

**DIE BAHÀ`i-GELOOF IN SUID-AFRIKA.
'n GODSDIENSWETENSKAPLIKE STUDIE**

deur

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PROMOTOR: PROFESSOR JS KRÜGER

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**THE BAHÀ`i FAITH IN SOUTH AFRICA.
A RELIGIOUS STUDY**

by

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OPSOMMING:

Die Bahà`i-geloof is 'n nuwe onafhanklike wêreldreligie en is redelik onbekend onder die breë Suid-Afrikaanse publiek. Hierdie kwalitatiewe studie (gebaseer op die fenomenologiese metode) het ten doel om die Bahà`i-fenomeen op 'n nie-veroordelende wyse sonder vooroordele te beskryf en om die Bahà`is se eie Suid-Afrikaanse ervaring te registreer.

Dit geskied eerstens deur 'n bespreking van die Bahà`ise historiese gebeure (deel 1). Op hierdie wyse word dié geloof in sy religieuse familiegroepering geplaas. Terselfdertyd verklaar hierdie deel die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die Bahà`i-geloof wêreldwyd en in Suid-Afrika. Dit herdefinieer die verbondsgedagte en toon hoe Bahà`is die eenheidsgedagte en die uitlewing van Baha'u'llah se boodskap via die skepping van 'n Administratiewe orde vormgee.

Sentrale Bahà`i-konsepte (deel 2) aangaande die geestelike dimensie van dié geloof word hierna aangestip. Dit word uitgebou met ongestruktureerde onderhoude met versigtig gekose deelnemers, waarin Bahà`is dus self hul geloof in terme van die Bahà`i-administrasie, wette, byeenkomste en bepalinge, Godsbegrip en eskatologie sowel as hul antropologie en geskiedenis uitspel. Dit word ooreenkomstig die sentrale temas bespreek sodat 'n Bahà`i-geheelbeeld gekonseptualiseer kan word. Dit word afgesluit met 'n bespreking van die Bahà`i-wêreldstaat as die vervulling van die profesie van die nuwe hemel en aarde.

Verskeie gevolgtrekkings word uit hierdie data gemaak. Dit toon hoe die Bahà`is Baha'u'llah se boodskap as sleutel gebruik sodat die moderne mens na die vestiging van 'n nuwe wêreldkultuur gelei word. Hierdie strewe bekragtig die Bahà`i-strategie en motto van **eenheid in die verskeidenheid**, en word as die oplossing vir die hedendaagse probleme van die moderne mens aangebied. Daar word dan met die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-toekomsbeskouing afgesluit.

SUMMARY:

The Bahà`i Faith is a new independent world religion and is vastly unknown to the South African public. The purpose of this qualitative research (based on the phenomenological method) is to describe the Bahà`i phenomenon in an unbiased, non-judgemental way so that the own South African Bahà`i experience is registered.

The Bahà`i history (part 1) is discussed first in order to place this faith in its own religious framework and to explain its origin and development worldwide as well as in South Africa. It establishes the message of the Covenant and shows how Bahà`is are proclaiming the unity idea and the message of Baha'u'llah via the establishment of the Administrative order.

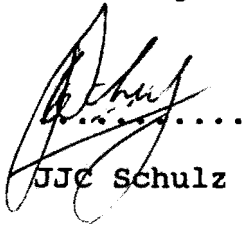
Central Bahà`i concepts (part 2) concerning the spiritual dimension of the Bahà`i faith are explored. It is expanded via unstructured interviews with carefully selected participants in order to let Bahà`is explain their own administration, laws and regulations, concepts about God and their escatology as well as their anthropology and history. This is done in accordance to the central themes so that a total picture of Bahà`i could be conceptualised. It ends with a discussion of the Bahà`i worldstate as the fulfillment of the new heaven and earth prophecy.

Different conclusions are made from these data. It shows how the Bahà`is are using Baha'u'llah's message as the key in order to lead man to the establishment of a new modern world culture. This culture will be the fulfillment of the Bahà`i strategy and motto of **unity in diversity** and serves as the Bahà`i answer to the modern day problems. The thesis ends with the South African expectations of the future.

Key terms:

Baha'u'llah; Bahá'í; pluralism; syncretism; new world culture; global religion; universalism; new definition of prophecy; new spirituality; qualitative research; new manifestation; oneness of God, man and religion; administrative world order; covenant

"Ek verklaar hiermee dat **Die Bahá'í-geloof in Suid-Afrika.**
'n Godsdienwetenskaplike studie my eie werk is en dat ek
alle bronne wat ek gebruik of aangehaal het deur middel van
volledige verwysings aangedui en erken het."


.....
JJC Schulz

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Bostaande word in byna elke Bahá'í-huis of plek waar 'n Bahá'í-**a**ktiwiteit plaasvind, aangetref.

'n Arabiese saekhede: Yá Bahá'u'l-Abná ("O Glory of the Ati Glor**o**us").

HOOFSTUK 1 INLEIDING

1.1 PLURALITEIT en PLURALISME

'n Woordeboek-definisie van "pluraliteit" is "meerderheid" of "meervoudigheid" (1). Pluraliteit verwys in dié studie na die konkrete werklikheid van die bestaan van 'n groot aantal religieë of godsdienste (2). "Pluralisme" het betrekking op die filosofie wat "pluraliteit" positief verreken en wat die positiewe verstaan van mekaar en saamleef van die "pluraliteit" van religieë moontlik maak. Pluralisme vat die werklikheid van religieë saam op 'n positiewe gerelateerdheid sonder om die "pluraliteit" monisties tot 'n eenheid te reduseer.

Hierdie opvatting van "pluralisme" hou filosofies verband met 'n opvatting van die wêreld as 'n samehang van kragte in oorgang en wisselwerking. Dit behels **sentrifugale** asook **sentripetale**, **konvergerende** asook **konverterende** (veranderende, verwisselende) momente. Sosiale en kulturele ontwikkelinge na die twee wêreldoorloë (1914-1918 en 1939-1945), asook denkrigtings wat veel vroeër ontstaan het, het impetus verleen aan die gedagte van 'n pluralistiese samehang. Twee twintigste-eeuse denkers wat hierdie tendens filosofies geartikuleer het, was AN Whitehead met sy proses-filosofie, en die Suid-Afrikaner JC Smuts met sy holistiese paradigma. Dié besef dat almal van mekaar afhanklik is, het gelei tot die ontstaan van verskeie organisasies soos die **Verenigde Nasies (VN)** en die **Wêreldraad van Kerke (WRK)**. Suid-Afrika is ook deur hierdie denkrigting beïnvloed. So is daar in die resente verlede tot die besef gekom dat Suid-Afrika ontwikkel behoort te word as een diverse nasie, bestaande uit elemente wat mekaar nodig het. Argeologiese opgrawings en historiese navorsing

beeld die kultuurbydraes van verskillende volke (die San, die Khoi-Khoi, die Bantoe-groeperinge, die Kolonialiste en die Setlaars) in Suid-Afrika uit.

Die begrip "pluraliteit" is eweneens van toepassing op die Suid-Afrikaanse religieuse werklikheid. Dit is egter nie altyd voldoende besef nie, soos blyk uit die onderlinge onverdraagsaamheid en die oorheersingswaan wat die ontmoeting van die verskeidenheid volkere en religieë binne Suid-Afrika gekenmerk het. Dié stryd om oorheersing en onverdraagsaamheid is ook weerspieël in die soeke na 'n eie Suid-Afrikaanse identiteit. Eie inhoud en andersheid is beklemtoon, iets wat indirek geregverdig is deur die teenwoordigheid van kleiner groepe en religieë. Onverdraagsaamheid en die oorbeklemtoning van die verskeidenheid, sowel as die dominante groep se strewe om ander by sy doelstellinge te laat inval, het die ideaal van een samelewing met 'n verskeidenheid identiteite verydel.

Die religieuse verskeidenheid in Suid-Afrika word, by gebrek aan beter syfers (3), soos volg geïllustreer:

Tabel 1

Volgelingen van die verskillende godsdienste in Suid-Afrika, 1980 en 1991 (in duisende):

Religie Denominasie	1980		1991	
	Getal	%	Getal	%
Christendom	22603	77,0%	25065	66,4%
Hindoeïsme	512	1,8%	477	1,3%
Islam	319	1,1%	412	1,1%
Judaïsme	119	0,4%	81	0,2%
Confucianisme	7	0,02%	2	0,00%
Boeddhisme	3	0,01%	3	0,01%
Ander gelowe	38	0,1%	31	0,1%
Geen godsdienst	625	2,1%	454	1,2%
Niks/objekteer	910	3,1%	11213	29,75
Onseker	4229	14,4%	-	-
TOTAAL	29365	100,0%	37738	100,0%

Bogenoemde syfers bevestig onomwonde dat daar inderdaad 'n verskeidenheid van religieë aan die suidpunt van Afrika aanwesig is. Die verloop van die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis toon egter ook dat 'n (religieuse) pluralisme in die ware sin van die woord nog nie in Suid-Afrika ontwikkel het nie. Die feit en gevolge van verbandlose isolasie is so opsigtelik dat dit geen demonstrasie regverdig nie.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse religieuse diversiteit en pluraliteit, asook die resente sosio-politieke gebeure met al die inbegrepe uitdagings, sowel as die noodsaaklikheid om oplossings op probleme te vind, laat die volgende vrae ontstaan: **Hoe gaan Suid-Afrikaners hierdie ryke verskeidenheid met mekaar versoen?; Hoe gaan die verskillende godsdienste op die nuwe uitdagings reageer?; Op watter wyse sal die verskillende religieë en hul unieke boodskappe ruimte vir mekaar skep?; Is Suid-Afrikaners verdraagsaam ten opsigte van mekaar se religieë?.**

Teen hierdie breë agtergrond wil hierdie studie 'n bydrae maak tot die dinamiek van religieuse pluralisme in Suid-Afrika. Op teoretiese vlak lê die relevansie van hierdie studie in die deurligting van begrippe soos pluraliteit, pluralisme en sinkretisme.

Die Bahà`i-geloof se strewe stem by uitstek ooreen met vermelde verwikkelinge en kragte wat die wêreld beïnvloed en verander. Gevolglik reflekteer die Bahà`i-geloof ook die beweging vanaf blote pluraliteit tot positiewe pluralisme. Hul toenemende invloed blyk duidelik uit die herdenking van hul verskillende spesiale dae deur die nie-Bahà`i-individue en -organisasies (dae soos die Herdenkingsdag vir Eenheid tussen die verskillende rasse op 12 Junie, die Internasionale Vredesdag op 20 September, die

Universele Kinderdag op 3 Oktober, die Verenigde-Nasie-dag op 24 Oktober, die Verenigde-Nasie-menseregtedag van 10 Desember en die Wêrelddag vir Religieë op 16 Januarie).

Die strewe na ware pluralisme behoort, volgens `Abdu'l-Bahà, sy oorsprong in die gedagte-wêreld van die mens te hê: "...for until the minds of men become united, no important matter can be accomplished" (4).

In aansluiting by die strewe na wêreldvrede en 'n wêreldregering, beskou die openbaarder van dié geloof, Bahà'u'llàh, die mens en die wêreld soos volg: "The world is but one country; and mankind its citizens. Let not a man glory in that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind" (5). Hy het ook gesê: "Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply....all mankind may become the upholders of one order, and the inhabitants of one city....Ye dwell in one world, and have been created through the operation of one Will" (6).

Die besef van die pluralistiese verskeidenheid van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing soos hierbo geskets, het die skrywer se belangstelling in die Bahà`i-geloof, 'n godsdiens wat pluralisme as hoeksteen het, geprikkel. Daar sal in hierdie studie gepoog word om 'n adekwate beskrywing en verstaan van die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-geloof te gee.

1.2 METODE

Die historiese deel van die proefskrif berus nie op primêre historiese navorsing nie, maar op die kritiese verwerking van die

bestaande historiese werke oor Bahà`i. Verder is daar, insake die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis, onderhoude met sekere stigterslede en ander Bahà`is gevoer. Die argiewe is ook geraadpleeg en die Bahà`i se eie "Pictorial"-geskrif is in dié verband gebruik.

Hierdie is nie 'n teologiese studie oor die Bahà`i-geloof nie. Dit is ook nie 'n studie oor die Christelike beleving van die Bahà`i-geloof in die RSA nie. Daar is fenomenologies gepoog om die subjektiewe betekenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-gelowige se eie bedoeling met en ervaring van die geloof te beskryf en te ontleed. Dit wil die manifestasie en patrone van die Bahà`i-geloof, soos die Bahà`is dit self ervaar, weergee en die subjektiewe sin van hul opvattinge en handeling eksplisiet en sistematies na vore bring.

Die skrywer poog in die proefskrif om, ter wille van eerlike verstaan en beskryf, eie voorveronderstellings, gebruike, voor- en afkeure en oortuigings na vore te bring en te erken, eerder as om dit te ontken en te verdoesel. Die skrywer se eie veronderstellings is deur die bestudeerde groep bespreek en, waar nodig, gekorrigeer. Dit het in 'n atmosfeer van gemeenskaplike respek geskied, wat dit vir die navorser moontlik gemaak het om sy subjektiewe vooroordele konstruktief te gebruik. Dit is naïef om te dink dat die navorser in staat is om hom of haar van al die genoemde subjektiewe faktore te distansieer. Objektiviteit is juis geleë in die erkenning van eie vooroordele.

Wanneer 'n navorser religieë, asook die aanhangers daarvan se eie ervarings en gebruike op dié wyse bestudeer, behoort hy of sy ook oop te wees vir enige nuwe perspektief wat na vore kan kom. Indien die navorser by voorbaat enige verandering wat in sy of haar eie sienswyses na vore mag kom, sou uitsluit, wek dit twyfel oor

sy of haar openheid met betrekking tot die onderwerp wat bestudeer word. Slegs wanneer die risiko van verandering deur die navorser aanvaar word, is 'n volledige beskrywing en 'n korrekte weergawe haalbaar.

'n Verlenging van die fenomenologiese benadering is die kwalitatiewe prosedure, wat vir hierdie bestudering van die Bahà`i-geloof binne die RSA gevolg is (7). Dit beteken dat die Bahà`i-geloof vanuit sy eie omgewing en betekenisrykheid (soos Bahà`is dit self ervaar) geïnterpreteer en ondersoek is. Die studie se benadering is dus nie streng geformaliseer nie, wat dit onderskei van 'n kwantitatiewe benadering wat meer geformaliseerd, sowel as eksplisiet gekontroleerd is, met 'n reikwydte wat meer presies afgebaken is en relatief na aan die natuurwetenskappe se benaderings geleë is (8).

Gevolgtrek is daar nie gepoog om 'n begrippe-stelsel (of dit 'n stel kategorieë vir inhoudsanalise is, of 'n gestruktureerde skedule vir 'n onderhoud, of responskategorieë in 'n vraelys of toets) op die Bahà`i-geloof af te dwing nie. Die uitgangspunt is om die Bahà`i-geloof self te laat spreek, anders as in die kwantitatiewe benadering waar die bestudeerde onderwerp van buite af bekyk word en waar daar eerder van 'n voorafgestruktureerde, 'objektiewe', gestandaardiseerde waarnemingstegniek gebruik gemaak word. Laasgenoemde dra daartoe by dat die kwantitatiewe navorser dikwels probleme ondervind om onvoorsiene of onverwagte gedragssuitinge in die waarneming te huisves (9).

Aangesien beoog word dat die Bahà`i-geloof self aan die woord kom, sal die sogenaamde "Grounded Theory"-benadering gevolg word. Vir sover interpretatiewe kategorieë en gesigspunte ontwikkel word, sal dit self groei vanuit die empiriese data wat

versamel en ontleed is. Hierdie tipe teorievorming is deur Glaser en Strauss (1967) ontwikkel en behels die ontginning van 'n teorie deur die navorser vanuit die sistematies nagevorste data. Die studie sal nie eksplisiet ten doel hê om 'n verhelderende teorie te ontwikkel nie, maar eerder poog om die kenmerke van die Bahà`i-fenomeen binne Suid-Afrika daar te stel. Die konkrete teorie, soos dit verder deur onder andere Westner (1987) ontwikkel is, blyk weens die sterk klem op die induktiewe benadering en openheid tot die data die gepaste benadering vir hierdie studie te wees. Hierdie studie is dus 'n eerste eksploratiewe studie wat later tot die formulering van 'n meer algemene teorie aanleiding mag gee.

Die konkrete teorie of benadering behels verder dat navorsers hulself doelbewus bevry van alle vooropgesette idees en teorieë aangaande die onderwerp van bestudering. Dit sluit aan by die fenomenologie (soos vantevore uiteengesit). Teorievorming is wel nodig, omdat die data sonder 'n teoretiese of vertolkende raamwerk nie verstaanbaar en betekenisvol kan wees nie.

Konkrete teorievorming behels die sinvolle verwerking van die fenomene en dat die leser in staat gestel word om die data ooreenkomstig hierdie raamwerk te verstaan.

Die oproep vir die bevryding van a prioriese, abstrakte teorie impliseer nie dat die navorser sonder 'n teoretiese of vertolkte raamwerk moet werk nie, maar dat die navorsingsdata self toegelaat word om die ophelderende en verduidelikende teorieë na vore te bring.

Die navorsing is dus deur die Bahà`i-omgewingsdinamiek (interaksie met die belangrikste rolspelers en Bahà`i-dryfkragte)

beïnvloed. Die belangrikste faktore is geïdentifiseer. Terselfdertyd was die navorser ook aan die belangrikste onsekerhede onderworpe sodat hy op dié wyse die Bahà`i-dinamiek ontleed en geregistreer het. Dit het dus deelnemende waarneming behels en die situasie en Bahà`i-belewenis is ontleed. Die implikasie is ook aangeteken.

Die praktiese uitvoering van die veldwerk het soos volg verloop:

1.2.1 Deelnemende Waarneming

Die studie het gedurende 1992 'n aanvang geneem. Sekere Bahà`is het tydens hierdie verkennende ondersoek te kenne gegee dat die Bahà`i-werke meer gewig dra as die boodskap van enige individuele Bahà`i.

Nadat die skrywer 'n verskeidenheid Bahà`i-literatuur aangeskaf en bestudeer het (onder leiding van die hoof van die Bahà`i boekwinkel in Houghton [Bahà`i Nasionale Sentrum]), het hy gedurende 1993 en 1994 toenemend ingeskakel by verskillende Bahà`i-byeenkomste. Hierdie "firesides", Bahà`i-feeste en openbare byeenkomste het die skrywer in staat gestel om te kon waarneem dat die meeste sprekers die Bahà`i-beginsels, soos vervat in die Heilige Werke, akkuraat weergee. Dit was ook duidelik dat die sprekers kenners op hul eie terreine met betrekking tot sekere spesialis-terreine binne dié geloof is. Sekere sprekers het gevolglik by meer as een geleentheid en by verskillende byeenkomste oor hul spesifieke onderwerpe gepraat.

Gedurende die tydperk vanaf Junie 1993 tot Oktober 1995 het die skrywer by twee en dertig (32) verskillende Bahà`i openbare ontmoetings en byeenkomste in Roodepoort (by die Florida biblioteek,

Kerkstraat, Floridapark) ingeskakel en gepoog om 'n eerstehandse kennis van die geloof op te doen. Vermelde is sedert Maart 1994 uitgebrei deurdat die skrywer elke Vrydagaand die Bahà`i-byeenkoms by hul Nasionale kantoor in Johannesburg (h/v Louis Botha- en Acornstraat, Houghton) bygewoon het ('n verdere een en tagtig (81) byeenkomste). Voorts is 'n verdere ses en twintig (26) ander Bahà`i-byeenkomste in Randburg-rif (h/v van Bloekom- en Rooihoutstraat) bygewoon. In totaal is daar dus honderd nege en dertig (139) verskillende Bahà`i-byeenkomste gemonitor, waartydens daar telkens met die betrokke Bahà`i-sprekers en -gelowiges gesels is om meer van dié geloof te wete te kom.

Voorts het die skrywer ook die Bahà`i Internasionale Somerskool in Zimbabwe vanaf 26 tot 31 Desember 1994 bygewoon. Die volgende 28 lande was aldaar deur Bahà`is verteenwoordig:

Australië; Bahà`i-Wêreldsentrum, Israel; Botswana; Burkinna Fasso; Engeland; Ethiopië; Frankryk; Ierland; Iran; Ivoorkus; Kanada; Kenia; Lesotho; Malawi; Mauritius; Mosambiek; Namibië; Samoa; Seychelle; Sri Lanka; Suid-Afrika; Swaziland; Tunisië; Uganda; Verenigde State van Amerika; Zambië en Zimbabwe.

Hierdie betrokkenheid het ook gepaard gegaan met deelname aan 'n Persiese ete in Augustus 1993 en die bywoning van 'n Bahà`i-fees insake die Dag van die Verbond op 26 November 1993 aan huis van Suha (Auxillary Board member) en Shoreh Rawhani (nasionale sekretaris van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid-Afrika), asook ander feesvieringe (soos die herdenking van Baha'u'llah se verjaarsdag op 12 November 1993 in Sandton en die Bab se geboortedagvieringe op 20 Oktober 1994 in Houghton). Die video-opname van die Bahà`i-wêreldbyeenkoms in 1992 in Amerika, is tydens die eerste ete vertoon en het alle Bahà`is (van die primale tot die hoogs gekul-

tiveerde volke in 165 lande van die wêreld) uitgebeeld. Hierdie tipe van blootstelling en ervaring het aan die skrywer die ruimte gegee om die studie wyer en oper aan te pak, sodat die ware betekenis en omvang van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid-Afrika beleef kan word.

1.2.2 Onderhoude

In 'n poging om die funksionering op grondvlak te bepaal, het die skrywer aan die einde van 1994 en in die begin van 1995 negentien (19) geselekteerde onderhoude gevoer. Die inhoud van hierdie onderhoude is bepaal deur prominente Bahà`i-temas en het hoofsaaklik gehandel oor dié gedeeltes wat nie in die byeenkomste gefiguureer het nie. Die onderhoude was ook gemik om die geloof se praktiese toepassing te verstaan en te begryp. Hierdie gebeure is aangevul deur die bywoning van die Internasionale Bahà`i-somerskool sodat die eienskappe en boodskappe met die lewens- en wêreldbeskouing, sowel as die Bahà`i-karakterkenmerke gekontroleer kon word. Daar is opnuut bekragtig dat die Bahà`i-geloof 'n wêreld beweging met 'n internasionale karakter is en beslis van ander religieë in die wêreld onderskei moet word op grond van hul heersende nasionale karakter.

Die negentien verteenwoordigende semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is regoor Suid-Afrika gevoer aan die hand van sekere oop vrae en temas. Die onderhoude is almal op klankband opgeneem.

Die onderhoude is met Bahà`is op plaaslike, nasionale en internasionale vlakke gevoer, en het doelbewus Bahà`is afkomstig uit die verskillende wêreld religieuse groeperinge betrek:

Band-opname	Geslag en ouderdom	Nasionaliteit en Bahá'í-generasie	Plek van Herkoms	Beroep	Vorige Geloof
(1)	Manlik ongeveer 52 jaar oud	Blanke Amerikaner Tweede	VSA	Professor in Opvoedkunde	Ouers was Bahá'í-pioniers in Swaziland
(2)	Manlik ongeveer 48 jaar oud	Iranes Derde	Swazi-land	Oor-, neus- en keel-spesialis	Ouers was Bahá'í's
(3)	Manlik ongeveer 58 jaar oud	Maleier Eerste	Kaapstad	Arbeider	Moslem
	Vroulik ongeveer 55 jaar oud	Indiër Eerste	Kaapstad	Huisvrou	Moslem
(4)	Manlik ongeveer 45 jaar	Blanke Duitser Tweede	Kaapstad	Tegnikus	Ouers was Bahá'í's
(5)	Manlik ongeveer 37 jaar oud	Sotho Eerste	Lesotho	Siviele Ingenieur	Rooms-Katolieke Kerk
(6)	Manlik ongeveer 25 jaar oud	Sri Lankaan Eerste	Virginia	Ingenieur	Hindoe
(7)	Vroulik ongeveer 65 jaar	Pedi Eerste	Pietersburg	Arbeider	Ned Gerref Kerk
(8)	Manlik ongeveer 68 jaar oud	Tswana Eerste	Rustenburg	Afgetrede skoolhoof	Lutherse Kerk en Pinkster Kerk
(9)	Vroulik ongeveer 26 jaar oud	Tswana Tweede	Israel	Klerikaal Bahá'í-wêreldsentrum)	Moeder was eerste swart Bahá'í-vrou
(10)	Manlik ongeveer 46 jaar oud	Indiër Eerste	Richardsbaai	Sakeman	Hindoe
(11)	Manlik ongeveer 42 jaar oud	Xhosa Eerste	Tranскеi	Bestuurder van Elektронika-winkel	Rooms-Katoliek en later Metodis

(Vervolg)

Band-opname	Geslag en ouderdom	Nasionaliteit en Bahā'i-generasie	Plek van Herkoms	Beroep	Vorige Geloof
(12)	Manlik ongeveer 38 jaar oud	Kleurling Eerste	Kaapstad	Bestuurder meubelwinkel	Anglikaan
	Vroulik ongeveer 35 jaar oud	Maleier Eerste	Kaapstad	Tuiste-skepper	Moslem
(13)	Manlik ongeveer 68 jaar oud	Rooi Indiaan (geklassifiseer as Kleurling) Eerste	Kaapstad	Afgetree-algemene arbeider	Metodis-te Kerk en Hara Kris-na
	Vroulik ongeveer 66 jaar oud	Kleurling Eerste	Kaapstad	Arbeider en tuis-teskepper	Sewende-dagse Ad-ventis en later Me-todis
(14)	Vroulik ongeveer 23 jaar oud	Blanke Tweede	Roode-poort	Student	Ouers is Bahā'is
(15)	Manlik ongeveer 64 jaar oud	Phedi Eerste	Tzaneen	Tuinier en arbeider	Rooms-Katolieke
(16)	Manlik ongeveer 41 jaar oud	Blanke Australi-ër Eerste	Kaapstad	Wiskun-de-dosent	Vader was ateis

Ouderdomsgroepe	Totaal
60 en ouer	5
50 en ouer	3
20 en ouer	5
32 en ouer	3
20 en ouer	3
Groottotaal	19

Gelowe	Totaal
Bahā'i	4
Islam	3
Hindoe	2
Christen	9
Ateis	1
Groot Totaal	19

Nasionaliteit	Manlik	Vroulik
Amerikaner	1	
Australianer	1	
Duitser	1	
Iranees	1	
Sri Lankaan	1	
Suid Afrikaner:		
* Blanke		1
* Indiër	1	1
* Kleurling	2	1
* Maleier	1	1
* Pedi	1	1
* Sotho	1	
* Tswana	1	1
* Xhosa	1	
Totaal	13	6

Soos hierbo vermeld, is ook informele gesprekke gevoer met Suid-Afrikaanse en internasionale gassprekers, sowel as die plaaslike sprekers. Die Bahà`i-sprekers het gewoonlik oor die een of ander aspek van die Bahà`i-geloof gepraat en daarna verskeie vrae oor sy of haar spesifieke tema (of aanverwante aspekte van die Bahà`i-geloof) beantwoord. Daarna het die gehoor, meestal Bahà`is, gekuier en verder oor 'n koppie tee of koffie oor verskeie aspekte van hul geloof gesels. Hierdie gesprekke is na elke byeenkoms op skrif gestel. Dit was nie prakties uitvoerbaar om al dié verrigtinge met bandopnames te dek nie en gevolglik is nota`s kort na die gebeure gemaak.

Alle onderhoude is getranskribeer. Daarna is die oorvleuelende tematiese aspekte opgesom. 'n Kort verslag van die verrigtinge, insluitende die skrywer se gevoel en evaluering van die deelnemer, is kort na elke onderhoud gemaak. Dit het ook die deelnemer en die onderhoudvoerder se kommentaar oor die onderhoud bevat. Voorts is ook enige onduidelikhede of huiwering deur die deelnemer tydens die onderhoud opgeteken.

1.2.3 Semi-gestruktureerde Onderhoude

Die semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is aan hand van die volgende temas gevoer:

1.2.3.1 Agtergrond:

1.2.3.1.1 Die redes waarom die deelnemer 'n Bahà`i geword het.

1.2.3.1.2 Die geloofsgroep waartoe die deelnemer behoort het voordat hy/sy 'n Bahà`i geword het.

1.2.3.2 Eienskappe van die Bahà`i-geloof:

1.2.3.2.1 Wat uniek aan die Bahà`i-geloof is.

1.2.3.2.2 Die basiese Bahà`i-geloofsleer.

1.2.3.3 Eiesoortighede van die Bahà`i-geloof, byvoorbeeld:

Bahà`i-benadering teenoor mense van ander gelowe en verskillende denominasies binne 'n spesifieke geloof (soos die Christendom).

1.2.3.4 Praktiese funksionering van die Bahà`i-geloof, byvoorbeeld:

Bahà`i-reaksie op en -hantering van homoseksualiteit.

1.2.3.5 Sosiale betrokkenheid, byvoorbeeld:

Bahà`i-benadering ten opsigte van ouetehuse en onderwys.

1.2.3.6 Bahà`i-geboue.

1.2.3.7 Bahà`i-byeenkomste, feeste en liturgie

(waar, wanneer, ensovoorts).

1.2.3.8 Organisasie en opleiding van ampsbekleërs:

Enige opleiding vir 'n Bahà`i-ampsbekleër op nasionale en/of plaaslike vlak.

1.2.3.9 Bahà`i-toekomsverwagtinge:

Siening met betrekking tot die huidige gebeure in Suid-Afrika.

Vooruitsigte vir die Suid-Afrikaanse toekoms.

Die rol wat die Bahà`i-geloof insake die deelnemer se verwagtinge sal vervul.

1.2.3.10 Algemeen:

1.2.3.10.1 Enigiets anders wat vermelding verdien.

1.2.3.10.2 Aanbevole literatuur.

Weens die Bahà`i se unieke bestuurstyl asook die eiesoortige rol wat buitelanders binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks vervul, het die skrywer ook gedurende Januarie 1995 'n skriftelike vraelys deur middel van die Bahà`i Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Afrika (900 adresse) versprei (kyk bylae A). Hierdie vraelys het onder andere ten doel gehad om te bepaal hoe buitelanders hier in Suid-Afrika by die Bahà`i-geloof inskakel, asook hoe die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-stand met die res van die wêreld vergelyk (met ander woorde, of ons te make het met 'n buitelandse religie wat nog nie binne Suid-Afrika wortel geskied het nie). Dié vraelys, wat alreeds teen 31 Maart 1995 terugbesorg moes gewees het (as gevolg van die Bahà`i-verkiesing en ingrypende gepaardgaande grensveranderinge weens nuwe munisipale grense, asook die herinlywing van die voormalige Tuislande), het getoon dat die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid Afrika reeds by die tweede generasie strek. Uit die reaksie op die vraelys (8% terug ontvang), wat grootliks op 'n soortgelyke Australiese vraelys gebaseer was, het dit geblyk dat sommige van die vrae nie op die respondente betrekking het nie omdat hulle gevoel het dat genoemde vrae uitsluitlik op die Bahà`i-pioniers betrekking het. Ander respondente was baie tevrede met die vraelys. Tog is veel met betrekking tot die Bahà`i se geloofslewe, bestuurstyl en huislike omstandighede vasgestel.

1.3 Bestudering van Bahà`i-literatuur

Die primêre Bahà`i-literatuur -- en wat geraadpleeg is met die oog op hierdie navorsing -- sluit in 'n verskeidenheid van Ba-

ha'u'llah se werke in die vorm van boeke en briewe. Indien al sy geskrifte in een werk saamgevoeg sou word, sou só 'n werk meer as 100 volumes beslaan (kyk bylae B). Die meeste van hierdie werke is in Persies en Arabies geskryf; slegs die belangrikstes is in Engels en ander tale vertaal. Die skrywes en aangetekende toesprake van `Abdu'l-Bahà, Baha'u'llah se oudste seun en aangewese opvolger, het 'n laer rangorde as die werke van Baha'u'llah; maar is vir Bahà`is net so bindend as die werke van Baha'u'llah. Gevolglik is `Abdu'l-Bahà se werke ook deel van die Bahà`i Heilige Geskrifte. Bahà`is beskou al die ander wêreldgodsdienste se Heilige Boeke (soos die Bybel en Qur'ân) as deel van hul Heilige Geskrifte.

Bahà`i-geskrifte omvat 'n groot verskeidenheid van onderwerpe. Dit sluit in aspekte soos basiese konsepte oor godsdiens, beginsels insake die mensheid se lewe en optrede, wette en leerstellings sowel as riglyne vir die daarstelling van sosiale en administratiewe instellings. Van die belangrikste Bahà`i-geskrifte is die volgende:

1.3.1 Die werke van Baha'u'llah

1.3.1.1 Kitâb-i-Aqdas (Die Mees Heilige Boek)

Die naam toon aan dat hierdie een van Baha'u'llah se belangrikste werke is-- dit bevat die wette en verordeninge met betrekking tot onderwerpe soos gebed, vas, trou, egskeiding, erflating, pelgrimstogte en werksverpligtinge, asook verbodsbepalings ten opsigte van slawerny, dobbelary, bedelary en die gebruik van dwelm-middels en alkohol. Dit dien ook as die riglyne wat Bahà`is kollektief en individueel moet navolg.

1.3.1.2 Kitāb-i-Iqān (Die Boek van Oortuiging)

In hierdie werk sit Baha'u'llah die basiese konsepte van sy openbaring uiteen. Hierin skets hy die beginsel van progressiewe openbaring en proklameer hy die Eenheid van God, die vlak en rangorde van God se manifestasies as die "spieëls" deur wie die mensheid kennis oor God kan verkry, asook die eenheid van hül goddelike skoling. Hy verskaf ook geestelike interpretasies vir 'n aantal diepsinnige verse in beide die Qur'an en die Bybel.

1.3.1.3 Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah ('n Versameling uit die Geskrifte van Baha'u'llah)

Hierdie boek bevat geselekteerde dele van Baha'u'llah se belangrikste werke, wat nog nie in geheel in Engels beskikbaar is nie. Dit handel oor die doel van godsdienst, die geestelike karakter van die mens en die transformasie van die mens se gemeenskapswêreld.

1.3.1.4 The Hidden Words (Die Verborgte Woorde)

Hierdie kort werk bevat beginsels vir menslike lewe en optrede en bevat ook Baha'u'llah se aansporings en vermanings vir die mensheid sowel as sy verduidelikings oor die aard en doel van die lewe, die mensheid se unieke plek in die geskape wêreld, en die misterieuse verhouding tussen mens en God.

1.3.1.5 The Seven Valleys (Die Sewe Valleie)

Hierdie allegoriese verhaal wat in die styl van die Islamitiese mistieke literatuur geskryf is, het sy oorsprong as Baha'u'llah se reaksie op die vrae van 'n welbekende en prominente sūfi-fi-

guur in daardie tydvak van sy omswerwinge. Hier identifiseer Baha'u'llah die sewe fases of valleie waardeur 'n ware soeker na waarheid moet gaan in sy of haar soeke na God.

1.3.2 Die Werke van `Abdu'l-Bahà

1.3.2.1 Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahà (Uittreksels uit die Geskrifte van `Abdu'l-Bahà)

Hierdie is die belangrikste versameling van `Abdu'l-Bahà se briewe waarin hy kommentaar lewer oor 'n groot aantal aspekte van die Bahà`i-geloofsleerstellings. Dit handel oor verskeie geestelike vrae, asook vrae oor die huwelik en die opvoeding van kinders.

1.3.2.2 Some Answered Questions (Sommige Beantwoorde Vrae)

Hierdie toesprake van `Abdu'l-Bahà behels antwoorde op verskeie geestelike en filosofiese vrae. Die temas is divers en sluit die volgende in: die uitwerking wat openbaarders van God op die mens se geskiedenis het, onderwerpe uit die Bybel, die Bahà`i teologie, metafisika, die oorsprong van die heelal, die onsterflikheid van die siel, asook sonde.

1.3.2.3 Paris Talks (Parys-Gesprekke)

Hierdie klein volume bestaan hoofsaaklik uit die informele toesprake wat `Abdu'l-Bahà in 1911 gedurende sy negeweeklange verblyf in Parys, Frankryk gemaak het. Die toesprake is in Persies gelewer en vir die gehoor in Frans getolk. Al dié toesprake het op een of meer van Baha'u'llah se sentrale leerstellings gefokus en die inhoud het gewissel van vrae oor die metafisiese karakter van die siel tot sosiale gebeure binne die lewe van die mens,

soos die oorsake van oorlog en die noodsaaklikheid vir 'n universele vrede.

1.4 Struktuur van die Proefskrif

Die studie beslaan twee dele, naamlik 'n historiese deel en 'n deskriptiewe of interpretatiewe deel. Die historiese deel neem 'n aanvang in hoofstuk 2, waarin die religieuse interaksie van die Midde-Oosterse religieuse families bespreek word. Voorts word die geboorte of ontstaan van die Bahà`i-geloof uit die ander religieë aangetoon, die Bahà`i-geskiedenis kortliks weergegee en die prominente rol wat die verskillende leiersfigure gespeel het, bespreek. Die inhoud van die hoofstuk is ook onontbeerlik vir die verstaan van die geloof. In hoofstuk 3 word die Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis van die Bahà`i geloof bespreek.

Die deskriptiewe/interpretatiewe deel begin by hoofstuk 4, waarin die organisatoriese en administratiewe orde van die Bahà`i-geloof behandel word, asook die praktiese implikasies daarvan vir elke Bahà`i. Hoofstuk 5 handel oor die Bahà`is se siening van God, asook hul eskatologie. In hoofstuk 6 word die Bahà`is se siening van die geskiedenis en antropologie bespreek.

1.5 Verwysingsisteem

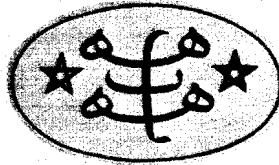
Die primêre bron van data is die bandopnames van onderhoude. Dit word aangevul met nota's en/of bandopnames van Bahà`i "firesides", feesvieringe en openbare byeenkomste. Verwysing met betrekking tot hierdie bronne geskied in die volgende formaat:

"Band 1, 030-052" verwys byvoorbeeld na die bandopname van die eerste onderhoud en die meterlesing op die bandmasjien.

1.6 Eindnote

- (1) Odendal, Shoonees, Swanepoel, Du Toit en Booysen, Verklarende Handwoordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal, Perskor-Uitgewery, 1983, p 845.
- (2) Die begrippe "godsdienst" en "religie" word in die studie as sinonieme gebruik. Voorkeur sal egter gegee word aan "religie".
- (3) JJ Kritzinger se sensussyfers van 1980 en 1991 soos gepubliseer in J Kilian, Religious Freedom in South Africa, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1993, p 2. (Kyk ook sy nota's 3 en 4 oor die syfers op bladsy 10 en 11).
- (4) J Tyson, World Peace and World Government: from Vision to Reality, George Ronald, Oxford, 1986, p 76.
- (5) Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, Bahà'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1980, p 114.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Vergelyk SJ Taylor en R Bogden, 1984, Introduction to Qualitative Research, New York, John Wiley; en WJ Schurinck, 1988a, Lewensgeskiedenis: Die Gebruik van Persoonlike Dokumente, in Inleiding tot Kwalitatiewe Metodes (module 3), Pretoria, Raad vir Geestes Navorsing en 1988b, Deelnemende Waarneming, in Inleiding tot Kwalitatiewe Metodes (module 3), Pretoria, Raad vir Geestes Navorsing.

- (8) Mouton, J en Marais, H.C. 1989, Metodologie van die Geesteswetenskappe: basiese begrippe, Pretoria, Raad vir Geestes Navorsing, p 157.
- (9) Ibid, p 165.



Die teken kom dikwels op die ringe van Bahà'is voor:

- (1) Die boonste horisontale streep simboliseer die wêreld van God.
- (2) Die tweede horisontale streep simboliseer die wêreld van die manifestasies of die profete.
- (3) Die onderste horisontale streep simboliseer die wêreld van die mens.
- (4) Die vertikale streep in die middel simboliseer die Heilige Gees.
- (5) Die twee sterre simboliseer die tweeling openbaarders, naamlik: die Bab (links) en Baha'u'llah (regs).
- (6) Die sirkels aan die begin en einde van die horisontale strepe is Arabiese bye.

HOOFSTUK 2

HISTORIESE PERSPEKTIEF OP DIE BAHÀ`i-GELOOF

2.1. Voorgeskiedenis van die Bahà`i-geloof

Die Indo-Europese reisigers het iewers aan die begin van die tweede millennium voor die huidige jaartelling, of selfs vroeër by die skeiding van weë naby die Kaspiese See gekom. 'n Groot groep het na die Oxus-riviervallei in Indië gegaan, terwyl die ander groep die huidige Armenië, Azarbaijan en die noordwestelike gedeeltes van die Heuwel-valleie in die Iranese tafelland gepenetreer het. Laasgenoemde groep het die natuurkragte soos die son, maan, sterre, aarde, vuur, water en winde (met ander woorde dié glinsterende/skitterende gode van die Rig-Veda) aanbid. Sekere van die gode se name het verlore gegaan; en die groepe het ook ander denkwyses ontwikkel. So is ook ander gode en wesens in die hemel, 'n eie wêreldorde, 'n eie onafhanklike morele waardesisteem en die eenwording van verskeie godhede gevestig. Die bekende hemelse tweeling (die Nasatya of Asvins ooreenkomstig die Hetitiese dokument Nashaadtianna) word as 'n uitvloeisel van hierdie gebeure gebore. Nog 'n ander unieke kenmerk van hierdie religieuse era is die aanbidding wat deur middel van altaarverering geskied het. Die element van vuur het prominensie geniet en is deur Zoroaster oorgeneem (1).

Zoroaster (moontlik 828-551 van die vorige jaartelling) het 'n monoteïsme en 'n morele kode oor menslike geregtigheid, wat van die goeie God (Ahoera Mazda) afkomstig is, verkondig. Die God, was volgens hom, ongeskape en die skepper van lig en duisternis. Ahoera Mazda, wat as die bron van alle goedheid aanbid is, het ook goeie gedagtes, woorde en daede en die afstanddoening

van alles wat sleg (**Ahriman**) is, vereis. Zoroaster het ook voorskrifte aangaande die mens se alledaagse lewe gegee en het verder die reinheid van die liggaam en siel en selfs die tuiste, beklemtoon. Die profeet Zoroaster word deur die meeste geleerdes beskou as die eerste persoon in die menslike geskiedenis wat die gedagte van 'n kosmiese oordeel verkondig het. Die huidige gedagte rondom die **hemel** en die **hel**, individuele oordeel, 'n universele laaste oordeel vir elke mens, die bestaan van engele en die ewige lewe kan moontlik ook aan hom toegeeskryf word. Hierdie gedagtegang is in Judaïsme, die Christendom en Islam opgeneem.

Die Bahà`i-geloof aanvaar Zoroaster as een van die ware manifestasies van God op die aarde en verheerlik hom as 'n profeet. Hy is egter slegs een van die figure wat Bahà`is uit die Midde-Oosterse religieuse tradisie aanbid en verheerlik, naas **Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christus en Mohammed**, sowel as die bygevoegde **Gautama Boeddha, die Bab, Baha'u'llah en Krishna** (2). Die Bahà`i-geloof spruit voort uit die familie van Midde-Oosterse religieë en word (volgens oorlewering) deur die bloedlyn van **Baha'u'llah** direk met die profeet Zoroaster verbind. Hierdie afstammelingslyn loop via **Mirza Buzurg** (vader van Baha'u'llah) (3), wat van koning **Yazdigird** afstam en direk met Zoroaster se bloedlyn verbind word. Mirza Buzurg stam ook (ooreenkomstig die Bahà`i-geloof) uit die bloedlyn van Abraham se derde vrou **Katura** (raadpleeg Genesis 25 :1 in die Bybel) en hulle vyf seuns (4). Die Bahà`i-geloof neem, ten spyte van hierdie verbin-tenis, nie die Hemel- en helgedagte van Zoroaster en sy voort-spruitende gelowe oor nie, maar beskou die hemel en hel as die twee pole van die mens se verhouding met God. "Hemel" beteken dan 'n direkte verhouding met God, terwyl "hel" op die persoon slaan wat verder van God af staan of geen verhouding met God het nie.

Bahà`is glo wel dat die mens se siel vir ewig voortbestaan in 'n nuwe lewe wat verskil van die huidige lewe (5).

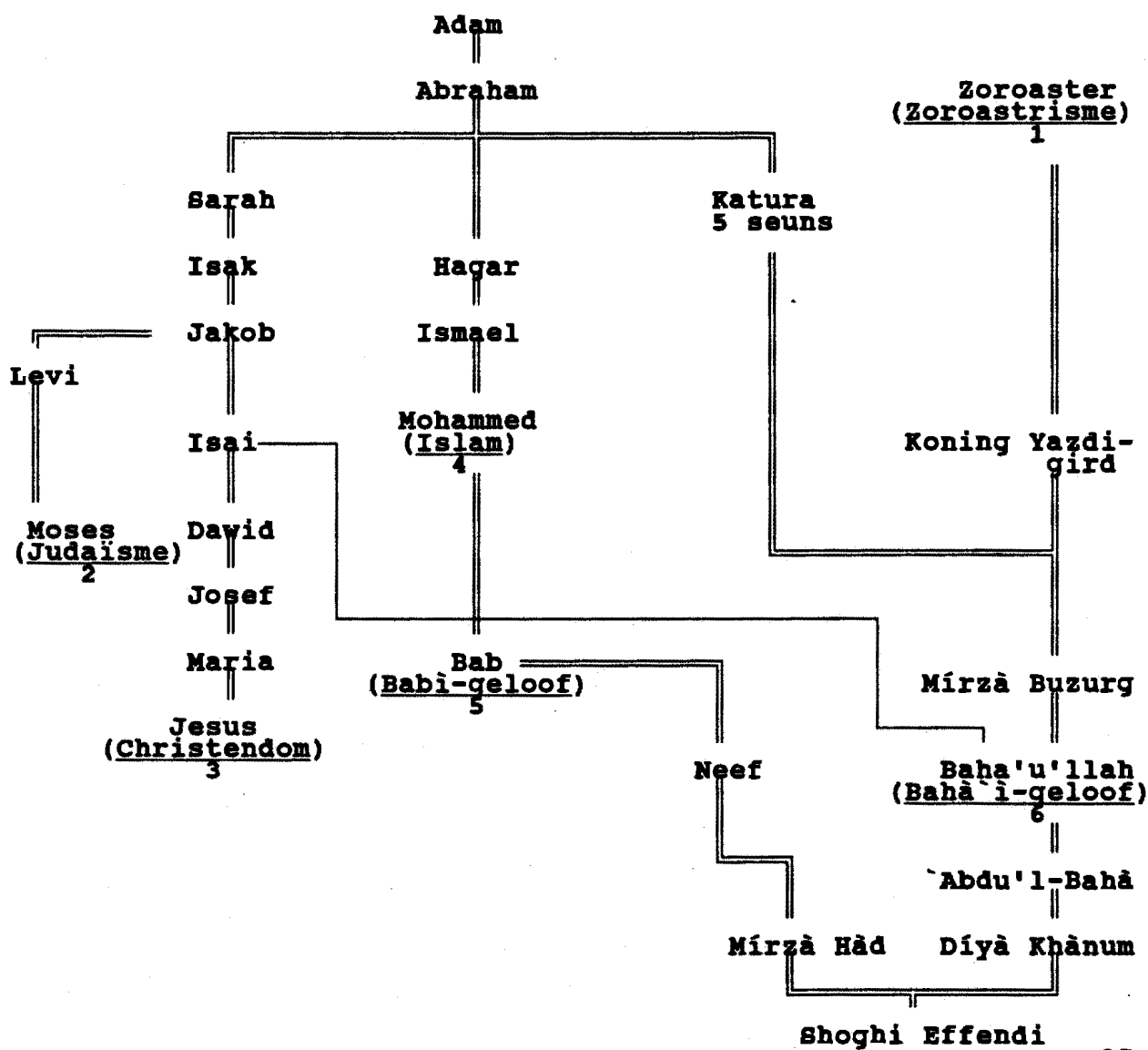
Zoroaster se boodskap kulmineer uiteindelik in die gedagte dat 'n wêreldverlosser genaamd **Susiyant** of **Shâh-Bahrâm Varjâvand** eendag sal verskyn. Hierdie verlosser sal die finale oorwinning oor die bose **Ahrîman** behaal. Die profeet Zoroaster het gesê dat 'n tydperk van 3060 jaar sal verloop, waartydens **Ahrîman** deur **Susiyant** oorwin sal word. Hierdie datum korrespondeer vir Bahà`is met die tydvak waarin Baha'u'llah sy roëping as die profeet wat alle profesie van die verlede vervul, bekend gemaak het (6).

Die Bahà`i-religie het voorts elemente oorgeneem uit die Judaïsme, wat diep beïnvloed is deur die Zoroastrisme, en tot hierdie skat van historiese kontinuiteit behoort die verbondsgedagte. Volgens Lowell Johnson, lid van die Bahà`i Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid Afrika, "**Baha'u'llah continues the Ancient Covenant and applies it to the primary need for today, the regeneration and unity of mankind. Man's role in the Covenant is to be grateful that God has sent this Message and to obey**" (7).

Bahà`is bekragtig die verbondsgedagte deurdat hulle glo dat God hierdie Verbond en belofte deur al Sy manifestasies in die wêreld verkondig. Dié lyn word deurgetrek van Abraham en Moses in die Ou Testament, deur Jesus Christus in die Nuwe Testament en Mohammed, van die Islam, tot by die **Bab** (1819-1850) (8). Die lyn begin by Adam, en loop deur na Abraham en sy drie vroue, Sarah, Hagar en Katura. Die Bab se lyn loop via Hagar, Ismael en Mohammed; Baha'u'llah se lyn strek via Sarah, Isak, Jakob en Isai (vader van Dawid, koning van Israel) sowel as die Zoroaster-lyn met die koppeling van Abraham se vrou Katura en haar vyf seuns. Die twee

lyne ontmoet by Mirzà Hadí en Diyà Khànum en word finaal met mekaar verenig in die geboorte van Shoghi Effendi van die Bahà`i-geloof. Hierdie geboorte koppel die manifestasielyne van Zoroastrisme, Judaïsme, die Christendom en Islam simbolies met mekaar en word deur Bahà`is beskou as die aanduiding van die geestelike eenheid van die openbaarders (9).

Shoghi Effendi se stamboom en die verskillende godsdienste se verwantskap word soos volg geïllustreer (10):



Die Bahà`i-geloof erken beide die maagdelike geboorte van Jesus Christus en sy goddelike roeping (11), asook die Christelike gedagtegang dat Christus (soos Krishna in die Hindoe-geloof en die verwagte Boeddha in Boeddhisme) na die wêreld sal terugkeer om sy Hemelse Vader se Koninkryk op aarde te vestig. Bahà`is huldig die mening dat die "ander openbaarder" (vir Christene die Heilige Gees) wat na Hom sou kom en wat die mense in die wêreld meer van God en godsdiens sou leer, inderdaad gekom het, en as Baha'u'llah (12).

Wat Islam betref, verbind die Bahà`i-geloof die geslagslyn van die Bab (die eerste van die tweeling-openbaarders van die Bahà`i-geloof) met Mohammed en die Islam-geloof. Mohammed stam, volgens die Bahà`i-geloof, op sy beurt direk af van Ismael, Hagar (byvrou en slavin van Abraham), Abraham en Adam.

Die Bahà`is beskou ook Mohammed as een van die manifestasies van God en bou voort op die gedagte dat Mohammed, soos alle ander manifestasies (openbaarders) in die wêreldgeskiedenis, die koms van 'n groter manifestasie nà homself profeteer. Hierdie profesie hou verband met die moslem-boodskap oor die trompetgeskal-- volgens Bahà`is glo Moslems dat wanneer daar geen spoor van God se godsdiens op aarde te vinde is nie, die geluid van 'n trompet gehoor sal word; nie eenmaal nie, maar twee keer, en dan sal die mense God se gesig self op die aarde sien (13). Dié trompetgeskal beteken volgens Bahà`is die verkondiging van God se woord. Die woord van God is dus reeds twee keer in hierdie era ooreenkomstig Mohammed se profesie verkondig. Die Bab het presies een duisend jaar (ooreenkomstig Bahà`is se voorskrifte vir die verskyning van manifestasies) nà Mohammed se openbaring verskyn. Byna onmiddelik daarna het Baha'u'llah sy roeping aangekondig. Hierdie tweeling-openbarings is volgens Bahà`is dus reeds voorspel deur Mohammed in sy heilige boek.

2.2 Die gebeure wat die ontstaan van die Bahà`i-geloof vooraf gaan

In Januarie 1844 is die Shaykhí-sekte (binne die Shi'ite groepering van Islam en wat die tradisionele letterlike uitleg van die doktrines oor die opstanding, die Laaste Oordeel en die wederkoms van die twaalfde Imam onder andere deur 'n allegoriese interpretasie vervang het) weens die afsterwe op 31 Desember 1843 van hul leier, Siyyid Kàzim-i-Rashti (in kort Siyyid Kàzim) (14) in 'n groot krisis gedompel, omdat Siyyid Kàzim geen opvolger aangewys het nie. Die dood van Siyyid Kàzim het gelei tot interne spanning, tweedrag, twis en rusies en uiteindelik tot die stigting van twee faksies binne die Shaykhí-sekte.

Dié faksie-vorming het plaasgevind aan hand van die optrede van twee van Siyyid Kàzim se studente, naamlik **Mírza `Ali Muhammad, die Bab** (1819-1850) en **Hàjí Mullà Muhammad Karím Khàn Kirmaní** (1810-1871). Hierdie tweespalt was later so op die spits gedryf dat die groepe nie met mekaar geassosieer wou word nie. Mírza `Ali Muhammad het homself en sy faksie in die openbaar gedi-stansieer van die Shaykhí-sekte en het selfs in sy kommentaar op die **Súrat al-Kawthar** in 1846 aangevoer dat beide Shaykh Ahmad (die stigter van die Shaykhí-sekte) en Siyyid Kàzim (die leier vir ongeveer sewentien jaar, na die afsterwe van Shaykh Ahmad) sou erken het dat die Shaykhí-godsdiens van Khàn Kirmaní die spoor byster was (15).

Die groepering van Khàn Kirmaní het egter die klem geplaas op die voortspruitende rol van die profete en imams en het opnuut die steun van die Shi`ite, wat deur die Shaykhí leiers geëkskommuni-seer is, gesoek. Mírza `Ali Muhammad se groep het, daarenteen, van die Islam-geloof wegbeweeg en uiteindelik die nuwe openbaring

met betrekking tot die verskyning van die Beloofde Imam (Mahdi of Qa`im) ontwikkel (16). Die groep het later as Babi bekendgestaan, 'n naam wat verband hou met die volgelinge van die Bab se gebruik om na hulself as "The People of the Bayan" te verwys (17).

2.3 Ontstaansgeskiedenis (1844-1850)

Die Bahā`i-geloof het 'n paar uur voor sonsondergang op Woensdag 22 Mei 1844 (volgens Westerse weergawe) in Shirāz, 'n klein dorpie 40 kilometer wes van die ruïnes van Persepolis in Iran, ontstaan toe die vyf-en-twintig-jarige Mīrza `Ali Muhammad vir Mullā Husayn-i-Bushrú'i (18) (ook 'n volgeling van Siyyid Kāzim) vir die eerste keer by die ingang van Shirāz ontmoet het.

Die kamer van die huis in Shirāz waarin die Bab op 23 Mei 1844 sy roeping bekendgemaak het:



(The Bahā`is, A Profile ... , p 18)

Dit geskied omdat Siyyid Kàzim, 'n dissipel van Shaykh Ahmad in Persië en leier van die Shaykhí-sekte, 'n paar maande tevore oordele is. Na 'n gebed van 40 dae het Mullà Husayn-i-Bushrú'i na Shiràz vertrek (19) om vas te stel of die beloofde Een (die Twaalfde Imam ooreenkomstig die Islam-geloof) nog nie gekom het nie. By die ingang van die dorp is hy vriendelik gegroet en deur die Bab (Mírza `Ali Muhammad) (20) na sy woning uitgenooi. Daar het die twee eers saam gebid, waarna hulle die Qà'im bespreek het (die beloofde Twaalfde Imam of Mahdi, wie se herverskyning na 'n afwesigheid van eenduisend jaar vir die Shi`ite Moslems beteken dat die verwagte nuwe era aangekondig word) (21).

Mírza (Siyyid) `Ali Muhammad (die Bab)



(William McElwee Miller, ... , p 17)

Die Bahà`i-geloof is tydens bogenoemde gesprek gebore nadat die besoeker (Mullà Husayn) deur die Bab ingelig is dat hy (die Bab) die Qà'im was (22). Die besoeker het na Siyyid `Ali-Muhammad gekyk en geweet dat sy soektog verby was. Hierdie openbaring het, volgens albei van hulle, twee uur en elf minute na sonsondergang plaasgevind (23). Alhoewel die nuwe geloof volgens Westerse standarde sy oorsprong op 22 Mei 1844 gehad het, het dit ooreenkomstig die Bahà`i-kalender en dagindeling op 23 Mei 1844 ontstaan (24). Hierdie gebeurtenis (die Bab se eerste volgeling in die persoon van Mullà Husayn) sou tot die geboorte van die nuwe religie en die koms van die nuwe openbaring van God aanleiding gee. **Bab** beteken **Weg**, en die Bab sou inderdaad vir die Bahà`i die **Weg** na die nuwe wêreldorde, die Koninkryk van God op aarde wees.

Siyyid `Ali-Muhammad het soos Johannes die Doper verklaar dat hy slegs die `wegbereider' was vir Een groter as hy, die Ware Manifestasie van God. Sy bediening het net ses jaar geduur en sy vervolging en gepaardgaande aanhouding (deur die Moslems in Mekka en later in die Chihriq-gevangenis) het tot die vorm en inhoud van die geloof bygedra. Tydens dié era is onder andere die Bahà`i-wette (25) (verskillend van en plaasvervangend vir die Qu'ran-wette) geformuleer en die Bahà`i-verbond opgestel.

Ten einde God se Koninkryk op aarde daar te stel, bou die Bahà`i-verbond voort op die Antieke en Ewige verbonde (die verbond met Adam, die verbond van God met Abraham, die verbond aangaande Isak en Ismael, die verbond van God met Moses, die verbond van Moses met die kinders van Israel, die verbond van God met Jesus, die verbond van Mohammed met sy volgelinge, die verbond van God met die Bab, die verbond van die Bab met die mensheid, die verbond van God met Baha'u'llah, die verbond van Baha'u'llah met die wê-

reld, die verbond van Baha'u'llah aangaande sy opvolger, die verbond van Baha'u'llah aangaande die volgende manifestasie, die verbond van `Abdu'l-Bahà met die Bahà`is en laastens die verbond wat elke Bahà`i met God self sluit). Baha'u'llah beskryf die belangrike aspekte van hierdie toekomstige Ryk van God. Hy begin deur dít wat verkeerd is in hierdie wêreld, uit te lig, en kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat verdeeldheid die wêreld se grootste probleem is. Binne die groot verbond het Baha'u'llah dus 'n kleiner verbond daargestel wat ten doel het om eenheid te bring, en het sy seun `Abdu'l-Bahà aangestel as die middelpunt van die verbond. Sodoende het hy verseker dat eenheid na sy dood sou bly voortbestaan. `Abdu'l-Bahà het sy vader se voorbeeld gevolg en vir dieselfde doel sy kleinseun, Shoghi Effendi as die **Beskermheer ("Guardian")** aangewys.

Gedurende sy lewe op aarde het `Abdu'l-Bahà die kwaliteite wat volgens Bahà`is nodig is vir 'n mens om in die Koninkryk te kan leef, gedemonstreer. Hy het ook die wiel aan die rol gesit vir die verspreiding van die Bahà`i-geloof reg`deur die wêreld. Die **Guardian** het die plan voltooi. Vandag word die Bahà`i-wêreld bestuur deur die **Universele Huis van Geregtigheid ("Universal House of Justice")**. Ten spyte van hierdie verandering in leierskap het die geloof 'n eenheid gebly omdat die krag in die verbond geleë is (26). (Opmerking: Daar het tog van tyd tot tyd sogenaamde verbondsverbrekers binne die Bahà`i-geloof voorgekom. Hulle is uitgewerk en alle bande is met diésulkes verbreek. 'n Verbondsverbreker word deur die Bahà`is self in hoofstuk 3 nota 72 beskryf. Raadpleeg dus nota 72 vir die Bahà`is se eie definisie van 'n verbondsverbreker).

Ten spyte van die Bab se oproep vir die verspreiding van die Babí-geloof oor die hele aarde, het Baha'u'llah reeds vroeg tot

die besef gekom dat hierdie geloof nie verder as Iran se landsgrense sou uitbrei nie. Die rede hiervoor was dat sekere van die neergelegde wette nie aan die mensheid se behoeftes-- plaaslik sowel as internasionaal-- voldoen nie. Selfs die Bab en sy volgelinge se strewe om 'n teokrasie op gewelddadige wyse te vestig, het 'n onmoontlikheid geblyk te wees. Baha'u'llah het dus, sonder om die Bayan van die Bab en die gevaardgaande wette te herroep, 'n beleid gevolg waarvolgens hy sekere aspekte van die Babí-geloof en sy verbintenis met die Shi'ite-Islam geïgnoreer het. Hy het ook die klem geplaas op die universele karakter van die Bahà'í-geloof. Hierdie gedagtegang is onder andere uitgedra deur middel van sy groot aantal briewe en/of tablette (Lawh) waarin hy verkondig het dat hy die manifestasie van God is en beveel het dat die volke van die wêreld hom moet aanvaar en gehoorsaam (27).

Die Bab en sy opvolgers het opsigtelik in die openbaar opgetree en 'n onafhanklike godsdiens uitgeroep. Sy volgelinge het as **Bābis** (enkelvoud Bābi) bekend gestaan. Hy het sy volle boodskap aan sy dissipels oorgedra voordat hy op 9 Julie 1850 in opdrag van **Mirzā Taqī Khān**, voorsitter van die Shāh se ministersraad, op die hoofplein van **Tabriz** (28) in die openbaar voor 'n vuurpeleton tereggestel is.

Gedurende die Bab se sesjaarlange bediening het sy onderrig en vrome leefwyse die gemeenskap voorberei vir die koms van die beloofde Een na hom. Sy boodskap was dat die beloofde Een 'n eenheid in godsdiens, 'n eenheid van die mensheid en vrede op aarde sou verkondig. Dit het dan ook dertien jaar ná sy missie gebeur, toe **Baha'u'llah** (een van sy dissipels), net soos **Jesus Christus**, verklaar het dat hy dié beloofde Een was.

2.4 Baha'u'llah (1817-1892)

Drie volgelinge van die Bab het op 3 Augustus 1852 gepoog om Nāsiri'd-Din Shāh (29) (Iranese regeerder vanaf 1848 tot 1896) om die lewe te bring. Dié gebeure het hewige politieke sowel as kerklike vergelding teen die reeds erg vervolgte Bābi-gemeenskap tot gevolg gehad. Baha'u'llah (op 12 November 1817 uit 'n adellike familie gebore) (30) was een van 'n groep Babi-vogelinge wat gearresteer en na die donker kerker (Siyāh-Chāl) in Teheran (Persië) verban is. In dié kerker, wat deur sy volgelinge "the Black Dungeon" genoem is, is hy saam met diewe, moordenaars en rowers aangehou. Daar het hy reeds sy roeping ontvang, hoewel hy (Baha'u'llah) dit eers tien jaar later sou bekend maak. Na drie maande van aanhouding in die kerker met 'n swaar ketting om sy nek, is hy en sy familie op 8 April 1853 deur die Ottomaanse regering na Baghdād (destyds nog in die Turkse Ryk) verban (slegs die begin van sy ballingskap na verskeie lande). Daar het Baha'u'llah vir bykans 10 jaar gebly, afgesien van die tweejaarlanse afsondering in die Koerdistanberge en geleentheidsbesoeke aan Najaf, Karbilā en Kāzimayn.

Dié tienjaarlanse ballingskap het 'n positiewe en belangrike uitwerking op sy geestelike nalatenskap gehad en daartoe bygedra dat 'n deeglike grondslag vir die nuwe geloof daargestel is. Selfs die twee jaar van afsondering in die berge van Koerdistan het vele odes, gebede en alleensprake, in prosa- en versvorm, in Arabies en Persies uit sy pen laat ontstaan. Shoghi Effendi (31) beskryf Baha'u'llah se terugkeer na Baghdād, nā die tydperk van afsondering, as die vestiging van 'n "firm anchorage" vir die nuwe geloof en "a fixed and accessible center to which its adherents could turn for guidance, and from which they could derive continuous and unobstructed inspiration". Baie van die voor-

skrifte of geskrewe Baha'u'llah-werke wat in dié tydperk ontstaan het, het egter verlore gegaan. Alhoewel sekere van sy werke op sy eie bevel in die rivier gegooi is, het drie van sy bekendste en beste Baghdād-werke behoue gebly, naamlik:

Kalimāt-i-Maknūnih (The Hidden Words)-- in Persies en Arabies, 1858 huidige Era en ook bekend as Hidden Book of Fātimih.

Haft-Vādī (The Seven Valleys)-- geag as een van die beste mistiese werke van Baha'u'llah.

Kitāb-i-Iqān (Book of Certitude)-- geskryf as 'n antwoord op vrae van die Bab se oom. Die werk het in 1862 verskyn en verteenwoordig die heel belangrikste werk in die hele Bahā`ī-literatuur.

Byna al die Bab se volgelingen het Baha'u'llah as hul leier erken. Sy aansien en aanhang het só uitgebrei dat die Turkse regering hom en sy familie, op versoek van Iran op 22 April 1863 na Konstantinopel verban het. Die reis na Konstantinopel (kyk aangehegte kaart) het vier maande geduur. Op 3 Mei 1863, tydens dié reis, het Baha'u'llah in die Nājibiyih-tuin (Ridvān) sy roeping (van ongeveer tien jaar tevore) aan die teenwoordiges bekend gemaak. Hierdie gebeure word herdenk met die heiligste en belangrikste fees van al die Bahā`ī-feeste en staan bekend as Ridvān (32). Die presiese woorde waarmee Baha'u'llah sy roeping bekend gemaak het, het ongelukkig nie mondelings óf skriftelik behoue gebly nie. Selfs die identiteit van die aanwesiges is onbekend.

Die kaart toon die roete wat Baha'u'llah tydens sy ballingskap gevolg het:



(The Bahá'is, A Profile ... , p 22)

Uit vele gesprekke met die Bahā`is (die volgelinge van Baha'u'llah wat eers na 31 Augustus 1868 amptelik as Bahā`is en aanhangers van die Bahā`i-geloof bekend sou staan) is dit duidelik dat dié deel van hul geskiedenis enersyds as die mees rampspoedige hoofstuk en andersyds as die heel beste hoofstuk in die eerste eeu van die Bahā`i-geloof beskou word. Bahā`is glo dat God hierdie rampspoedige gebeure in Baha'u'llah se lewe toegelaat het sodat die Bahā`i-geloof kon wortel skiet.

Baha'u'llah is net vir vier maande in Konstantinopel as gevangene aangehou, sonder dat enige klag teen hom gelê is, en daarna verskuif na Adrianopel waar hy vir 'n verdere vier en 'n half jaar aangehou is. Vele werke het in dié tyd uit sy pen voortgespruit (33). Hy het aan die konings en godsdienstige leiers van die wêreld geskryf en hulle gemaan om te verenig en vir vrede te werk. Hy het hulle ook versoek om slawerny af te skaf en na die armes om te sien. Voorts het hy aan hulle verkondig dat die tyd vir geregtigheid aangebreek het.

Van die bekendste werke wat Baha'u'llah in heirdie tydperk van ballingskap geskryf het, is Lawh-i-Ahmad (The Tablet of Ahmad), Lawhu'r-Ridvān (The Tablet of Ridvān), Súriy-i-Mulúk (The Súrih of Kings) (in laasgenoemde word die monarge van die ooste en die weste gesamentlik aangespreek), Lawh-i-Nāpulyún (The First Tablet to Napoleon III), Lawh-i-Sultān (The Tablet to Nāsiri'd-Din Shāh), Súriy-i-Ra'is (Tablet to Ra'is)" (laasgenoemde was gerig aan `Ali Pāshā, die Turkse voorsitter van die ministersraad), Munājāthāy-i-Siyām (Prayers for Fasting) en die Kitāb-i-Badí` (34). Die Súriy-i-Ghusn (The Tablet of the Branch) is ook in Adrianopel bekendgestel-- hierin word die posisie van `Abdu'l-Bahā (35) beskryf, 'n uiters belangrike aspek van die toekoms van die Bahā`i-geloof.

Baha'u'llah het vir byna vyf jaar in hierdie huis in Adrianopel gebly, totdat hy vir die finale gedeelte van sy ballingskap na die gevangenes in Akka, Israel geneem is:



(The Bahà'is, ... , p 20)

Baha'u'llah se aankondiging dat hy die Beloofde Een is van wie die Bab gepraat het (die Ridvân-gebeure), het 'n groot impak op die **Babi**-volgelingen gehad en veroorsaak dat onderlinge struwelinge ontstaan het. Die mees gewelddadige konflik het voorgekom tussen die groep volgelingen wat hulle by Baha'u'llah geskaar het, en die groep wat sy halfbroer, **Mirzâ Yahyâ**, die aangewese Babí-leier sonder dat die Bab hom ooit persoonlik ontmoet het (36), gevolg het. Dié konflik het gelei tot 'n aanslag op Baha'u'llah se lewe, wat die Turkse owerhede verplig het, om die

twee groepe te skei. Mirzà Yahyà (37) is na Famagusta in Ciprus gestuur, terwyl Baha'u'llah en sy familie (asook 70 dissipels) na 'n tronk in die stad van `Akkà (die huidige Akko en ook bekend as Acre) in die Heilige Land verban is. Dié skeiding van weë het op 31 Augustus 1868 plaasgevind.

Die Tronk in `Akkà. Baha'u'llah se selvensters is dié twee aan die regterkant.



(Hidāyatu'llah Ahmadiyyih, The Bahā`i Faith, ...)

Baha'u'llah en sy geselskap kon vir byna nege jaar (twee jaar in die gevangenis self en daarna sewe jaar in 'n huis) nie die stad verlaat nie. Sy volgelinge het daagliks groot afstande te voet

afgelê om hom te sien, maar is kragtens 'n bevel van Sultan `Abdu'l-`Aziz, gedateer 26 Julie 1868, by die hekke van `Akkà weggewys (38). Gedurende dié tydperk is Baha'u'llah se jongste seun, die een-en-twintigjarige Mirzà Mihdi tragies dood toe hy op die dak van die tronk gebid en deur 'n dakvenster na onder geval het (39). Baha'u'llah het die sterwende seun gevra wat sy laaste wens was. Mirzà Mihdi het versoek dat sy lewe 'n offerande vir die gelowiges moes wees, sodat hulle toegelaat sou word om Baha'u'llah te sien. Die tronkdeure is kort na dié gebeure vir besoekers geopen. Ook het die volgelinge van Baha'u'llah toe, vir die eerste maal in die geskiedenis, as Baha`is begin bekendstaan. Die vervolging van die verkondigers en volgelinge van die geloof het egter steeds voortgeduur en talle is vir hul geloof gedood. Baha'u'llah het steeds die ketting om sy nek gedra.

In ongeveer 1870 het die Turkse owerheid uiteindelik toegelaat dat Baha'u'llah en sy geselskap die mure van die gevangenis verlaat. Baha'u'llah se seun `Abdu'l-Bahà (oorspronklik bekend as `Abbàs Effendi) (40) het in 1877 vir sy pa `Abda'llàh Pàshà's (41) se woning (bekend as Mazra`ih), vier kilometer noord van die stad `Akkà, gehuur. Na tweejaar het Baha'u'llah en sy familie vanaf Mazra`ih verhuis na die herehuis Bahji (wat aan ene Udí Khammar behoort het) (42) waar Baha'u'llah die res van sy lewe deurgebring het. Sy volgelinge het ook die pragtige tuin Na`mayn gehuur, waar die banneling vele nagte in 'n kothuis deurgebring het. Baha'u'llah het later die tuin gekoop (43) en dit hernoem tot die Tuin van Ridvàn (Garden of Ridvàn) (44). Gedurende hierdie tyd het hy Haifa vier keer (die laaste keer vir drie maande) besoek. Tydens een van hierdie besoeke, in 1890, het hy sy tent by die Karmel-gebergte opgeslaan, waar die "Tablet of Carmel" openbaar is (45). By 'n ander geleentheid het hy by die selfde berg aan `Abdu'l-Bahà die plek uitgewys wat die finale rusplek vir die Bab sou wees (46).

Professor Edward Brown van Engeland het Baha'u'llah van 15 tot 21 April 1890 by Bahji besoek. Hy was die enigste Westerse geleerde wat met die grondlegger van die Bahà`i-geloof 'n onderhoud gevoer het en sy indrukke daarvan aangestip het (47). Sy beskrywing van Baha'u'llah (48) lui soos volg: "The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget ... Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul".

Die werke wat Baha'u'llah tydens sy ballingskap in `Akkà geproduseer het, het al sy vorige werke oortref. Shoghi Effendi (49) beskryf dié era in Baha'u'llah se lewe soos volg: "[It] must rank as one of the most vitalizing and fruitful stages in the evolution of His Faith."

Baha'u'llah se werke kan in drie kategorieë verdeel word: Die eerste groep bestaan uit dié werke wat oor sy roeping in Adrianopel handel, soos Lawh-i-Malikih (The Tablets to Queen Victoria), Lawh-i-Nàpulyún II (Second Tablet to Napoleon III), Lawh-i-Malik-i-Rús (Tablet to Czar of Russia, Alexander II Nikolaevich). Bostaande is aangevul met werke in die vorm van briewe aan die Pruisiese koning, Willem I; die regeerder van Oostenryk en Hongarye, Francis-Joseph; Pous Pius IX; `Ali-Pàshà, die Groot Visier van die Ottomaanse Ryk ('n tweede Tablet); aardse konings; regeerders van Amerika en presidente van al die Republieke; die Aartsvaders van die Christelike kerk; die volgelinge van Christus; die totale spektrum van die Moslem-geestelikes; die Joodse volk; die hoëpriesters van die Zoroaster-geloof, asook die volgelinge van die Bab (50).

Die tweede kategorie behels slegs een werk, die Kitàb-i-Aqdas (1873) wat al die wette en verordeninge wat aan hom geopenbaar is, bevat. Hierdie mees heilige boek word deur Shoghi Effendi (en

ander Bahà`is) beskryf as die handves van die toekomstige wêreld-beskawing en die duidelikste teken van sy bediening (51). Die boek beskryf ook die nodige instellings wat die integriteit sowel as die eenheid van dié geloof waarborg en die funksie van interpretasie aan sy opvolger toeken (52).

Die derde kategorie sluit daardie werke in, waarin Baha'u'llah se verwagte toekomstige Era geformuleer word en die fundamentele beginsels vir dié toekomstige dispensasie daargestel word (53). Sy heel laaste werk was die Lawh-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'h (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf), gerig aan 'n geestelike in Isfahàn wat 'n welbekende vyand van die Bahà`i-geloof was. In dié werk het Baha'u'llah sy roeping en beweegredes geregverdig. Die Lawh-i-Hikmat (The Tablet of Wisdom) en die Ziyarat-Namiy-i-Awli-yà (Tablet of Visitation) wat in eerbetoning aan Imàm Husayn geopenbaar is, vorm ook deel van hierdie derde kategorie van Baha'u'llah se werke.

Só het Baha'u'llah meer as 'n honderd werke nagelaat waarop sy volgelinge die nuwe wêreldgemeenskap kon fundeer. Naas Islam, met sy Qur'àn, is dié geloof die enigste godsdienst wat 'n omvangryke literêre nalatenskap uit die pen van sy grondlegger (Baha'u'llah) ontvang het en waarop sy volgelinge kon voortbou. Baha'u'llah is moontlik ook die enigste stigter van 'n religie van wie se handskrif die mensheid 'n voorbeeld het. Sy sekretaris, Mírzà Aqà Jàn, se handskrif verskyn links, en Baha'u'llah se eie handskrif regs onder:

(Mírzá Aqâ Jân)

(Baha'u'llah)

(The Bahá'is, A Profile ... , p 24)

Baha'u'llah het, volgens oorlewing, in sy vyf-en-sewentigste lewensjaar met sonsopkoms op 29 Mei 1892 gesterf en is deur sy oudste seun, `Abdu'l-Baha, opgevolg.

2.5 `Abdu'l-Bahà (1844-1921)

`Abdu'l-Bahà (gebore 23 Mei 1844), wat vanaf agtjarige leeftyd sy

*
vader (Baha'u'llah) gedien en geloof het, was ook vir 40 jaar saam met hom 'n gevangene. Sy opvolging kragtigs sy vader se handgeskrewe testament is volgens die Bahà`l-geloof uniek aan dié godsdiens.

Ooreenkomstig sy vader se laaste wens het hy die amptelike interpreteerder en bewaarder van die geloof geword-- sy uitsprake sou finaal wees. Die doel hiermee was om te verhoed dat die geloof verdeel of versplinter omdat volgelinge oor die betekenis van werke of die bedoelings en interpretasies van die woorde en dade van die grondleggers van dié geloof verskil (54). Laasgenoemde was een van die faktore wat, volgens Baha'u'llah, tot die verdeeldheid in die godsdienste van die wêreld gelei het. Die verskillende soorte en vorme van en tradisies binne die Christendom word byvoorbeeld deur Bahà`is toegeskryf aan die verskillende interpretasies van die grondlegger, Jesus Christus, se woorde en boodskap deur Sy dissipels en volgelinge (veral kerkleiers). Shoghi Effendi (55) sê die volgende oor die feit dat 'n opvolger deur dié godsdiens se eie grondlegger aangewys is: "For nowhere in the books pertaining to any of the world's religious systems, not even among the writings of the Author of the Babi Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with the authority comparable to the Covenant which Baha'u'llah had himself instituted".

Die Bahà`is se redenasie word verder gevoer deur die bewering dat die geskiedenis bewys dat die afwesigheid van so 'n nalatenskap deur die stigter van 'n geloof, juis bydra tot 'n skeuring binne die gelowige gemeenskap van 'n bepaalde godsdiens direk nadat die openbaarder vanaf sy volgelinge heengegaan het. Hierdie gebeure laat die volgelinge gewoonlik verward en selfs in konflik met mekaar. Baha'u'llah se besluit om `Abdu'l-Bahà so aan te wys, het

dus daartoe bygedra dat sy (Baha'u'llah) eie bediening vir minstens 'n verdere dertig jaar verleng is. Die gebeure het ook die begin van 'n nuwe wêreldorde en religieuse benadering ingelei.

Die Bahà`ì-geloof het gedurende dié dertig jaar (1891-1921) na Amerika, Europa en die Verre-Ooste versprei. Die eerste Bahà`ì in die Verenigde State van Amerika het in 1894 sy woning in Chicago (56) aan dié geloof beskikbaar gestel. Die eerste Amerikaner wat die Bahà`ì-geloof in Kenosha, Wisconsin (57) aangeneem het (ongeveer 1902), was **Thornton Chase** (58). In 1899 is 'n sogenaamde "council board" (bestaande uit sewe lede) in Kenosha aangewys. In 1908 is die "**Bahà`ì Bulletin**" in New York gepubliseer. Die "**Star of the West**" (vantevore "**Bahà`ì News**") het gedurende 1910 ook in Chicago verskyn. Nege-en-dertig afgevaardigdes van 36 stede het in 1909 in Chicago vergader en so is die eerste permanente Bahà`ì Institusie ('n voorloper van die Nasionale Geestelike Vergadering [National Spiritual Assembly]) binne die Verenigde State van Amerika gevestig. Die geestelike liggaam het as dié "**Bahà`ì Temple Unity**" bekend gestaan.

Die Turkse Rewolusie van 1908 het intussen bygedra tot die vrylating van `Abdu'l-Bahà. In 1911 het hy met 'n geselskap van vier na **Marseille** gevaar om die Bahà`ì-geloof te verkondig. Van daar het hy na Londen en Parys vertrek en in Desember 1911 na Egipte teruggekeer. Vroeg in 1912 het hy na New York gereis en deur die Verenigde State van Amerika getoer, en ook Kanada besoek. Sy boodskap het gedagtes soos die volgende ingesluit:

"The basis of the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the unity of Mankind ..."

"All people and nations are of one family, the children of One Father ..."

"If you meet those of different race and color from yourself think of them as different colored roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity..." (59).

In Amerika het hy ook die hoeksteen vir die eerste Bahà`i-tempel in die Weste by Wilmette, naby die Michiganmeer, gelê. Vandaar het hy weer na Liverpool (Brittanje) vertrek, die Bahà`i-boodskap verkondig en in Londen gebly tot 21 Junie 1913. Nadat hy Parys, München, Stuttgart, Boedapest en Wenen besoek het, het hy op 5 Desember 1913 na Haifa teruggekeer. Dié gebeure en die verkondiging van die sentrale tema van Baha'u'llah se era van **"The Most Great Peace"** (60) het die Bahà`i-boodskap voor sy (`Abdu'l-Bahà) dood op 28 November 1921 internasionaal laat pos vat en het ook 'n indruk op die gebruike en denke van vele gelowiges gemaak. Hierdie denke en boodskap word deur Shoghi Effendi beskryf as **"...an Instrument which may be viewed as the Charter of the New World Orde"** (61). Laasgenoemde word in 'n sekere sin bekragtig deur die inhoud van `Abdu'l-Bahà se brief aan die Bahà`is in die Verenigde State van Amerika kort voor sy dood: **"The tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruit, and cast its shade over the East and the West"** (62).

Die grootste mylpaal wat `Abdu'l-Bahà in sy leeftyd bereik het, was volgens Bahà`is die omskepping van die subjektiewe geloof in 'n sosiale samewerkende. In dié verband het hy gesê: **"When a man turns his face to God, he finds sunshine everywhere. All men are his brothers. The best way to thank God is to love one another"** (63).

Die Bahà`is beskryf hom op hul beurt soos volg: **"By his life `Abdu'l-Bahà showed us how to be Bahà`is"** (64).

'n Belangrike aspek van `Abdu'l-Bahà se geskiedenis is die feit dat hy die skepper van die Bahà`i-administrasie is. Hoewel dié administrasie deur Baha'u'llah voorgeskryf is, was dit `Abdu'l-Bahà wat dit omskryf het en daaraan vorm gegee het. Hy het die beginsels wat sy vader neergestip het, ontwikkel en het vir byna 30 jaar met liefde en gesag gelei, die Bahà`i-gemeenskap laat groei en hul van verwarring en skeuring bewaar. Rassekh vat dit saam deur te sê: **"He planted the administration seed of the Faith"** (65).

Hierdie tydperk van ontwikkeling was so groots en indrukwekkend dat baie van die Bahà`is dit beskou as dié era waarin geen parallel met enige ander godsdiens getref kan word nie, en wat die gebeure in die wêreld in so 'n mate verander het dat die mensheid 'n nuwe era betree het (66).

Abdu'l-Bahà (1844-1921)



(Poskaart; verkrygbaar by die Bahà'ì Nasionale
Sentrum in Houghton)

2.6 Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957)

`Abdu'l-Bahà het deur sy testament sy oudste kleinseun, **Shoghi Effendi** (gebore op 1 Maart 1897) (67) as die amptelike opsiener en beskermer (Guardian) van die Bahà`i-geloof aangewys. Hierdie aanstelling het hom ook gemagtig en outoriteit gegee om die heilige skrifte te interpreteer en om die voorsitterstoel in die Universal House of Justice (68) te bekleë (69). Die Bahà`i-geloof, wat met die Bab ontstaan het, het deur hierdie gebeure Baha'u'llah se boodskap in 1921 weereens vir 'n verdere 36 jaar, tot en met die dood van Shoghi Effendi (Guardian vanaf 1921-1957) op 4 November 1957, verleng.

Die belangrikheid van Shoghi Effendi se dienstydyperk lê daarin dat hy `Abdu'l-Bahà se wêreldorde geneem en in die praktyk laat funksioneer het. Die administratiewe orde (70) van `Abdu'l-Bahà is deur Shoghi Effendi tot volle rypheid en volwaardigheid gebring. Shoghi Effendi het dit prakties gevestig en die administrasie tot 'n wêreldwye sisteem gelei en uitgebrei. Sy werk het aanleiding gegee tot die vestiging van die onderskeie Nasionale Geestelike Rade (deur wie die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid later saamgestel is) in die Britse Eilande, Duitsland, Indië, Egipte, die Verenigde State van Amerika, Kanada, Persië en Australië. Die vestiging van die administratiewe orde is 'n belangrike kenmerk van Shoghi Effendi se werksaamhede tydens die eerste twee dekades van die "Guardianship" (71).

Hierdie ses-en-dertigjaarlanse leierskap van die Beskermheer (vanaf 1921-1957), is ook gekenmerk deur die opstel van konstitusies vir die verskillende Rade (assemblies), die saamstel van spesiale komitees om die verskillende aspekte van die gemeenskapslewe te administreer en die ontwikkeling van prosedures

waardeer Rade geïnkorporeer kon word. Dit is gedoen sodat die onderskeie Bahā`i-gemeenskappe eiendom kon besit en ook amptelike status en erkenning vir die vier van die Bahā`i-feesdae, die hou van troues en begrafnisse kon ontvang (72). In hierdie tydvak het ook die eerste en mees breedvoerige boek oor die nuwe geloof dié lig gesien. Dié werk is deur die Skotse medikus, **JE Esslemont** geskryf en in 1922 gepubliseer. Hierdie omvattende boek, getiteld Baha'u'llah and the New Era, was teen 1970 reeds in 58 tale vertaal.

In 1937 het Shoghi Effendi ook verskeie programme vir meer sistematiese onderriggewing deur die onderskeie Nasionale Geestelike Rade aangekondig. Dit het ook die sogenaamde Seven Year Plan vir Amerika en Kanada ingesluit. Dié plan het behels dat Bahā`i-gemeenskappe teen die einde van die sewe jaar in elke staat van die VSA, in elke provinsie van Kanada en in elke Republiek van Latyns-Amerika verteenwoordig sou wees. Al hierdie doelwitte is, ten spyte van die Tweede Wêreldoorlog, teen 1944 met die eenhonderdjarige herdenkingsfees verwesenlik. Ander planne het ook gevolg.

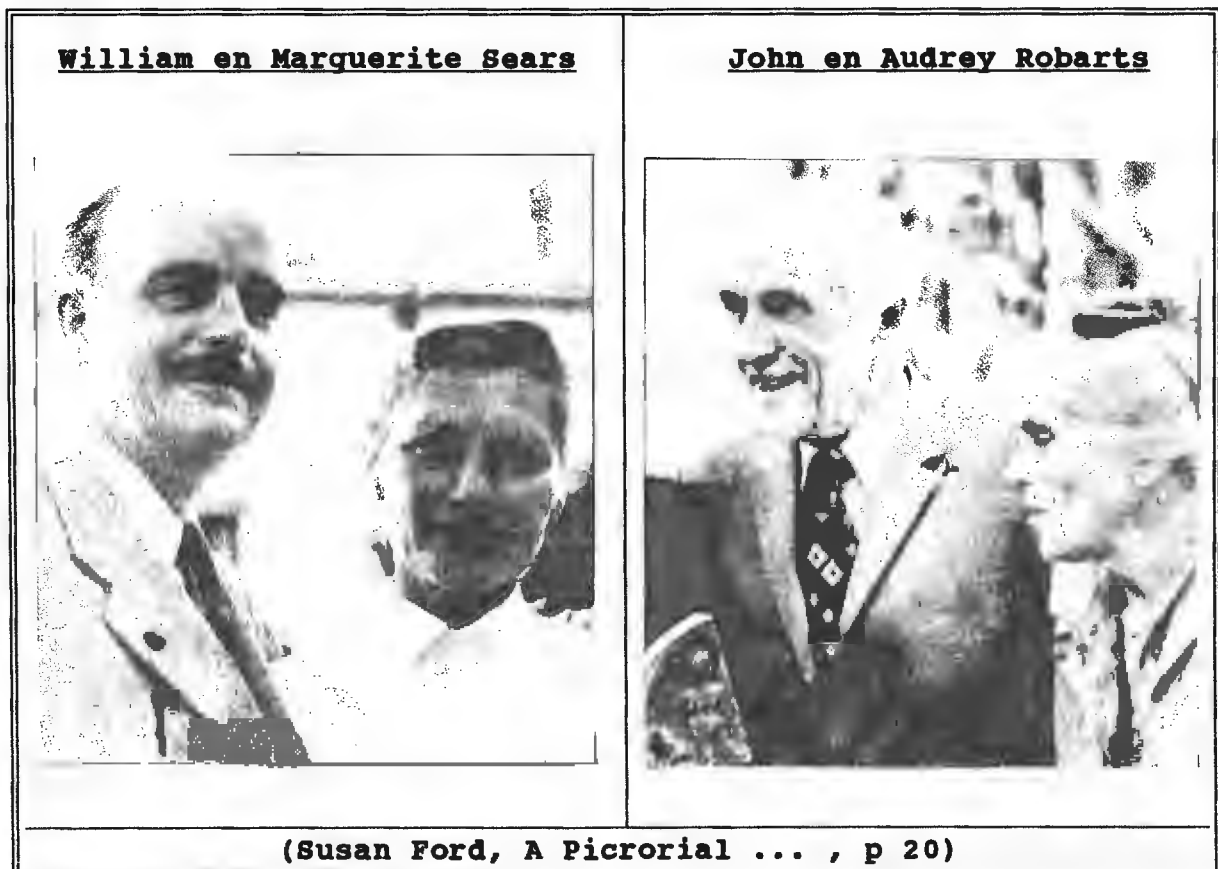
Shoghi Effendi het in 1953 'n sogenaamde Ten Year Crusade van stapel gestuur. Die "Crusade" het ten doel gehad om Bahā`i-gemeenskappe in elke land van die wêreld te vestig. Die projek was veral in Afrika, Indië en Latyns-Amerika besonder suksesvol. Die doelwit (5000 Plaaslike Geestelike Vergaderings waar Bahā`is woonagtig is) is ver oortref. Dertien duisend Plaaslike Geestelike Rade (Local Spiritual Assemblies) was gevestig en waar daar slegs twaalf Nasionale Geestelike Vergaderings (National Spiritual Assemblies) bestaan het toe die plan van stapel gestuur is, was daar teen 1963 reeds 56. Shoghi Effendi sterf in November 1957 in Londen aan Asiëse griep.

'n Verdere kenmerk van die era is die vestiging van vele werke van Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Bahà in Engels deur Shoghi Effendi. Voorts het die opsiener en beskermer van die Bahà`is sedert 1952 vele geboue opgerig by die Karmel-gebergtes in Haifa, wat die administratiewe sentrum van die Bahà`i-gemeenskap wêreldwyd sou word. Hy was ook die argitek van die tuine op die Karmel-berg en verantwoordelik vir die vergroting van die Bahji-herhuis (op 12 November 1952). Hy het ook in die omliggende omgewing, waar die Bab se oorskot ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah se versoek begrawe moes word, grond gekoop. Hier het hy 'n vierkantige gebou opgerig wat uit nege kamers bestaan het, ter nagedagtenis aan die Bab en die bouwerk het vroeg in 1949 begin. Die gebou het ook agtien vensters gehad, in herinnering aan die 18 Lewende Letters ("Letters of the Living"), die eerste 18 volgelingen (73). 'n Kwarteeu na Shoghi Effendi se dood (op 5 Junie 1973), is die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid se geboue op die gronde opgerig.

Die verskil tussen Shoghi Effendi en sy voorgangers was dat hy geen kinders gehad het nie en gevolglik ook geen opvolger kon aanwys nie. Sodoende het die "Guardianship" met sy dood ook effektiewelik tot 'n einde gekom. Tog het hy die hele administratiewe proses van die Bahà`i-geloof nagelaat sodat dié geloof na sy dood sou kon voortbestaan en onafhanklik onder die wakende oog van die "Universal House of Justice" kon funksioneer. Op 24 Desember 1951 het Shoghi Effendi ooreenkomstig die versoek en testament van `Abdu'l-Bahà die twaalf "Hands of the Cause of God" (74) vir die Bahà`i-wêreld aangestel (75).

Die Hands of the Cause of God is 'n titel wat Baha'u'llah aan sekere individue binne die Bahà`i-geloof toegeken het, en dit het ook gepaard gegaan met sekere pligte wat hy aan diésulkes opgedra het, soos die beskerming en die propagering van die Bahà`i-ge-

loof. `Abdu'l-Bahà het ook in een van sy werke (Memorials of the Faithful) na sekere individue verwys as Hands of the Cause. Tydens 'n gesprek op Saterdag 23 Julie 1994 het meneer X in sy woonstel in Hillbrow aan die skrywer opgemerk dat `Abdu'l-Bahà wel sekere persone as Hands of the Cause verkies het, maar dit nie aan die verkoses bekend gemaak het nie. Hy het later in sy testament ook daarvoor voorsiening gemaak dat Shoghi Effendi self Hands of the Cause of God kan aanwys. Gevolglik het Shoghi Effendi 'n aantal persone as Hands of the Cause of God aangewys. Die getal het later tot 32 uitgebrei sodat elke kontinent 'n verteenwoordiger gehad het. Wiliam Sears en John Robarts was die twee Suid Afrikaanse Bahà'is wat as Hands of the Cause aangewys is.

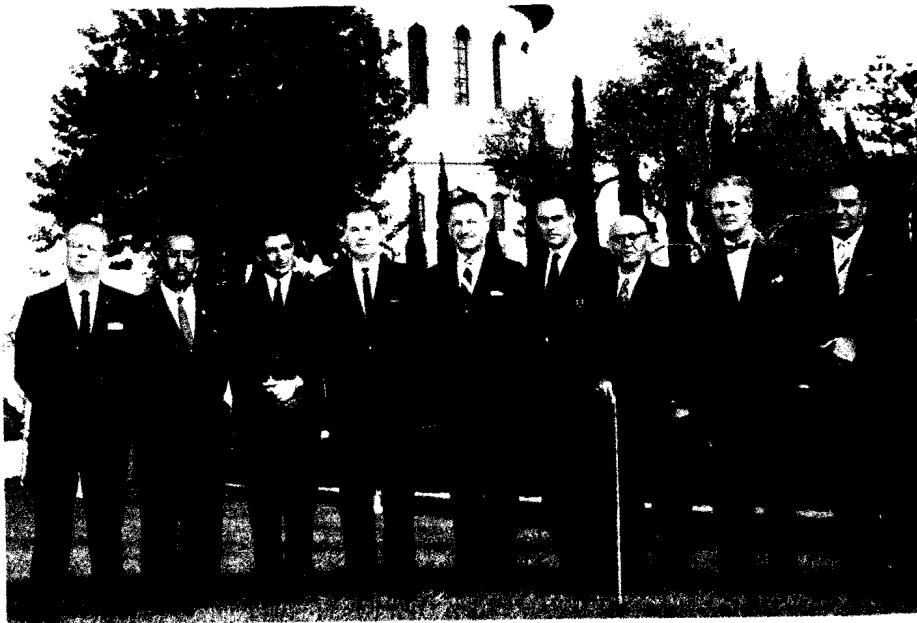


Hierdie "Hands" is inderwaarheid vir die eerste keer deur Ba-ha'u'llah as die eerste organisatoriese struktuur van die Bahà`i-geloof ingestel en hul diens was hoog deur hom aangeslaan (76). Die Hands of the Cause was ook deur `Abdu'l-Bahà aangewys en in sy testament het hy hul funksie as bewaarders en verkondigers van die Bahà`i-geloof uitgespel. Hy het hulle die pilare van die geloof genoem en hulle aangespreek as die persone "[who] `declared His proofs, proclaimed His faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in this world, and kindled the Fire of the Love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants'" (77). Shoghi Effendi het by die bekendmaking van die 19 Hands of the Cause hul tweeledige doel duidelik uitgespel. Hulle sou voortaan vir die verkondiging en bewaring van die eenheid van die Geloof van Ba-ha'u'llah verantwoordelik wees en was "destined to assume individually in the course of time the direction of institutions paralleling those revolving around the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative body of the Baha`i World" (78). In die tydperk tussen die afsterwe van Shoghi Effendi in 1957, en die aanwysing van die Universal House of Justice in 1963, het die Hands of the Cause dié geloof se belange behartig en bestuur.

Die verkiesing van die Universal House of Justice in 1963 het daartoe bygedra dat die Hands of the Cause van al die administratiewe verpligtinge verlos is en, ooreenkomstig `Abdu'l-Bahà se testament, bloot 'n hulp-organisatoriese struktuur van die Guardianship geword nie. Na Shoghi Effendi se dood het die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid besluit dat hulle nie enige verdere aanstellings in die Hands of the Cause kan wettig nie, en die opdrag van bewaring en verkondiging eerder sou beskerm deur self 'n nuwe liggaam in dié funksie saam te stel. Die eerste stap het in November 1964 plaasgevind toe die Universele Huis van

Geregtigheid die Hands of the Cause by hulself geaffilieer het: "Responsibility for decisions on matters of general policy affecting the institution of the Hands of the Cause, which was formerly exercised by the beloved Guardian, now devolves upon the Universal House of Justice as the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn" (70).

Lede van die eerste Universele Huis van Geregtigheid, soos verkies in 1963:



(The Bahà`is, A Profile ..., p 46)

Dié gebeure is in Junie 1968 opgevolg deur die daarstelling van 'n Continental Board of Counselors vir die bewaring en verkondiging van die Bahà`i-geloof. Dié raad se pligte, waarin baie van die pligte van die Hands of the Cause vervat was, is duidelik

uitgespel. Intussen is dié Hands of the Cause wat in die Heilige Land woonagtig was, aangestel as amptelike skakelpersone tussen die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid en die Board of Counselors. Voorts is die lede van die Board of Counselors op 29 Junie 1979 ingelig dat hulle vanaf 26 November 1980 vir 'n tydperk van vyf jaar aangestel is. Die name van die eerste 36 lede het verskyn in 'n brief gedateer 24 Junie 1968 (80).

"Hands of the Cause" in 1963, toe die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid verkies is:



(The Bahá'is, A Profile ... , p 45)

Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid het op 8 Junie 1973 'n langverwagte liggaam, wat ooreenkomstig Bahà`is deur Baha'u'llah verorden is en deur `Abdu'l-Bahà in die vooruitsig gestel is, aangekondig-- die "International Teaching Center" (81). Alle lede van die Hands of the Cause en ook persone aangewys deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid, het lede van die nuutgestigte organisasie geword. Die sentrum se verpligtinge was om die aktiwiteite van die Continental Board of Counselors te bestuur en te rig. Dit het verder behels die gee van advies en berading oor alle aspekte van die beskerming en verkondiging van die Bahà`i-geloof.

`Abdu'l-Bahà en sy kleinseun, Shoghi Effendi



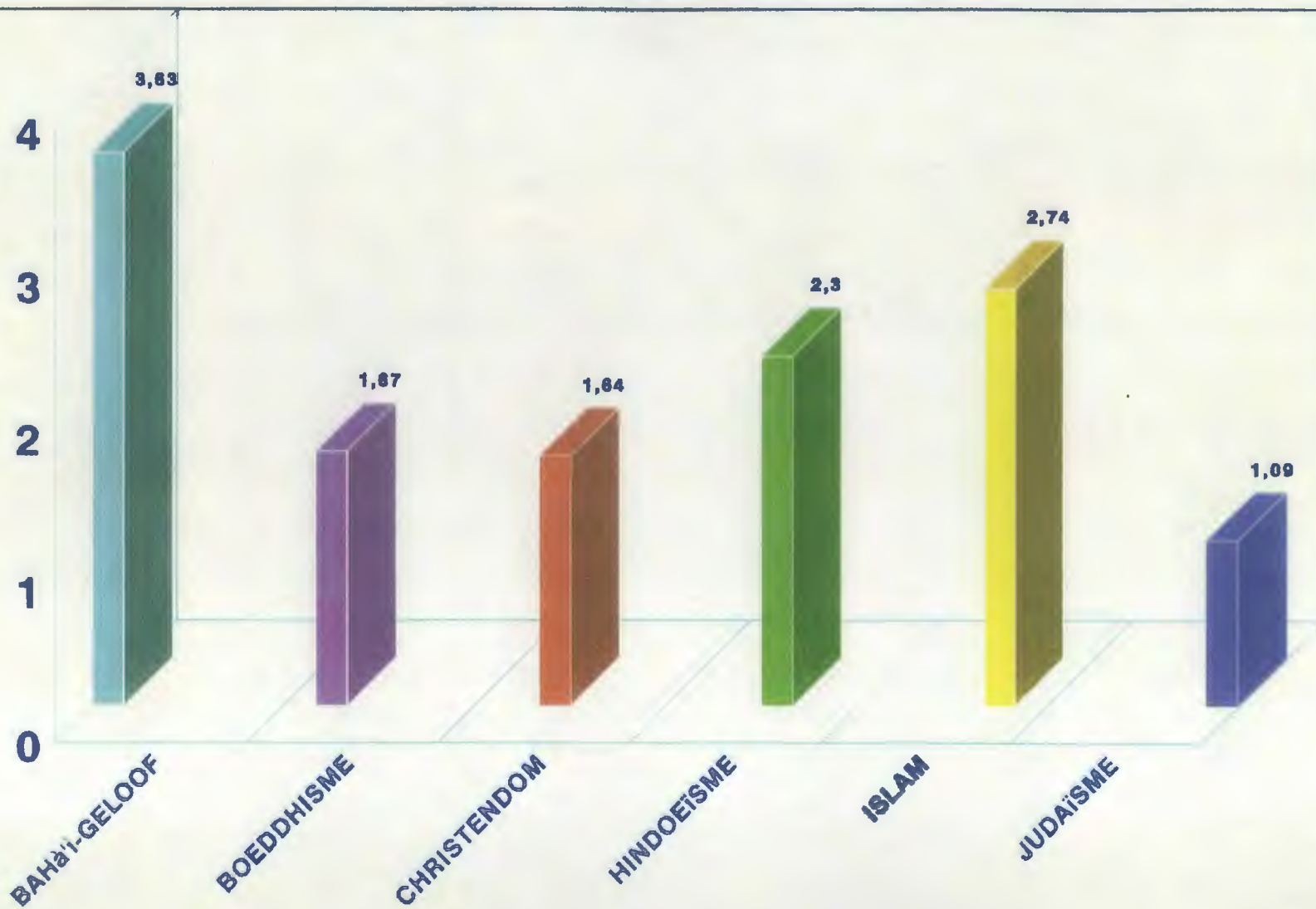
(William McElwee Miller, ..., p 250)

2.7 Die huidige stand van die Bahà`is in die wêreld

Effektiewe Bahà`i-leierskap en die vestiging van die administratiewe orde het daartoe gelei dat die Bahà`is se ledetal van 400 000 in 1963 tot meer as 5 000 000 in 1992 gegroei het. Hierdie getal is selfs meer merkwaardig as daar in ag geneem word dat die Bahà`is in 1985 'n ledetal van ongeveer 3 500 000 gehad het. Tussen 1985 en 1992 het die ledetal dus met 1 500 000 (bykans 43%) gegroei.

Statistiek van die "World Christian Encyclopedia" toon dat die Bahà`i-geloof van 1970 tot 1985 die vinnigste van alle gelowe gegroei het:

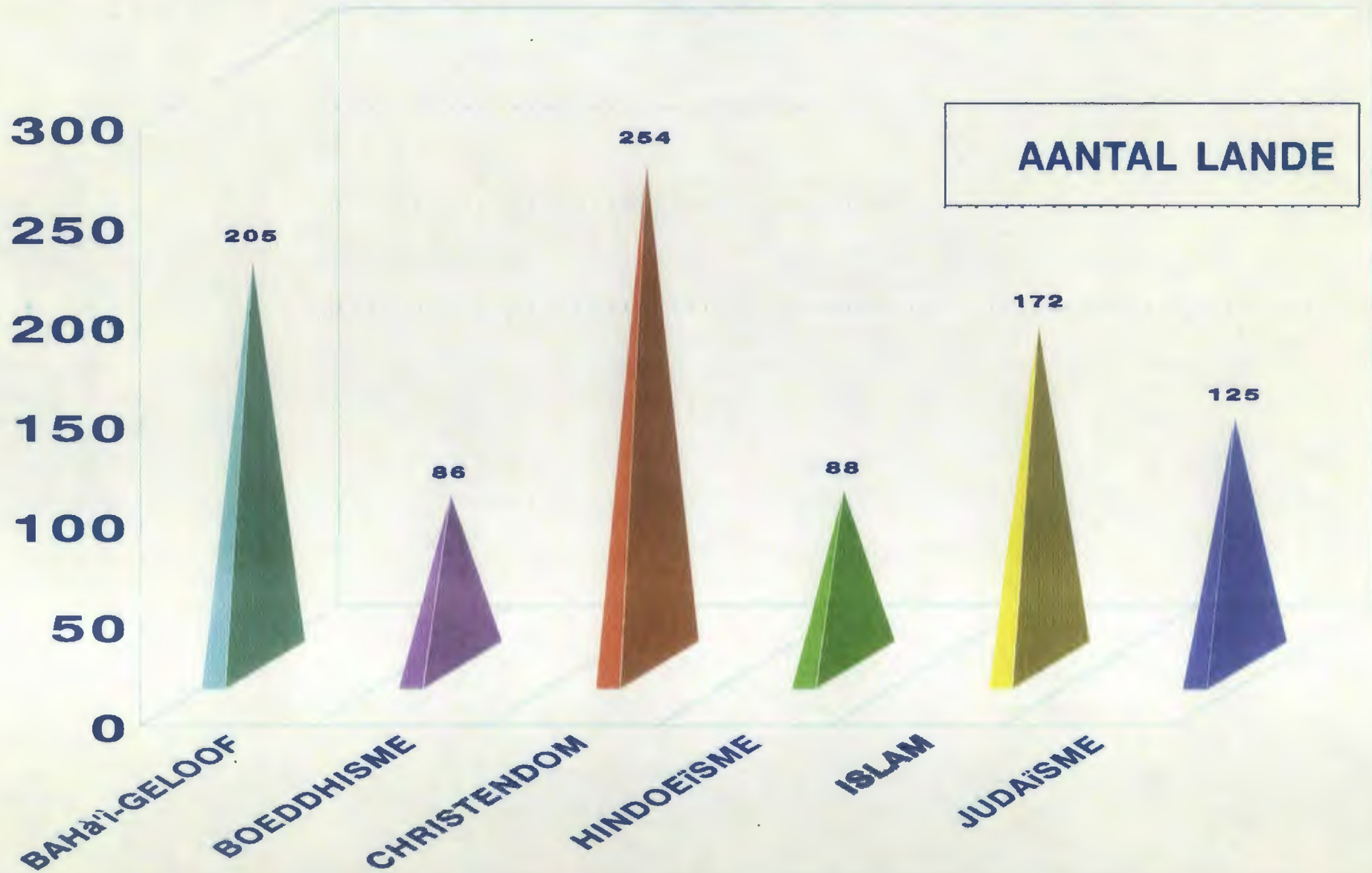
JAARLIKSE GROEIPERSENTASIE: Wêreld onafhanklike religieë 1970-1985



9

Die Bahà`i-geloof is tans, naas die Christendom, die mees
wydverspreide religie in die wêreld:

GEOGRAFIESE VERSPREIDING: WêRELD ONAFHANKLIKE RELIGIEË (1992)



Bahà'ì verspreiding wêreldwyd



Minder as 1000



Tussen 1000 & 10,000



Tussen 10,000 & 100,000



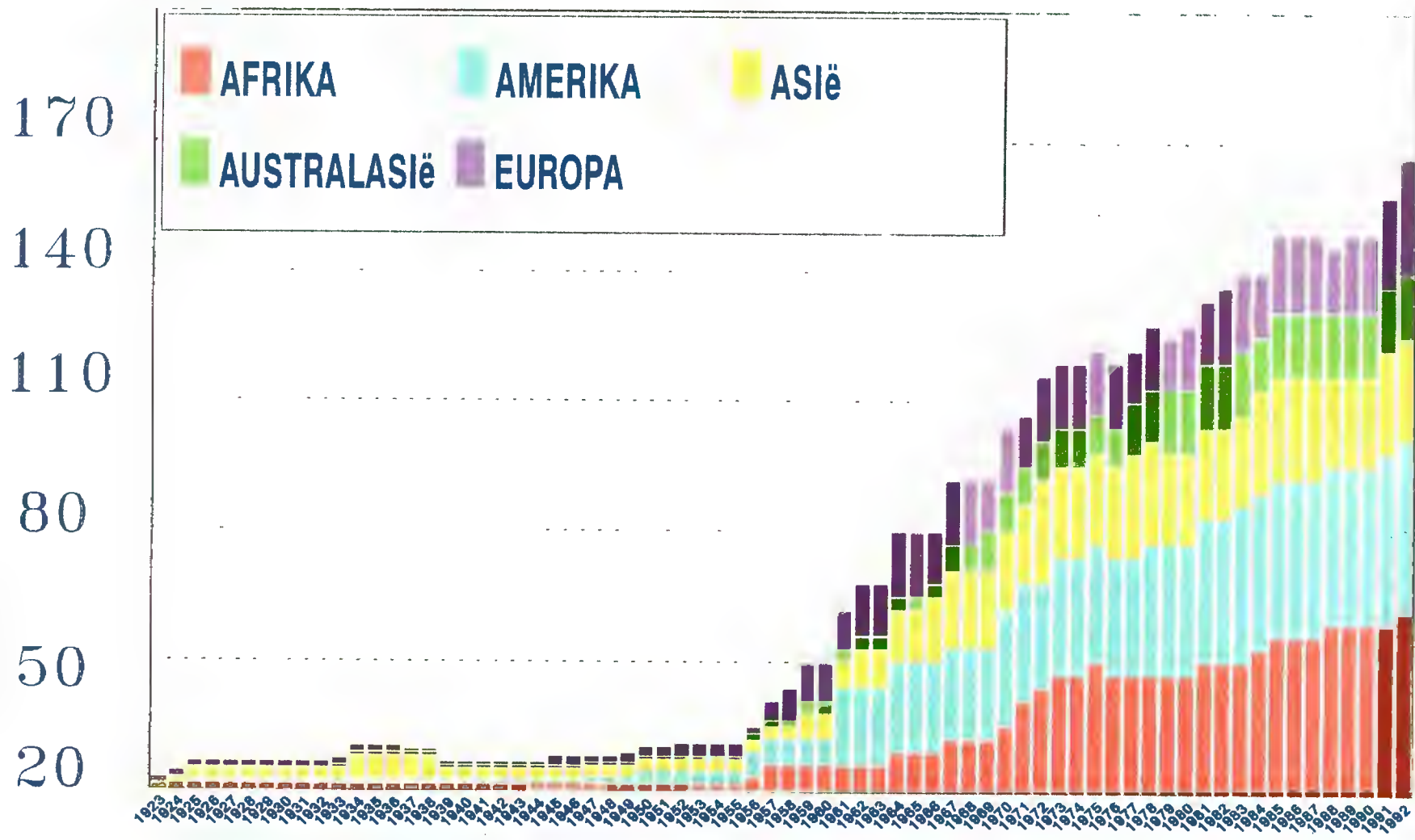
Meer as 100,000

'n Geheeloorsig (aangepas) insake die Bahā`i wêreld statistiek kan skematies soos volg voorgestel word (82):

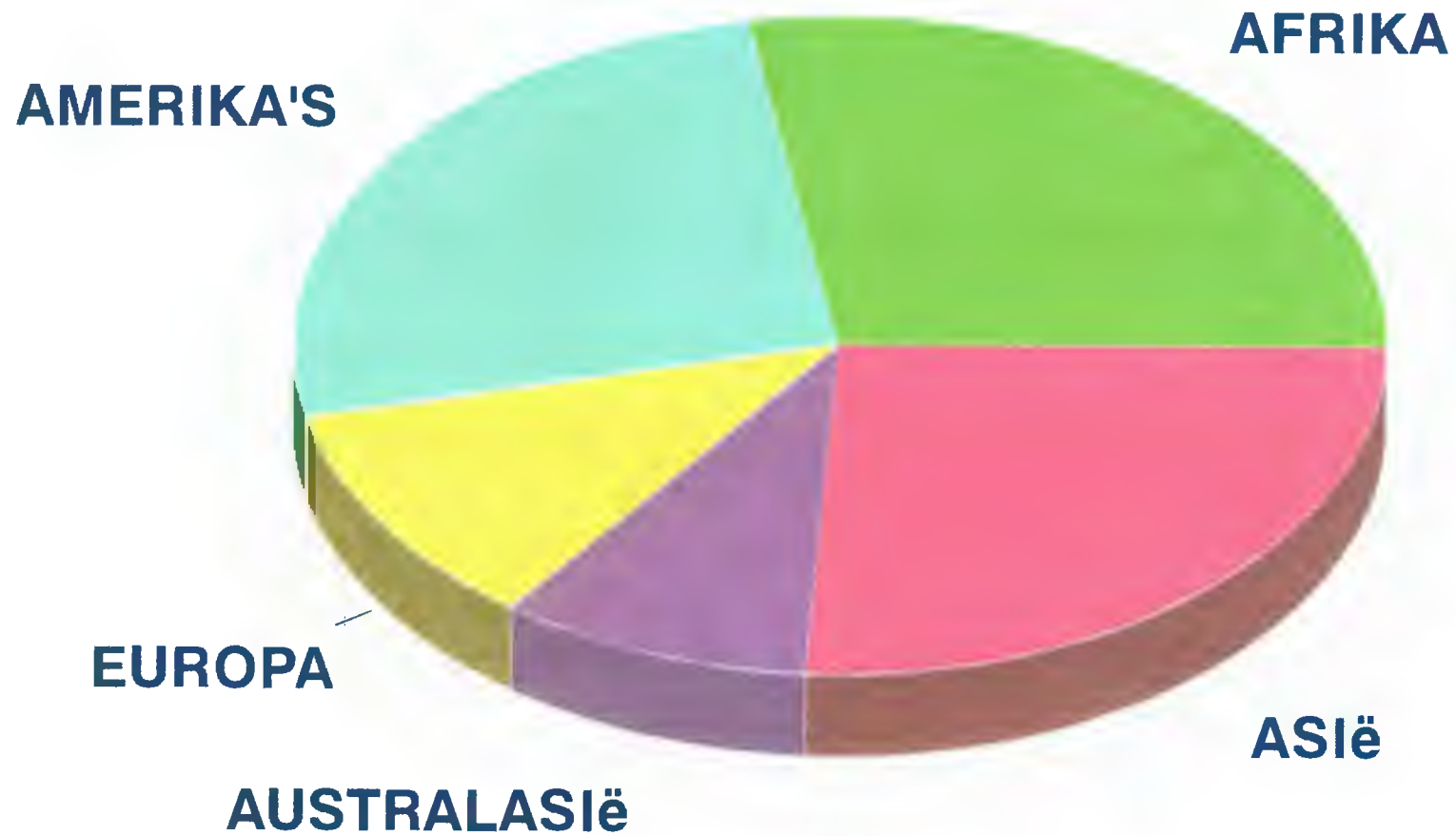
Tema:	Getal:
Aantal Bahā`is	meer as 5 000 000
Aantal onafhanklike lande waar die geloof gevestig is	233
Ondergeskikte gebiede of oorsese departemente waar dié geloof gevestig is	45
Aantal nasionale of streeksrade (bekend as Nasionale Geestelike Rade)	167
Aantal plaaslike beheerrade (bekend as Plaaslike Geestelike Rade)	ongeveer 20 000
Aantal lande waar Bahā`is wêreldwyd woon	meer as 120 000
Entiese groepe, rasse en inboorlingstamme wat as Bahā`is verteenwoordig word	meer as 2 112
Tale waarin die werke van Baha'u'llah vertaal is	802
Publikasierade	26
Radiostasies	7
Skole	741 (geen in Suid Afrika)
Geletterheidsprogramme	203
Ander ontwikkelingsprogramme	670

Die groei van die Nasionale Geestelike Rade, die verspreiding van die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade en die betrokkenheid van vroue sien soos volg daaruit:

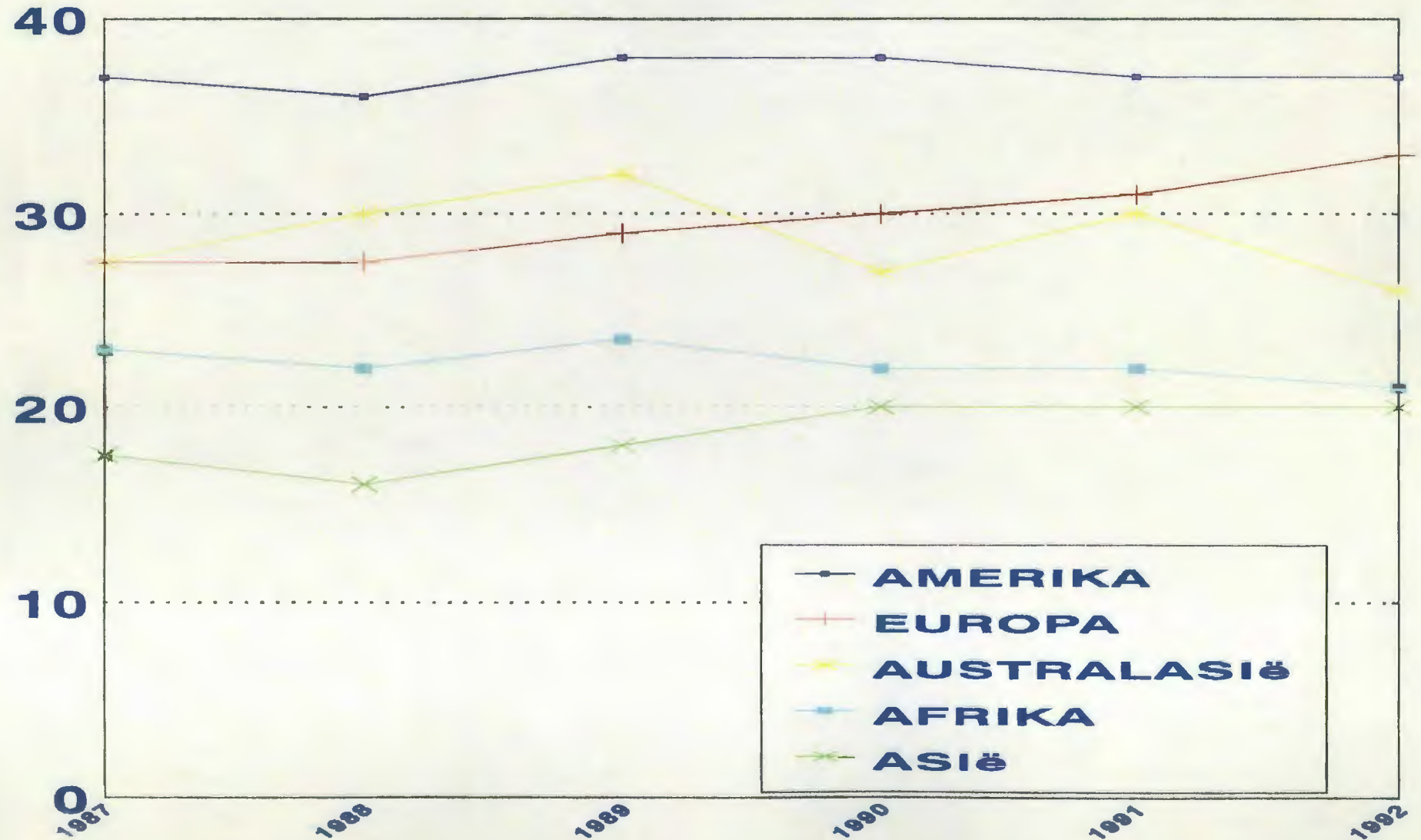
BAHÀ'Ì NASINALE GEESTELIKE RADE SE UITBREIDING WÊRELDWYD: 1923-1992



GEOGRAFIESE VERSPREIDING VAN PLAASLIKE GEESTELIKE RADE

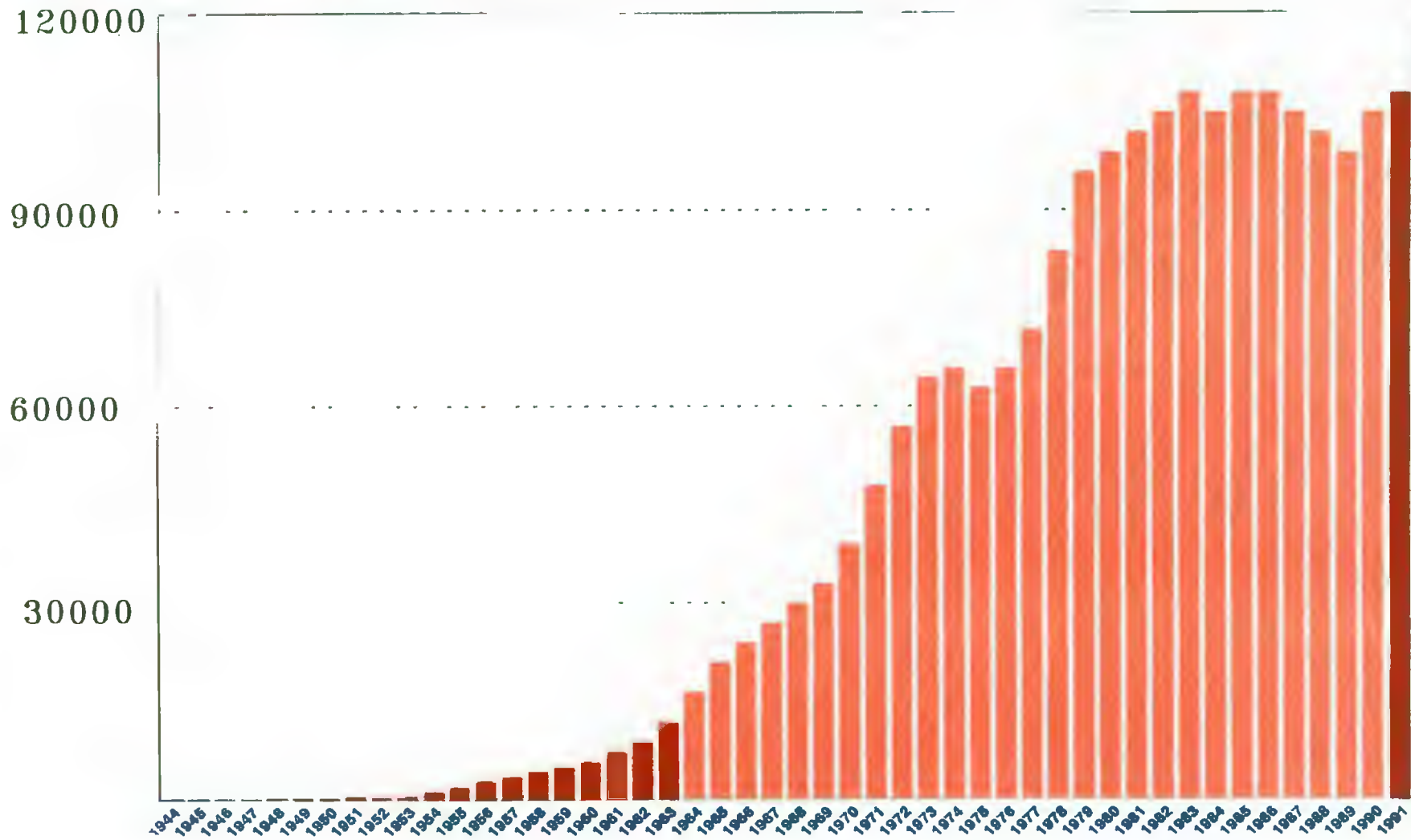


AANTAL VROU IN BAHÀ'Ì NASIONALE GEESTELIKE RADE



*
Die Bahā`ī uitbreiding wêreldwyd vanaf 1944 tot 1991:

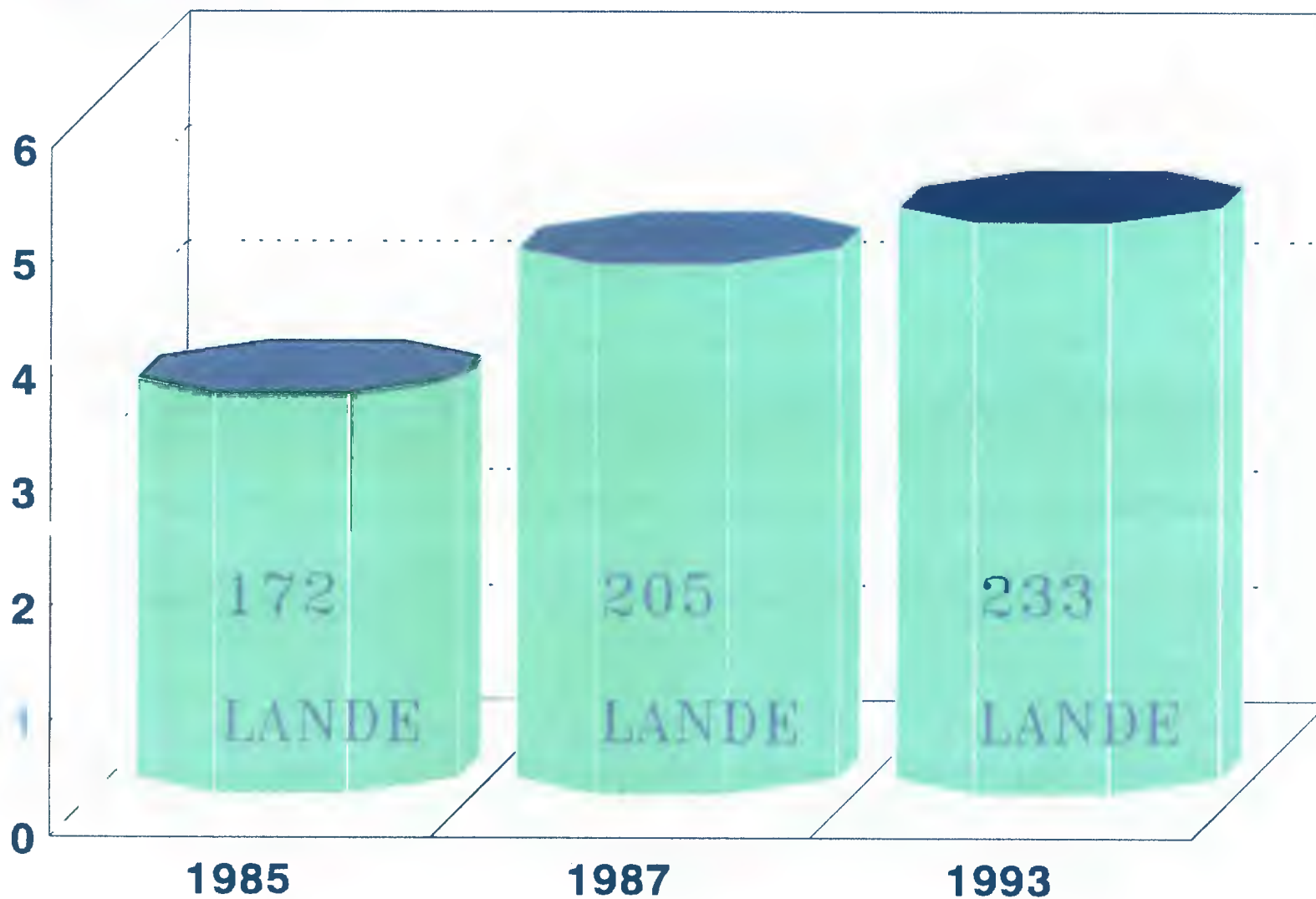
BAHÀ'Ì UITBREIDING WÊRELDWYD: 1944-1991



Bahà`i-ledetal en uitbreiding vanaf 1985 tot 1993:

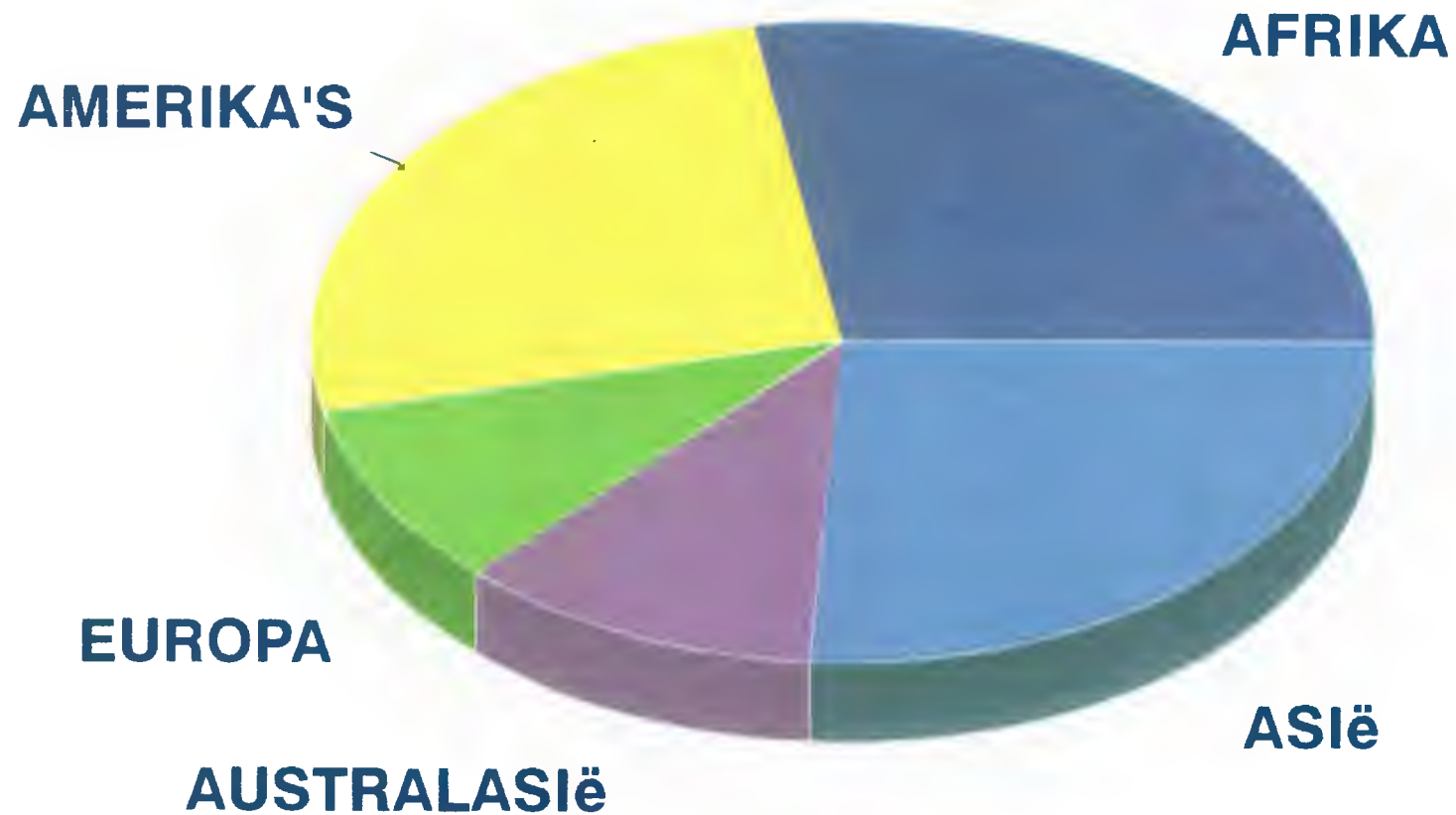
BAHÀ'Ì LEDETAL EN UITBREIDING: 1985-1993

MILJOENE



Bahā`i-geografiese verspreiding van sosiale en ekonomiese ontwikkelings-programme wêreldwyd:

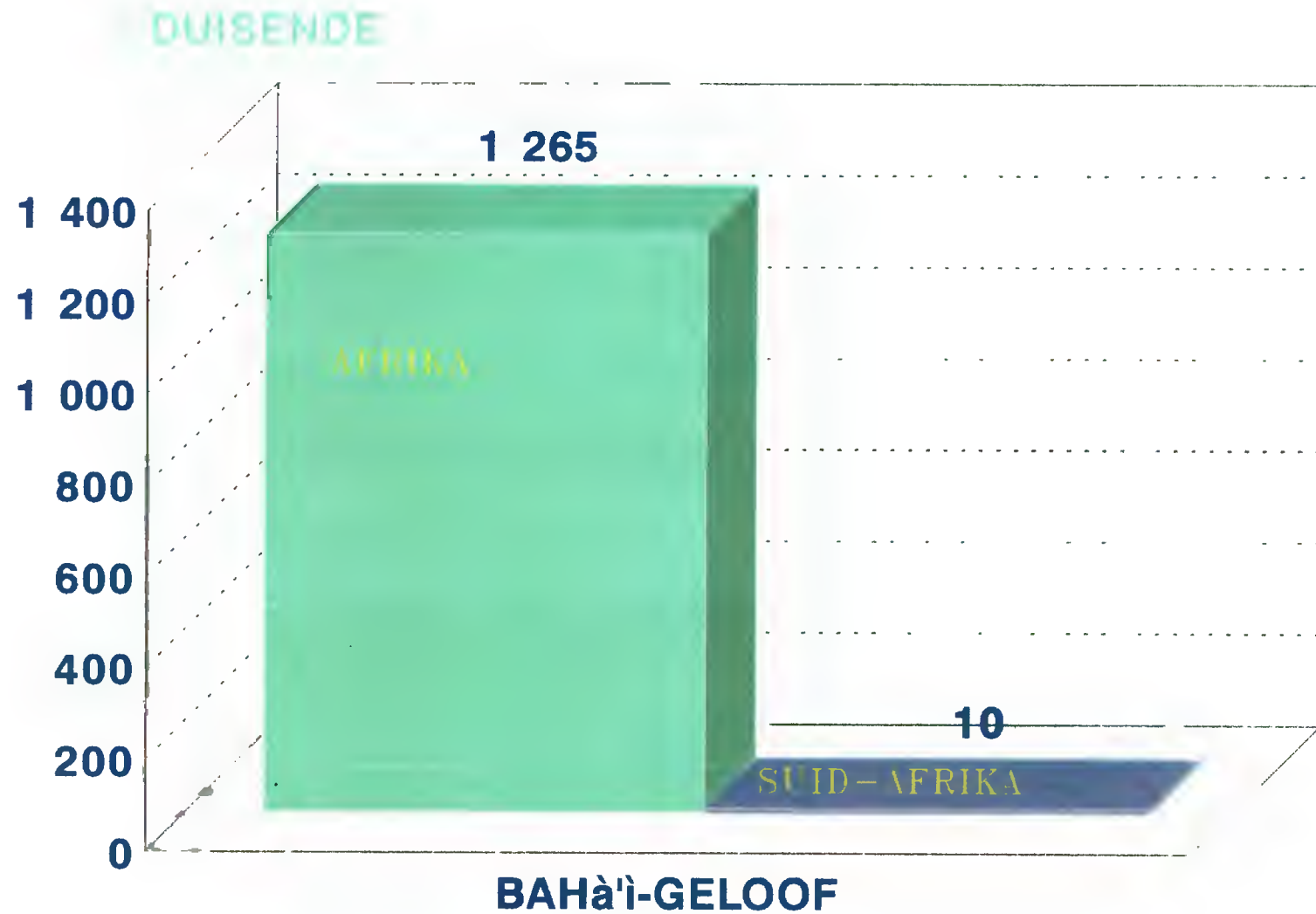
GEOGRAFIESE VERSPREIDING: SOSIALE EN EKONOMIESE ONTWIKKELINGSPROGRAMME



'n Vergelyking van die Bahà`i-ledetal van Afrika (1987) met dié van Suid Afrika (1991):

VERGELYKING: BAHÀ'Ì LEDETAL: AFRIKA vs SUID AFRIKA

1987-1991



2.8 Eindnote

- (1) David & John Noss, A history of the world's religions, MacMillan Publishing Company, New York, 1990, p 355 e.v.
- (2) Peter Smith, The Bahà`ì Religion, A Short Introduction to its History & Teaching, Goerge Ronald, Oxford, 1982, pp 14-15 asook The Bahà`ì Faith, Bahà`ì International Community Office of Public Information, Bahà`ì Publishing Trust, 6 Mount Pleasant, Leicestershure LE15 6HU, England, p 1.
- (3) William Sears, Thief in the Night or The Case of the Missing Millennium, George Ronald, Oxford, 1961, p 133.
- (4) Lowell Johnson, Our Beloved Guardian, An Introduction to the Life and Work of Shoghi Effendi, The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahà`is of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1993, p 18.
- (5) Hushmand Fathea'zam, The New Garden, Bahà`ì Publishing Trust, New Delhi, Indië, pp 75-78.
- (6) Ibid, p 21.
- (7) Lowell Johnson, The Eternal Covenant, National Book Printers, Goodwood, Kaapstad, 1989, p 22.
- (8) Ibid, pp 19-20.
- (9) Ibid, p 17.
- (10) Lowell Johnson, Our Beloved ..., p 18.

- (11) Raadpleeg die Bahà`i-werk van Nabil I Hana, Bible proofs, a Fireside aid for teaching Christians, Kalimât Press, United States of America, 1988, p 119 en Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, 1980, pp 109-110 onder andere asook die Heilige Qur'an soos vertaal deur Imam M A Baker, Nasionale Boekhandel BPK, Kaapstad, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, 1961, pp 39-41. Die aanvaarding van Christus en sy boodskap word in die Qur'an (Sura 5 vers 85) ook gevind.
- (12) Fathea'zam, The New ..., p 24 en William Sears, The Thief in the Night, ... , in dié verband.
- (13) Fathea'zam, ... , p 26.
- (14) Die Shakhí-sekte is gestig deur **Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i** (datum onbekend). Hy sterf in 1826 (huidige jaartelling) en word deur Siyyid Kàzim-i-Rashti opgevolg. Die sekte het die volgende doktrines verkondig: (1) Ali en die 11 opeenvolgende Imams is heilige wesens; (2) daar moet altyd 'n persoon op aarde teenwoordig wees wat in direkte kontak met die "Beloofde (Twaalfde) Imam" is en wat as 'n kanaal (gate) tussen hom en die Shi`ite kan dien; (3) daar is geen liggaamlike opstanding nie.

Die aanhangers van hierdie godsdienstige groep het Shaykh Ahmad en Siyyid Kàzim as die kanaal tussen die mens en die Beloofde Imam geag en aan hul die titel Bab (gate) gegee. Hierdie leermeesters het hul studente onderrig om die koms van die Twaalfde Imam enige oomblik

te verwag. Die rede hiervoor was dat die koms van die Beloofde Imam (Mahdi of Qa'im) volgens sommige tradisies oor 'n duisend jaar (ongeveer 1844 huidige era) sou plaasvind. Dit het beteken dat die tyd vir Sy koms (terugkeer na die aarde) nou naby was en baie sektes binne die Shi'ite-groepering het ongeduldig op sy koms gewag (kyk William McElwee Miller, The Bahà`ì Faith, Its History and Teachings, William Carey Library, United States of America, 1974, pp 9-10).

- (15) Denis MacEoin, Early Shaykhí Reactions to the Bab and His Claims, in Moojan Momen, Studies in Babí and Bahà`ì History, Kalimát Press, Los Angeles, 1982, pp 38 en ook 1-2.
- (16) Ibid, pp 1-2 asook Miller, The Bahà`ì Faith ... pp 8-10.
- (17) Miller, ..., pp 9-10.
- (18) Mullà Husayn het op 36-jarige leeftyd tydens een van die vele aanslae by die fort Shaykh Tabarsí gesterf. Op 18-jarige leeftyd het hy Siyyid Kàzim vir die eerste keer ontmoet en vir die volgende nege jaar 'n student van hom gebly. Na die dood van Siyyid Kàzim en ooreenkomstig sy leerstellinge, het hy die Bab in Shíraz ontdek as die Beloofde Een. As eerste gelowige het hy die titel Bābu'l-Bab ("the gate of that Gate") ontvang. Hy was vir 'n verdere nege jaar van sy lewe 'n leermeester van die nuwe geloof, wat hy met woord en daad teen vyande beskerm het.

Die Bab se openbaring was deur Mullà Husayn aanvaar, omdat hy (die Bab) die toets vir die Beloofde Een (wat Kâzim aan Husayn oorgedra het) geslaag het. Die Bab het naamlik die korrekte deel uit die Qur'an (naamlik die Sura van Josef) verduidelik en het ook die boek wat Mullà Husayn self geskryf het, korrek uitgelê het (raadpleeg Lowell Johnson, 1976, Mullà Husayn ... , pp 11 en 12).

'n Verdere mylpaal in Mullà Husayn se lewe was dat hy vir Mullà Muhammad Mu'allim met hul eerste ontmoeting in Tihirà as 'n familielid van Baha'u'llah "herken" het. Hy stuur toe sekere van die Bab se werke, opgerol in 'n kledingstuk, saam met Mullà Muhammad en versoek hom om dit met sonsondergang aan Husayn `Ali (Baha'u'llah) te oorhandig. Baha'u'llah het, nadat hy die werke gelees het, die volgende gesê: "Verily, I say, whoso believes in the Qur'an and recognizes its Divine origin, and yet hesitates, though it be for a moment, to admit that these soul-stirring words are endowed with the same regenerating power, has most assuredly erred in his judgment and has strayed far from the path of justice" (Lowell Johnson, Mullà ... pp 21-23).

Mullà Husayn het Baha'u'llah hierna nog twee keer persoonlik ontmoet, naamlik in Tihirà en by Shaykh Tabarsí. Hy het ondertussen ook erken dat Quddús sy meester en die ware leier van die Babí-geloof is. In opdrag van Quddús het hy ook die eerste huis in Mashhad gebou, waar Babí-volgelingen kon oornag en onderrig word. Die huis is na die Bab vernoem: Bâbíyyih. Op 21 Julie 1848, kort voor sy vertrek uit Mashhad, het hy die

Bab se groen tulband, 'n skrywe van hom en ook 'n nuwe naam ontvang. Sy naam sou voortaan **Siyyid `Ali** wees. (Ibid, pp 30 & 38).

In die **Kitàb-i-Iqàn** het Baha'u'llah die hoogste lof aan Mullà Husayn toegedig: "But for him, God would not have been established upon the seat of His mercy, nor have ascended the throne of eternal glory!" (Ibid., p 44).

- (19) Debbie D Wittmann, The Birth of the Bahà`i Faith, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1980, pp 1-5 asook Johnson, Mullà ... , pp 7-9.
- (20) Mírzà `Ali Muhammad is op 9 Oktober 1820 of (meer waarskynlik) op 20 Oktober 1819 gebore in Shíraz, 'n dorp in die provinsie Pars, in die suidelike deel van Iran. Bahà`is herdenk 20 Oktober as die **Bab** se geboortedag. Hy is 'n direkte afstammeling van die stigter van Islam, die profeet Mohammed. Die Bab, soos Mírzà `Ali Muhammad beter bekend staan, was ook 'n student van Siyyid Kàzim en is grootliks deur sy lesings beïnvloed. Hy het vanaf Karbala na Shíraz teruggekeer en in 1842 (huidige era) in Shíraz getrou. Hy het dus dalk nie vir Mullà Husayn, wat ook van Karbala afkomstig was, van daar af geken nie (Raadpleeg The Universal House of Justice, The Kitàb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i World Centre, Haifa, 1992, pp 244-245).

- (21) Miller, The Bahà`i , p 16 en ook J K Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, A Study in Present-Day Isms, Fourth Revised and Enlarged Edition, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1962, pp 146-147.
- (22) Shoghi Effendi, 1970, God Passes By, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1970, p 5.
- (23) Kyk Nabil-i-A`zam, The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Bahà`i Revelation, Translated by and Edited by Shoghi Effendi, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America 1932.
- (24) Die Bahà`i se 24-uur dag begin en eindig met sonsondergang. (Kyk The Bahà`i World, An International Record, Prepared under the supervision of The Universal House of Justice, Volume XVIII, 136-140, of The Bahà`i Era, 1979-1983, p 606 en ook The Universal House of Justice, The Kitàb-i-Aqdas, . . . , pp 177-178).
- (25) Die Bahà`i-wette handel eerstens oor individuele verpligtinge en twee-dens oor sosiale beginsels. Wette gemik op die individu sluit die volgende in: (i) Elke Bahà`i moet elke oggend en aand tot God bid en uit die Bahà`i Heilige Werke lees; (ii) Elke Bahà`i bo die ouderdom van 15 jaar moet eenmaal elke jaar vir 'n tydperk van 19 dae (2-20 Maart) vanaf sonsopkoms tot sonsondergang vas (geen voedsel of drank word geneem nie); (iii) Bahà`is mag geen alkoholiese drank en verdowingsmiddels gebruik nie (behalwe as dit vir

mediese doeleindes voorgeskryf word); (iv) Bahà`is moet mekaar eers leer ken en hul ouers se toestemming verkry, alvorens hulle kan trou; (v) Bahà`is wat trou, moet 'n Bahà`i-huwelikseremonie hê. Indien een van die partye nie 'n Bahà`i is nie, mag die paartjie 'n gewone(nie-Bahà`i) én 'n Bahà`i troue hê; (vi) Mans en vroue mag nie intiem leef buite die huwelik nie; (vii) Mans en vroue mag nie gemeenskap hê buite die huwelik nie; (viii) Egskeiding word toegelaat, maar word nie deur Baha'u'llah goedgepraat nie; (ix) 'n Man mag slegs een vrou en 'n vrou slegs een man hê; (x) Bahà`is moet begrawe word binne een uur se reis vanaf die plek waar die persoon gesterf het-- 'n spesiale gebed moet deur een persoon gebid word, terwyl die ander teenwoordig met respek in stilte rondom die graf staan; (xi) Bahà`is moet te alle tye gehoorsaam wees aan die regering van die dag en mag nie aan party-politieke aktiwiteite deel hê nie; (xii) Bahà`is mag nooit skinder of laster nie; (xiii) hul daaglikse werk moet met 'n gesindheid van diens aan God verrig word, ongeag hoe gering of verhewe dit ook mag wees; (xiv) elke individu moet vir sy of haar bestaan-- bedel is verbode en dit is ook verbode om iets aan 'n bedelaar te gee hoewel hulp aan hulpbehoewendes aangemoedig word; (xv) elke Bahà`i moet 'n onderwyser van sy of haar geloof wees; (xvi) Bahà`is moet bydra tot die Bahà`i-fonds (spirituele verpligting, maar totaal vrywillig en vertroulik); (xvii) Bahà`is moet die Negentiendagse feeste en Bahà`i-Heilige-dae bywoon; (xviii) 'n Bahà`i kan nie terselfdertyd 'n ander geloof aanhang nie en (xix) Konsultasie is 'n nuwe God gegewe wet vir hierdie eeu (Johnson, Eternal Covenant ..., pp 75-79).

Die sosiale beginsels sluit die volgende in: (i) enige vorm van bevooroordeeldheid moet vermy word; (ii) individue moet onafhanklik soek na die waarheid; (iii) mans en vroue moet as gelyke wesen geag word; (iv) onderig moet universeel wees; (v) godsdiens en wetenskap moet hand aan hand loop; (vi) ekstreme armoede en rykdom moet totaal en al uitgeskakel word; (vii) 'n eenwêreldregering; (viii) een algemeen aanvaarde wêreldtaal en (ix) al bogenoemde rus op die beginsel van die drie eenhede, naamlik die eenheid van God, die eenheid van godsdiens en die eenheid van die mens (Ibid, pp 80-81).

Lowell Johnson vat die individuele wette en die sosiale beginsels, wat tesame die Bahà`i-wette vorm, soos volg saam: "The purpose of God's laws is to stimulate and protect mankind. As part of our Covenant, Bahà`is are expected to obey them for their own advantage" (Ibid, p 81).

(26) Die verbond van God met die Bab en die Bab se verbond met die mensheid word weergegee in Johnson se boek, Eternal ..., p 229- 230. Die verbond wat elke Bahà`i met God self sluit, lui soos volg: "I accept Baha'u'llah as God's Messenger to mankind today, and I promise to study, practise and spread His Divine Teachings". So 'n verbintenis word aangetref op alle Bahà`i-aansluitingskaarte regoor die wêreld (Ibid, p 235). Die volledige Antieke en Ewige verbond is vervat in Johnson se werk, The Eternal Covenant, p 220-235.

(27) Miller, The Bahà`i ... , p 116.

(28) 'n Besoekende Amerikaanse Bahà`i, Robin Chandler, het op Vrydag 15 Julie 1994 by die Johannesburgse byeenkoms van die Bahà`i Plaaslike Geestelike Raad tydens haar aanbieding oor die lewe van Baha'u'llah bevestig wat ander Bahà`is die skrywer vertel het van die gebeure wat die teregstelling van die Bab voorafgegaan het. Die gebeure word ook, in ooreenstemming met hierdie mondelinge weergawes, soos volg beskryf deur George Townshend: "Just before the execution the Bab drew aside His amanuensis, Siyyid Husayn, for a confidential conversation in one of the rooms of the prison. The gaoler interrupted and ordered the Bab to go at once. **'Not until I have said to him all those things that I wish to say,'** the Bab warned the gaoler, **'can any earthly power silence Me. Though all the world be armed against Me, yet shall they be powerless to deter Me from fulfilling, to the last word, My intention.'** He then went with the gaoler.

The Christian regiment opened fire at the Bab and His disciple, tied to the beam of wood, and when the smoke from seven hundred and fifty rifles had cleared away, it was seen by ten thousand onlookers that the Bab had disappeared and the disciple was standing unharmed, on the ground. A frantic search ensued and the Bab was discovered completing his talk with His amanuensis. **'I have finished my conversation with Siyyid Husayn,'** He said, **'Now you may proceed to fulfil your intention'**. The Christian regiment refused to continue the execution. Their place was taken by Muslims and the Bab and his disciple were instantly killed" (Kyk George Townshend, 1990, Christ and Baha'u'llah, herdruk, p 67-68 asook Miller, ..., pp41 en 42 en verder).

Die dissipel wat saam met die Bab tereggestel is, se naam was **Mirzà Muhammad-`Alí Zunúzí**. (Sien Moojan Momen, 1982, Studies in Babí and Bahà`ì History, Kalimât Press, Los Angeles, p 18).

(29) Die regeringstydperk van Näsiri'd-Din Shäh is deur verskeie belangrike gebeure gekenmerk. Een van die gebeure is die aanvang van die bloedige vervolgings (1848-1852) van die Babí-volgelingen. Dié gebeure kulmineer in die teregstelling van die Bab deur Näsiri'd-Din Shäh se groot visier, Mirzà Taqi Khân, op 9 Julie 1850. Tâhirih het ook onder sy heerskappy 'n marteldood gesterf (kyk Moojan Momen, An Introduction to Shi`i Islam, The History and Doctrine of Twelver Shi`ism, 1985, pp 138-142).

(30) Baha'u'llah het drie vroue gehad. Die eerste een se naam was **Asiya**. Hy het haar die titel **Nawwaba** gegee. Hy en sy het in 1835 in Teheran getrou en uit die huwelik is ses kinders gebore. In 1849 trou hy met 'n tweede vrou, **Bibi Fatima** ('n niggie van hom) en gee aan haar die titel Supreme Cradle. Die titel was eintlik gereserveer vir die Koninginmoeder van Iran. Sy het ook aan ses kinders geboorte geskenk. Baha'u'llah trou in Baghdad met sy derde vrou, **Gohar** (maar gee haar geen titel nie); sy het geboorte geskenk aan 'n dogter, **Furughiyya**.

Aangesien Baha'u'llah deur sy volgelingen as die boom van die waarheid geag word, is sy seuns "die takke" genoem. **Abbas Effendi** (Abdu'l-Bahà), die oudste seun by sy eerste vrou, het die titel **A'zam** (Most Mighty

Branch) ontvang. Die oudste seun by sy tweede vrou, **Mirza Muhammad Ali** het die titel **Akbar** (Most Great Branch) gekry. Die ander seuns het die titel Most Pure Branch en Most Luminous Branch gekry. Aan sy dogter **Bahiyya** het hy die titel Supreme Leaf toegeken. (Kyk Azal's Notes, soos aangehaal in Miller, The Bahà`i ..., p 121).

(31) Effendi, God Passes ..., p 127.

(32) Hierdie fees strek oor 'n tydperk van nege dae. Dit begin om 15:00 op 21 April en eindig op 29 April. Baha'u'llah verwys na dié fees as "the King of Festivals" (kyk The Kitàb-i-Aqdas,..., pp 224-225; Townshend, Christ and ..., p 77 en die Bahà`i World, Volume XVIII, 136-140 of the Bahà`i Era, 1979-1983, p 598).

Ridvàn is die naam van die bewaarder van die Paradys. Baha'u'llah gebruik dit om die Paradys self aan te toon. Raadpleeg die woordelys en notas in Die Kitàb-i-Iqan, Die Boek van Oortuiging, deur Baha'u'llah, vertaal deur Shoghi Effendi vanuit Persies in Engels en daaruit vertaal in Afrikaans, Die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid Afrika, Johannesburg, 1985, p 207.

(33) Effendi, God Passes ... , p 171.

(34) Ibid, pp 171-174 asook Townshend, Christ and ..., pp 77-86.

- (35) `Abdu'l-Bahā (1844-1921) is die seun van Baha'u'llah en is ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah se testament as die opvolger van die Bahā`i-geloof aangewys (kyk latere gedeelte in die hoofstuk oor sy lewe).
- (36) Miller, ..., p 175 asook Moojan Momen, An Introduction to Shi`i Islam, ..., pp 231-232.
- (37) Die Bahā`i-geskrifte toon nie duidelik wat van Mirzā Yahyā geword het nie. Vervolgens word daar kortliks na drie moontlike verklarings gekyk.

Uit gesprekke met verskillende Bahā`is blyk dit dat hy as 'n verbreker van die Bahā`i-verbond beskou word. `Abdu'l-Bahā het hom, kort voor sy dood, 'n kans gegee om die Bahā`i-geloof aan te neem. Hy het dit egter van die hand gewys en op 81-jarige leeftyd (29 April 1912) in Famagusta gesterf. Hy was getroud en het twee seuns gehad. Een van sy seuns het 'n Christen geword en sy naam verander, en het van toe af as Konstantyn van Persië bekend gestaan (kyk Miller, ... , p 107).

Volgens 'n tweede teorie bestaan daar vandag nog (in Iran) volgelinge van die Mirzā Yahyā. Die derde teorie beweer dat die geloof uitgesterf het en dat van die volgelinge tot insig gekom het en die Bahā`i-geloof aangeneem het. Die tweede teorie blyk die korrekte een te wees aangesien dr Sa'eed van Teheran in 1930 beweer het dat daar ongeveer 1500 vroue en kinders is wat die Babí (Azali) geloof beoefen. Gedurende mnr Azal se besoek aan Iran in 1963 het hy die getal op 4000 tot 5000 volgelinge geraam.

Mirzà Yahyà (ook bekend as Subh-i- Azal) was die halfbroer van Baha'u'llah en is in 1831 in Teheran gebore. Hy het in 1847 'n aanhanger van die Bab geword en na die dood van die Bab in 1850, is hy as die leier van die Babís aangewys. Baha'u'llah het hom ondersteun en selfs beskerm teen moontlike vervolging en teen persone wat beweër het dat hulle die beloofde Een was (soos onder andere Mirza Asadullah Dayyan). Na **Ridvân** (toe Baha'u'llah verklaar het dat hy die beloofde Een, Him-Who-God-Will-Manifest was), het hul weë egter geskei (kyk Miller, ..., pp 70, 71, 82, 85, 95, 107 en 114).

Die vyandighede tussen die twee groepe het voortgeduur en die Azali's (Mirzà Yahyà se volgelinge) het op die Bahà`is (volgelinge van Baha'u'llah) gespioeneer. Hulle het ook gepoog om die Bahà`is by die Moslem-regeerders verdag te maak. Dié optrede het daartoe bygedra dat die Bahà`i-geloof in die geheim beoefen is en dat Bahà`is die moskee gereeld besoek het en selfs die fees van Ramadan nagekom het. Dit wil voorkom asof die Moslems niks agtergekom het nie, want beide Baha'u'llah en sy seun Abbas Effendi het na bewering 'n "sunni-Moslem"-begrafnis gehad. Die Azal-notas beweër selfs dat die titel "Baha'u'llah" (wat beteken om die manifestasie van God te wees en om groter as die profeet Mohammed te wees) nooit die Moslems se ore bereik het nie en dat die leier van die Bahà`i-geloof slegs as Baha Effendi of Baha'u'Din (the Splendour of Religion) aan hulle bekend was.

Hierdie poging tot die openbaarmaking van die Azalis aan die Moslems het tot verdere konflik gelei en op 23 Janu-

arie 1872 is sewe Azalis in 'n huis in Akka deur Bahā`is vermoor. Hoewel sekere Bahā`i-skrywers die gebeure weglaat, is daar geen twyfel daaraan dat die sluipmoorde wel plaasgevind het nie. Dit is egter nie seker of die dade met die goedkeuring van Baha'u'llah plaasgevind het nie (kyk Miller, ..., pp 121-122).

Mirzā Yahyā



(William McElwee Miller, ... , p 105)

- (38) JE Esslemont, 1980, Baha'u'llah and the New Era: An Introduction to the Bahà`i Faith, Vierde Hersiene Uitgawe, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Willemette, Illinois, United States of America, p 33-34.
- (39) Effendi, God Passes ..., p 188.
- (40) Julio Savi, 1989, The Eternal Quest for God, Billing & Sons Ltd, Worcester, Great Britain, p 1.
- (41) `Abdu'llah Pàshà was 19 jaar oud toe hy as maghebber van `Akka by Sulaymàn Pàshà in 1819 oorneem. Hy was met Pàshà se dogter, Fàtimih, getroud en het hul woning (Mazra'ih) verlaat en in 'n ander groot woning net buite `Akkà gaan bly. Later van tyd (ongeveer 1832) is hy deur die Egiptiese regeerder weggevoer en het 'nlang tyd in Egipte vertoef. Met sy vrylating het hy na `Akkà teruggekeer en sy een woning (Stella Maris) verkoop. Hy het toe na Konstantinopel vertrek en later in Hijàz gesterf. Sy ander wonings is verwaarloos agtergelaat. `Abdu'l-Bahà het Mazra'ih (een van hierdie wonings) vir sy vader (Baha'u'llah) gehuur (David S Ruhe, 1989, Door of Hope, A Century of the Bahà`i Faith in the Holy Land, George Ronald, Oxford pp 205-206).
- (42) Udí Khammar ('n Christen-handelaar wie se naam "wynhandelaar" of "die bewaarder van 'n wynwinkel" beteken) het in 1879 saam met sy familie van hul huis (Bahji) in `Akkà weggevlug (moontlik vanweë 'n builepes plaag). Baha'u'llah het dié woning, waar die bykans laaste 13 jaar van sy roeping sou afspeel, gehuur. Udí het egter in 1879 gesterf en is by die woning se buitenste muur

begrawe. Hierdie huis, tesame met sy tuine, is later (na die dood van Baha'u'llah in 1892) deur die Bahà`i-gemeenskap gekoop. Baha'u'llah se graf is ook in die tuin van Bahji geleë. Dit vorm tans die fokuspunt van Bahà`is se besoeke aan die Bahà`i-wêreld in die Heilige Land (Ruhe, Door of Hope ..., pp 201-204 asook The Bahà`i International Community Office of Public Information, New York, Baha'u'llah, The Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London SW7 1PD, Kanada, 1991, nota 107, p 58).

- (43) Miller, ..., pp 125-127.
- (44) Nosratollah Rassekh, 1982, The Bahà`i Era, The First 138 Years, Bahà`i World, Volume 16, No 4, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, p 44.
- (45) Effendi, God Passes ..., p 345.
- (46) Verskeie teorieë bestaan oor die oorskotte van die Bab en sy dissipel. Sommige beweer dat die liggame buite die stad gegooi is sodat die honde en wilde diere van die veld hul oorskot kon verorber. Ander beweer dat hul dissipels die liggame, wat vir twee dae so daar gelê het, weggeneem en begrawe het. Nog 'n groep beweer dat die liggame versorg is en toe na Mirzà Yahyà (ook bekend as Subh-i-Azal) geneem is, en dat hy hulle oorskot op 'n geheime plek laat begrawe het.

Latere Babí-geskrifte beweer dat 'n getroue dissipel, Sulayman Khan, die oorskot in die hande gekry het en dit aan Mullà Husayn besorg het. Beide is egter later (1852)

gedood en daarom het die ligging van die Bab en sy dissipel se grafte onbekend gebly. Ander Bahà`is beweer egter weer dat die Bab se oorskot sedert 1850 deur sy volgelinge (moontlik onder Baha'u'llah se toesig) saam gesmokkel is en later in die Tuin van Ridvàn (in Akko) begrawe is. Hierdie teorie word ook uitgebrei en soms aangepas met die bewering dat `Abdu'l-Bahà die Bab se liggaam in 1899 na Akko laat bring het en die oorskot in 1910 op die aangewese plek in die Karmel gebergte begrawe het (Miller, ..., pp 42-44).

- (47) Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the New ..., pp 39-40.
- (48) Wittman, The Birth of the ... p 19.
- (49) Effendi, God Passes ..., p 205.
- (50) Ibid, pp 205-220 en ook The Kitàb-i-Aqdas ..., pp 48-53; 216-217.
- (51) Effendi, God ..., pp 213-216.
- (52) Rassekh, The Bahà`ì ..., p 45. (Opmerking: Aangesien baie van die skrywes aan die konings en regeerders van die wêreld in die Kitàb-i-Aqdas vervat was, en die heilige boek in Arabies geskrywe is en boonop eers in 1890 (Huidige Era) gepubliseer is, kan die afleiding gemaak word dat hierdie skrywes moontlik nooit deur die konings en regeerders gelees is nie. Die Kitàb-i-Aqdas is eers in 1992 in Engels vertaal (vir die honderdjarige herdenking van Baha'u'llah se dood) en toe deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid uitgegee (Miller, ..., p 152; asook The Bahà`ì International Community Office of, Baha'u'llah, nota 108, p 58).

- (53) Effendi, God ..., p 206.
- (54) The Kitàb-i-Aqdas ..., pp 3; 221 (nota 130); 227 (nota 145) en 246 (nota 184).
- (55) Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1980, p 238.
- (56) Raadpleeg vir meer besonderhede: Peter Smith, The American Bahà`i Community, 1894-1917, A Preliminary Survey in Moojan Momen, Studies in Bâbî and Bahà`i History, Volume I, Kalimât Press, Los Angeles, 1982, pp 85-224, raadpleeg.
- (57) Sien ook: William P Collins, Kenosha, 1893-1912, History of an Early Bahà`i Community in the United States, in Momen, Studies ..., pp 225-254.
- (58) Thornton Chase se foto, Ibid, p 122.
- (59) Wittman, The Birth of ..., p 22.
- (60) The Most Great Peace (een wêreldgemeenskap verenig onder een godsdiens en waarin al die mense harmonies saamwerk om 'n wêreldburgerskap daar te stel) is die Bahà`i-ge-loof se doel. Dit behels volgens Tyson die "**spiritual upliftment of humanity and the recognition of the oneness of mankind**". In 1906 het `Abdu'l-Bahà reeds verkondig dat "**[The] `unity of nations [are] causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland**" en dat dit "in hierdie

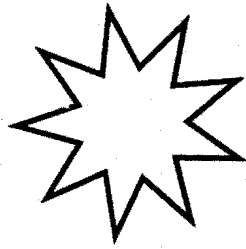
eeu" sal gebeur. (J Tyson, 1986, World Peace and World Government, From Vision to Reality, George Ronald, Oxford, p 2-3). Die huidige strewe is dus om die sogenaamde "Lesser Peace" daar te stel. Dit behels die samestelling van 'n wêreldregering en die beëindiging van oorloë tussen nasies. Laasgenoemde blyk (veral volgens Bahà`ls) reeds nou aanwesig te wees in die wêreld-- daar is tans sterk sprake van die beëindiging van oorloë tussen nasies (veral in 1993/5) en die era van onderhandelinge en gesprekke oor ontwapening word nou binnegegaan (kyk John S Hatcher, 1994, The Arc of Ascent, George Ronald, Oxford, p 236 en verder).

- (61) Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, Selected Letters, Bahà`l Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1991, p 144.
- (62) Wittman, The Birth ... , p 23.
- (63) Ibid, p 21.
- (64) Ibid, p 20.
- (65) Rassekh, ..., p 48.
- (66) Shoghi Effendi beskryf dié era soos volg: "Abdu'l-Bahà, Who incarnates an institution for which we can find no parallel whatsoever in any of the world's recognized religious systems, may be said to have closed the Age to which He Himself belonged and open the one in which we are now laboring" (Effendi, The World Order of ..., p 143).

- (67) Sy vader was **Mírzá Hādí** ('n familielid van die Bab in Shiráz) en sy moeder was **Díyà'iyih Khānum** (oudste dogter van `Abdu'l-Bahà). Vir 'n volledige bespreking van Shoghi Effendi se lewe, vgl. Johnson, Our Beloved Guardian,
- (68) Die rol van die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid is soos volg: "... destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world". Die Institusie wat deur Baha'u'llah reeds in die Kitàb-i-Aqdas ingestel is, beskryf sy rol self soos volg: "... to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings ...". Dit word uitgebrei met die volgende woorde: "There being no successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, the Universal House of Justice is the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution, to which all must turn, and on it rests the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God". Vgl. Johnson, The Eternal ... , pp 106 en 121-122.
- (69) `Abdu'l-Bahà, 1944, Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`ì Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, p 11.
- (70) Die administratiewe orde van die Bahà`ì-geloof word volledig in hoofstuk 4 bespreek.

- (71) Die **Guardian** was Shoghi Effendi. Hy was as die beskermer en amptelike interpreteerder van die Bahà`i-geloof aangewys. Lowell Johnson beskryf sy taak soos volg: "... The Guardian reveals what the Scripture means; his interpretation is a statement of truth which cannot be varied". Die Guardianship is die funksie wat deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid oorgeneem was omdat Shoghi Effendi geen kinders gehad het nie en dus nie 'n opvolger, soos die gebruik was, kon aanwys nie. Volgens Lowell Johnson, lid van die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid-Afrika: "The House of Justice has explained that even without a succession of Guardians, the Guardianship as an institution still exists in the form of his writings, which are always referred to: 'It should be understood by the friends that before legislating upon any matter the Universal House of Justice studies carefully and exhaustively both the Sacred Texts and the writings of Shoghi Effendi on the subject. The interpretations written by the beloved Guardian cover a vast range of subjects and are equally as binding as the Text itself'." (Johnson, The Eternal ..., pp 122-123).
- (72) John Huddleston, The Earth Is But One Country, Second Edition, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London, 1980, p 172.
- (73) Ruhe, Door of ..., pp 136-144.
- (74) The Kitàb-i-Aqdas, ... , pp 197, 245 en 246; asook Johnson, The Eternal ..., pp 106-107.
- (75) Rassekh, ..., p 50.

- (76) Vgl Garretta Busey se artikel in die Bahà`i News, 1966, p 2.
- (77) Ibid.
- (78) Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahà`i World: 1950-1957, Revised Edition, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1971, p 127.
- (79) The Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance: Messages, 1963-1968, Second Edition, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1976, p 46.
- (80) Rassekh, ..., p 51.
- (81) Die stigting van die **International Teaching Centre** gedurende 1973 dra daartoe by dat die sogenaamde dupliering in 'n sekere sin tussen die "Hands" en die "Boards of Counsellors" uit die weg geruim word. Vir die eerste maal hoef die twee strukture nie saam met die Nasionale Geestelike Vergaderings te werk nie, aangesien die **Hands of the Cause** nou deel van die International Teaching Centre vorm. Die "Counsellors" behou egter hul rol.
- (82) The Bahà`is, ... , p 7.
- (83) Ibid, pp 27, 44 en 45.



Bahà'ís gebruik 'n nege punt ster as dié teken vir hul geloof.

Die getal nege [9] het besondere betekenis in die Bahà'í openbaring.

Nege jaar na die Bab se aankondiging in Shíraz, het Baha'u'llah sy roeping as die Beloofde Een in die *Black Dungeon* in Teheran ontvang.

Nege as die hoogste enkele syfer simboliseer volledigheid.

Aangesien die Bahà'ís dus sê dat dié Bahà'í-geloof die vervulling van al die beloftes van die vorige religieë is, reflekteer hierdie getal (soos gebruik in die nege kantige Bahà'í tempels) vir Bahà'ís volledigheid en vervulling.

HOOFSTUK 3

GESKIEDENIS VAN DIE SUID AFRIKAANSE BAHÀ`IS

3.1 Inleiding

Hierdie weergawe van die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-geskiedenis is hoofsaaklik gebaseer op werke wat van sekere Bahà`is ontvang is, onderhoude wat gevoer is sowel as dokumentasie uit die Bahà`i-argief. Dit dien egter gemeld te word dat daar tans, vanweë die jonkheid van dié geloof in Suid-Afrika, nog nie 'n omvattende argief bestaan nie en dat statistiese gegewens ook in baie gevalle ontbreek. Daar word dus gepoog om die gegewens soos Bahà`is dit beskryf op te teken.

3.2 Vroeë geskiedenis

3.2.1 Die eerste Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika

Die vroegste opskrywings toon dat die eerste Bahà`i-byeenkomste in Suid-Afrika in 1911 in die Kaapprovinsie gehou is. Dié byeenkomste het aan die huis van mevrou **Agnes Cook** (Protealaan, Seepunt, Kaapstad) plaasgevind. Sy het dié byeenkomste op die 19 de dag van elke kalendermaand gehou en was inderwaarheid die eerste Bahà`i in Suid-Afrika. Agnes Cook se nadere besonderhede is tans nog onbekend en onopgeteken (1).

Bahà`ise historiese geskrifte toon verder dat mnr en mev **William Fraetas** (2) (Byrnslaan, Kaapstad) in 1912, op dieselfde tydstip as `Abdu'l-Bahà, die kontinent van Noord-Amerika besoek het (3). Tydens dié besoek is hulle aan die Bahà`i-geloof blootgestel. `Abdu'l-Bahà se teenwoordigheid het ook daartoe bygedra dat hulle die nuwe geloof aangeneem het. **Me Fanny Knobloch**, die eerste Bahà`i-pionier (4) na Suid Afrika in

1920 tot 1929, het meneer Fraetas as 'n "brilliant soul" beskryf en gesê dat die egpaar "a power for good in the Cape" was (5).

3.2.2 Die eerste Bahà`i-pionier na Suid-Afrika

'n Telegram wat op 20 Junie 1920 aan `Abdu'l-Bahà in Israel (die Heilige Land) gestuur is, vertel die verhaal van die eerste Bahà`i-pionier na Suid-Afrika. In die telegram vra Fanny Knobloch die volgende: "If according to divine wisdom, will you authorize me to teach in South Africa?" Die antwoord het spoedig gevolg en lui soos volg: "Your plan highly advisable", en is geteken deur `Abdu'l-Bahà (6).

Fanny Knobloch het vyf weke later, op 22 Julie 1920, per skip vanaf New York na die onbekende Suid Afrika vertrek. Sy het haar enigste besigheidsafspraak in Kaapstad so vinnig as moontlik nagekom en aan die egpaar (onbekend wie hulle was) vertel waarom sy na die suidpunt van Afrika gekom het. Sodoende het sy haar eerste saad vir die Bahà`i-geloof in Afrika geplant.

Dié egpaar het 'n teepartytjie vir 4 nm dieselfde dag gereël en Fanny Knobloch genooi om sewe ander gaste ook oor die boodskap van Baha'u'llah voor te lig. By hierdie huis in Kaapstad sou verskeie latere ontmoetings plaasvind. Hierdie vriende sou ook die weg baan vir ander kontakte (7).

Die eerste aand van haar besoek het sy ook by die gaste van die Cardaga Hotel in Kaapstad aangesluit en het dadelik die middelpunt van belangstelling geword. Verskeie aanwesiges wou weet waarom 'n ongetroude Amerikaanse vrou na Suid Afrika gereis het. Sy het na 'n stil gebed, soos volg geantwoord: "My visit is

for the purpose of sharing with all who are interested in the spiritual uplift of mankind, my most precious possession, my Faith" (8). Ongeveer 40 of 50 gaste het haar gesprek oor die "Prophecy Fulfilled" aangehoor en het haar versoek om dit die volgende aand voort te sit. Dit was die eerste openbare optrede met betrekking tot die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid-Afrika (9).

Gedurende die eerste paar weke het sy ook haar eerste Heilige Tablet (Holy Tablet) (10) van `Abdu'l-Bahà ontvang. Hierdie skrywe het haar so aangespoor dat sy van Kaapstad na Johannesburg gegaan het en die nuwe geloof aldaar verkondig het. Verskeie name soos mev. Beatrice Reid, mnr. en mev. John Main, mnr. en mev. Kemp (mev. Kemp het later 'n Bahà`i in Parktown, Johannesburg geword) en kolonel en mev. Purchase, word onder andere vermeld as individue wat goeie kontakpersone vir Fanny Knobloch was. Daar is geen bewyse dat al die vermeldes wel die Bahà`i-geloof aangeneem het nie, maar hulle het beslis deel uitgemaak van Me Knobloch se vriendekring (11).

Fanny Knobloch het weereens geskiedenis gemaak deurdat sy van Johannesburg na die destydse Lourenco Marques in Mosambiek gegaan het. Met haar optrede aldaar het sy die eerste persoon geword wat die Bahà`i-boodskap aan die inheemse Afrikamense (300 Swazi's in tradisionele drag) oorgedra het (12).

Me Knobloch het Suid-Afrika twee keer weens siekte verlaat, maar telkens (in 1924 en 1928) na Suid-Afrika teruggekeer. Hoewel die historiese dokumente nie heeltemal duidelik hieroor is nie, blyk dit tog dat sy in die Wes-Kaap in die Auletta Hotel in Drieankerbaai tuis gegaan het en Bahà`i-groepe in Kaapstad, Stellenbosch en Caledon, sowel as in Johannesburg, Pretoria en ander gebiede daargestel het. Sy is grootliks bygestaan deur haar

suster, Pauline Hannen (afkomstig van Washington DC) en is in 1924 en 1925 deur Martha Root besoek.

Fanny Knobloch het in 1929 weens swak gesondheid na Amerika teruggekeer, en so het die Bahà`i-geloof as't ware in Kaapstad en die res van Suidelike Afrika uitgesterf. Selfs die eerste Plaaslike Geestelike Vergadering, wat in 1925 in Pretoria gestig is, het in 1931 die aftog geblaas (13).

Gedurende 1936 ontvang Shoghi Effendi (die Guardian) 'n skrywe waarin me Knobloch meer pioniers na Suid-Afrika versoek. Die Beskermheer het positief reageer, maar slegs me Loulie Matthews, vergesel deur Ophelia Crum, het na Suid Afrika gereis. Geen verdere besoekers sou die suidpunt van Afrika tot en met 1953 besoek nie (14).

Fanny Knobloch (links) en Martha Root (regs)



(Susan Ford, A Pictorial ... , p16)

3.2.3 Martha Root

Die reisende Martha Root het in Desember 1924 vir haar besoek aan Fanny Knobloch gearriveer en saam met haar in die Auletta Hotel, Camberwellweg, Drieankerbaai in Kaapstad gebly (15). Haar aankoms en optredes is in verskeie koerantartikels beskryf (16).

Martha Root het ook 'n jaar in China deurgebring en het 'n groot voorliefde vir die Chinese volk gehad (17). Hierdie liefde het haar genoop om oral, in die verskillende lande wat sy besoek het, met Chinese kontak te maak. Sy is ook die eerste persoon wat die Bahà`i-geloof in Kaapstad en in Johannesburg aan die Chinese verkondig het (18). Tydens haar verblyf verblyf van 31 dae in Kaapstad, het sy 30 lesings aangebied. Vier van die lesings is oor die radio uitgesaai.

Vyf dae na haar aankoms in Kaapstad (op 13 Desember 1924) het die Cape Times 'n artikel oor Martha Root gepubliseer. Haar wêreldreise, haar vorige werk as 'n joernalis, haar beoogde lesings en radiogesprekke en haar adres is in hierdie artikel vermeld. Twee dae later is sy soos volg in die Cape Argus beskryf: "This earnest-eyed, fragile looking little American lady ... For years she worked as a member of the regular staff of the Pittsburg Sun ... She has the journalist's flair, the ready interest in all things and the sympathy which makes her work easy and delightful. Journalism is to her, however, only the means to an end. It enables her to live while carrying around the world her message of universal peace and her exhortation to all men to be brothers. The Bahà`i movement which sprang up in Persia some 70 years ago, has a strong following in South Africa, where most people have been told of the persecuted prophet who languished for 40 years in a Syrian prison, but managed from its darkness to send out to his

countrymen the message of Universal Brotherhood. For the followers of Bahà`i do not give up the religion in which they were bred. They are able to hold the peculiar tenets of their own sect while recognizing the claims of the universal brotherhood of man" (19). Die artikel sluit soos volg af: "She has the spare, wiry frame and the earnest eyes of a worker for a cause. The cause is not yet won, and there remains much hard work to be done. The time for labour is here, and while she has strength and force, she is not likely to desert the ranks" (20).

Ander persone het Martha Root op dieselfde wyse beskryf. Haar mees uitstaande karaktereienskap was dat sy nooit krediet vir haar eie werk geneem het nie-- sy het altyd gesê dat die eer Baha'u'llah toekom. Die meeste koerantberigte het haar soos in die bovermelde berig beskryf, en foto's van haar is in Kaapstad, Johannesburg en in Durban gepubliseer. Sy is ook deur die onderskeie koerante geprys vir haar werk en die boodskap wat sy na Suid-Afrika gebring het.

Me Root het een week in Johannesburg (14-21 Januarie 1925), een week in Pretoria en 10 dae in Durban deurgebring. Sy het Esperanto (21) as die aangewese Bahà`i universele wêreldtaal voorgehou en het op 6 Februarie 1925 aan boord van die Llanstephan Castle na Londen vertrek. Dié warrelwindtoer van Martha Root word moontlik ten beste beskryf in die volgende woorde van Fanny Knobloch:

"Every day of Martha's time, every hour, is full up, and even though we are up early, each of us busy with our correspondence, it seems impossible to catch up. Martha's correspondence calls for a typist, but we can't afford it, so we just `keep on keeping on'. Today we had two of our friends as guests ... Tomorrow the Pastor of the Unitarian Church

will be our guest at which time, arrangements will be made for Martha to speak at his church. This evening we meet a group of Theosophists, and another group on Monday. This afternoon we are having a parlor talk. Sunday we are to be the guests of the Chinese Republican Club ... Some society leaders here, who knew Martha as a journalist in Pittsburg, will call for her in the car, having us to dinner, and then meet a few of their friends for the evening" (22).

3.3 Die eerste Bahà`i Plaaslike Geestelike Raad in Suid-Afrika

Na vyf jaar se harde werk deur Fanny Knobloch het die geskiedenis uiteintlik 'n wending geneem deurdat die eerste Plaaslike Geestelike Raad (Local Spiritual Assembly) van die Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika in 1925 in Pretoria gestig is. Die hooflede was niemand anders nie as Fanny Knobloch, haar suster Pauline Hannen en Martha Root (23).

Ook die eerste Pretorianer om 'n Bahà`i te word, was 'n vrou-- Agnes Carey (1879-1958) (deur Shoghi Effendi as die Bahà`i-moeder in Suid-Afrika aangewys). Sy was van die vroegste dae af die enigste oorblywende Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i wat hier aanwesig was toe die pioniers in die vyftigerjare in die RSA begin arri-veer het, en het vanaf 1925 tot en met 1929 as gewone lid op die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad gedien. Haar huis in Arkadia, Pretoria het ook as die heel eerste "vergaderplek" in Suid-Afrika gedien (24). Die Pretoriase Bahà`i-gemeenskap is dus dié oudste gemeenskap van dié geloof binne Suid-Afrika.

Agnes Carey en die Arcadia huis



(Susan Ford, ... , p 16)

Pretoria was die eerste en enigste plek waar 'n Plaaslike Geestelike Raad gedurende hierdie vroeë era in Suid-Afrika saamgestel is. Die gebeure is ook gunstig deur Shoghi Effendi ontvang en hy het die volgende aan hulle geskryf: "Your joyful tidings and the inspiring state of your activities have deeply moved me. You have earned the admiration and gratitude of your fellow workers the world over. Persevere in your arduous yet noble task, and remember that He will never fail in your hour of need, and will crown your patient endeavours in so sacred and unique a field with single and abiding success"(25). Hierdie

strewe is aan die begin volgehou en bydraes het na beide die nasionale fonds en die Amerikaanse tempelfonds ingestroom.

Dit is nie bekend wie die nege lede van die Raad in Pretoria was nie, maar die sekretaris was mnr Vernon Durose. Mnr Durose was skynbaar getrou en toegewyd, aangesien die geskiedenis toon dat hy sewe jaar as sekretaris van dié Raad gedien het.

Die sleutelfigure in die Pretoriase Raad was natuurlik mnr en mev Carey. Hoewel mnr Harry Carey homself nooit as 'n Bahà`i laat verklaar het nie, blyk dit tog dat me Fanny Knobloch hom as 'n Bahà`i "van binne" beskou het. Die blinde musikant, Peter Cruse, is ook as 'n opregte en ware Bahà`i in dié Pretoriase gemeenskap beskou (26).

Die Pretoriase Plaaslike Geestelike Raad was egter gou in twee verdeel deurdat mnr en mev B_____ (27) die Bahà`i-boodskap met sterrekunde en ander idees vermeng het. Die egpaar het albei sterk persoonlikhede gehad en het die nuwe Bahà`is met hul vermengde idees verwar. Die situasie is deur me Knobloch se siekte en gevolglike afwesigheid vererger. Toe sy in 1928 terugkeer, het sy gevind dat die situasie in Pretoria versleg het. Fanny Knobloch het skryf weereens aan Shoghi Effendi geskryf en die situasie beskryf. Sy antwoord (in Desember 1928) het soos volg gelui: "My dear and precious co-worker. I feel we must gently and determinately remind the friends that it is absolutely essential that the Teachings should not be confused with the obscure ideas related to numerology and astrology and the like We must at this stage preserve the purity and sanctity of the Bahà`i teachings. I will pray that you may be guided in your efforts and may succeed in safeguarding and promoting the interests of our beloved Faith" (28).

Fanny Knobloch het hierdie brief op 30 Januarie 1929 ontvang. Na deeglike oorweging, gebed en meditasie het sy besluit om die twee persone uit die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad te sit. Dit is egter nie bekend hoé presies sy dit gedoen het nie, aangesien al die historiese dokumentasie van die Pretoriase Raad verdwyn het. Die Guardian se brief (gedateer 20 Maart 1929) waarin hy sy magtiging verleen, het egter behoue gebly. Sy sekretaris het soos volg geskrywe: "I am directed by the Guardian to thank you for your letter of Feb. 21, 1929. Although it is unfortunate that you have to break away with Mr. and Mrs. B_____ in Pretoria, it was absolutely important sooner or later to start the Cause in its true and simple form and remind your hearers that astrology and horoscopes are no part at all of the Bahà`i teachings, and in such cases or places where they have not taken this bold and necessary step they are in hopeless perplexity. The Guardian is glad to learn of your good work in other parts of South Africa and the sincere interest you have awakened" (29).

Me Knobloch het, ten spyte van hierdie gebeure voortgegaan om die Bahà`i-geloof te verkondig en het selfs na die destydse Oranje-Vrystaat, Natal en Bulawayo (tans Harare in Zimbabwe) vir dié doel gereis. Verskeie name verskyn om die een of ander rede in haar memoirs, maar daar kan nie met sekerheid gesê word dat die persone wel almal die Bahà`i-geloof aangeneem het nie: Mnr en mev Radloff (van 'n plaas naby Westbury), professor en mev Johann Spruyt (wat die geloof in Heidelberg aangeneem het), majoor en mev Carter (van Bulowayo, wat 'n Heilige Tablet van `Abdu'l-Bahà ontvang het) en mnr en mev Hall en hul dogter.

Hierdie toegewyde pionier het haar werk op eie koste verrig en was dus 'n onderwyser van die Bahà`i-geloof, sonder enige vergoeding. Haar fondse het egter in 1929 opgedroog en sy was ge-

noodsaak om Suid-Afrika in Mei 1929 te verlaat. Die geskiedenis neem egter 'n verdere wending-- sy haar terugreis tydelik uitgestel omdat mnr en mev B_____ 'n vredesooreenkoms met die Pretoria Plaaslike Geestelike Raad wou sluit. Sy het onmiddellik na Pretoria vertrek en die egpaar saam met die blinde musikant (toe professor Cruse) gesprek. Die egpaar het skynbaar egter nie vrede gesoek nie, maar die Raad eerder aangeval. Me Knobloch het weer eens met vele skrywes aan Shoghi Effendi gereageer. Voor die eerste skrywe egter beantwoord is, het sy (op 2 Julie 1929) na Amerika vertrek. Sy het altesaam sewe jaar as pionier in Suid-Afrika gewerk en het steeds deur inligting wat sy van kennisse ontvang het, op hoogte van die situasie gebly.

Twee jaar later (in 1931) skrywe sy weer aan die Guardian op grond van inligting wat sy van Agnes Carey ontvang het. Shoghi Effendi se antwoord deur middel van sy sekretaris, het soos volg gelui: "The friends should not hesitate to answer any attack which will be directed to them and they should courageously refuse to participate in the activities of Mrs. B_____ and her party Shoghi Effendi wishes the friends to not pay the least attention to these insignificant happenings and wishes you especially to encourage them to establish a Bahà'î Centre and to unite all their efforts for the great task they have to carry on" (30). Die Beskermheer het self ook soos volg geskryf: "... This small band of devoted and loyal believers in that land must not compromise nor sacrifice any of their cherished principles. What is required at present is the establishment of a vigorous, united and loyal Assembly which should supersede, guide, and control the activities of the believers and be regarded as the focal centre of the Faith and the guardian of its destiny. I pray that through your letters of loving encouragement you may be enabled to attain this noble end and thus consolidate your glorious and historic achievement" (31).

Dit blyk egter dat, ten spyte van al Fanny Knobloch se pogings en skrywes, dit net die begin was van die agteruitgang van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suidelike Afrika. Die groepe het hierna die een na die ander begin verdwyn. In 1938 was daar slegs drie Bahà`i-groepe oor: in die Kaapstad, Pretoria en die destydse Salisbury, en in 1946 was daar slegs drie Bahà`i-gelowiges in Suid-Afrika oor, mev Carey, wat na Natal verhuis het; mnr Jack Dee van Salisbury en mnr Reginald Turvey wat na Johannesburg teruggekeer het nadat hy 'n Bahà`i in Engeland geword het (32).

3.4 Loulie Mathews se besoek aan Suid-Afrika

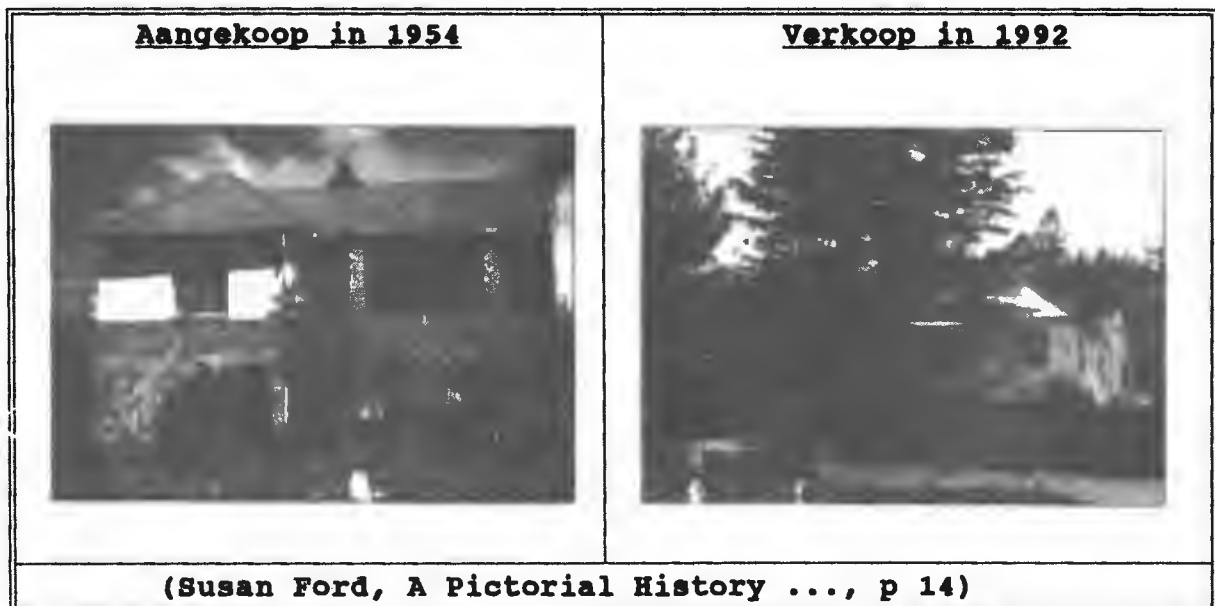
Loulie Mathews was nog 'n rondreisende Amerikaanse verkondiger van die Bahà`i-geloof en het opnuut gepoog om in Suid-Afrika lewe in die geloof te blaas. Sy het Kaapstad, die destydse Bulawayo en Durban in Februarie 1937 vir 'n onbepaalde tydperk besoek. In 1948 het sy weer na Suid-Afrika teruggekeer en vyf maande in Kaapstad, Johannesburg, Pretoria en Durban deurgebring. Hoewel sy al die ou kontakte en Bahà`is besoek het en selfs nuwe mense leer ken het, het haar optrede geen herlewing van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid-Afrika teweeggebring nie. Wat nodig was, soos die Beskermheer self gesê het, was om 'n groep pioniers te stuur wat hulself oor die Republiek sou versprei, daar sou vestig en ook permanente Bahà`i-sentrums sou daarstel (33).

3.5 Die planting van die Bahà`i-geloof

Die historiese gegewens toon hierna 'n duidelike sprong-- die werklike gebeure waarvan kennis geneem behoort te word, het eers in die vyftigerjare 'n aanvang geneem. Dit word onder meer geïllustreer deur Shoghi Effendi se erkenning aan die Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar, Reginal Turvey (1882-1968), dat dié geloof se uit-

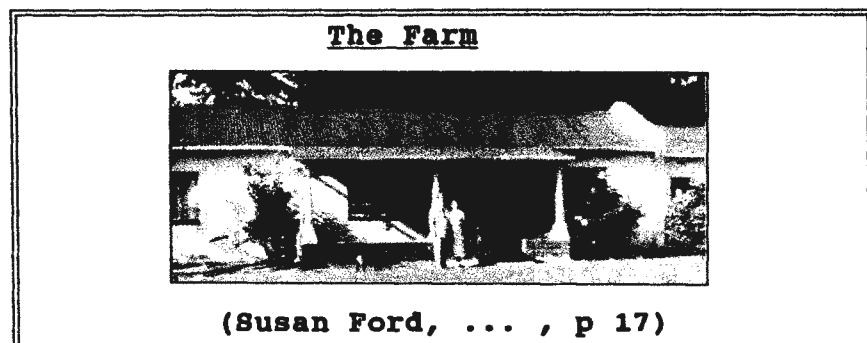
breiding eintlik misluk het (34):".....the reason the early days of Bahà`i activity in South Africa had failed to prosper was that the Bahà`i World Administration had not been established at that time to nurture growth and development".

Shoghi Effendi se tienjaarlange "Crusade" (35) het veroorsaak dat die nuwe geloof in 1953 ook na Afrika, en in besonder na Suidelike Afrika, sou uitbrei. Dit het daartoe gelei dat verskeie pioniers in 1953 vanuit Noord-Amerika na Suid-Afrika gekom het om die grondslag vir 'n Bahà`i Administrasie daar te lê. Hul aankoms het daartoe bygedra dat 'n huis in Melville, Johannesburg in 1954 deur die Bahà`is aangekoop is. Dit sou dien as die eerste hoeksteen vir die Bahà`i Administrasie in die hele Suidelike Afrika. Die woning by Rustenburgweg 23, Melville, was die nuwe Nasionale Bahà`i Sentrum. Dit is egter in 1992 verkoop omdat dit nie meer aan die behoeftes van die groeiende Bahà`i-gemeenskap kon voldoen nie. Die huis het vir byna 40 jaar as die geestelike, opvoedkundige en administratiewe sentrum van die Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika gedien.



In 1954 word die eerste Bahà`i Plaaslike Geestelike Raad (Local Spiritual Assembly) van Johannesburg aangewys. Dit dien ook tot en met 1956 in as die interim Nasionale Geestelike Raad (National Spiritual Assembly) in Suid-Afrika (36). Sewe lede van dié komitee was ook deel van die nege persone wat in 1956 die eerste Nasionale Konvensie in Suid-Afrika gehou het. Hulle was **William ("Bill") en Marguerite Sears, Reginal Turvey, Bayyid Ford, Robert en Helen Miller en Doris Ballard.**

Dié eerste Nasionale Konvensie is gedurende April 1956 op die Bahà`i-plaas in Muldersdrift gehou (die plaas staan onder Bahà`is as "**The Farm**" bekend). Die gasheer en gasvrou was die Amerikaanse pioniers, William en Marguerite Sears. "The Farm" (kyk foto hiernaas) is in 1958 verkoop. Verskeie afgevaardigdes van Suidelike Afrika en die eilande in die Indiese Oseaan het die byeenkoms bygewoon. Onder die besoekers wat die verrigtinge bygewoon en ook aan die konvensie deelgeneem het, was **Paul Haney, Musi Banani en Ali Nakhjavani** (al drie Hands of the Cause [Ali Nakhjavani is tans 'n lid van die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid]). Hierdie vergadering was verantwoordelik vir die administrasie van Suid-Afrika, Suidwes-Afrika (tans Namibië), Mauritius, St Helena, Reunion, Madagaskar, Angola, Mosambiek, Swaziland, Basoetoland (tans Lesotho), Bechuanaland (tans Botswana), Noord-Rhodesië (tans Zambië), Suid-Rodesië (tans Zimbabwe) en Nyasaland (tans Malawi).



Die Bahà`i-onderrig het, na die Nasionale Konvensie, drie belangrike veranderinge ondergaan en 'n nuwe fase is ingelei: eerstens is 'n Nasionale Onderwys Komitee aangewys; tweedens is die administrasie van "The farm" na die Nasionale Bahà`i-sentrum in Johannesburg verskuif; en derdens het Shoghi Effendi in Oktober 1957 twee Hands of the Cause in Suidelike Afrika aangewys, naamlik William Sears en John Robarts (37). Die twee mans is ook saam met **John Allen**, as "Auxiliary Board Members" aangewys (38).

In 1962 het die Bahà`i-gemeenskap eiendom op die Potchefstroom-pad naby Lenasia aangeskaf met die oog op die oprigting van 'n tempel. Die perseel is in 1990 verkoop en 'n plaas in Elandsdrift (enkele kilometers van die oorspronklike "Sears"-plaas in Muldersdrift) is gekoop. Bahà`is beoog om hul tempel (gebedshuis en sentrum vir sosiale bedrywighede, wat skole en ouetehuse insluit) aldaar te vestig. Konferensies word ook daar gehou en waar die Instituut vir Onderrig in die Bahà`i-geloof is daar gesetel. Die plaas is ook die Suid-Afrikaanse sentrum vir die koördinasie van die Bahà`ise oplossing vir die sosio-ekonomiese krisis van die hedendaagse wêreld.

3.6 Die Moeder van Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika

Die geskiedenis toon dat mev Agnes Carey die eerste en byna laaste Bahà`i vir baie jare in Suid-Afrika was. Sy is deur die Beskermheer as die Moeder van die Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika (39) aangewys. Frederika Agnes Carey is op 1 Desember 1879 in Kaapstad gebore en het op 10 Junie 1958 in Durban gesterf (40). Sy het in die Kaap grootgeword en na Pretoria verhuis toe sy vir verpleegster begin studeer het. Sy het haar finale eksamen by die Johannesburg Algemene Hospitaal afgelê en was ook 'n lid van die Pre-

toria Gevangenis Raad, 'n gevangenes waar sy baie vir vrouegevangenes gedoen.

Mev Carey en die Amerikaanse Fanny Knobloch het om en by 1920 in Arkadia, Pretoria, ontmoet. Me Knobloch het 'n groot invloed op Agnes Carey gehad. Meneer Carey het as 'n hoofklerk by die Departement van Openbare Werke by die Uniegebou in Pretoria gewerk. Fanny Knobloch beskryf die gebeure in haar dagboek: "In this city, Mr. and Mrs. Carey generously supported the Cause by opening their home as the centre of Bahà`i activities. The first South African Assembly was organised there between 1920-1925. Mr Carey, a Mason of high standing, brought us in touch with members of that order, as well as with men representing branches of the government. These became, at that time, deeply interested. On one occasion a group of eight of Mr Carey's friends came to hear more about the Cause. Seated at the long table sipping tea they listened attentively to the history of the Cause. Questions arose which Mrs Pauline Hannen answered with references to the Bible. One distinguished elderly Mason, who had made notes on his white cuff, turned to his host and voiced the desire of all present: 'May we be favoured with another hour of study?' As they departed Mrs Hannen suggested that they bring their Bibles next time. Again assembled around the table, with no absentees, these inquirers were given exact references in the Bible. As they read the prophecies of the time and place of God's Manifestation in this Day, there were exclamations of surprise. 'I have read these verses many times', said one, 'and never stopped to think, taking it for granted that they referred to Jesus'" (41).

Fanny Knobloch het ook in 1925 die volgende woorde aan mev Agnes Carey geskryf: "You blessed Sister mine--I love you so dearly, and am so thankful to hold you very close as my own Bahà`i love.

Yes dear, tests will come ... the greater the trials and persecutions, the happier and more joyous must you be, for then your faith hath brought forth fruit. The children and children's children of those who persecute you today will wish they had lived in this day-- they will glorify you because of your service to the Most Glorious Lord" (42).

Die briefwisseling tussen Fanny Knobloch en Agnes Carey het vir etlike jare voortgeduur. Toe me Knobloch in 1935 weer eens na Amerika terugkeer, het mev Carey aan Shoghi Effendi met betrekking tot die gebeure in Pretoria geskryf. Die Guardian se reaksie was soos volg: "My dear and precious co-worker. Your letter has refreshed my mind and heart. I will pray for your success from the depths of my heart. Persevere and never lose heart. The hosts of the Concourse on high will guide you, sustain you and secure for you unprecedented victory in the service of the Cause. Your pioneer work will ever live and adorn the annals of our Sacred Cause. Wishing you good health and happiness. Your true brother, Shoghi" (43).

Nadat mev Carey se man in ongeveer 1936 afgetree het met pensioen, het hulle na Amanzimtoti, Natal verhuis, waar mnr Carey gesterf het. Agnes Carey is gedurende die oorlogsjare tot Branch Commandant of the South African Women's Auxiliary Services (SAWAS) van Amanzimtoti verkies (44) en was die behoeftiges behulpsaam. Sy was ook 'n lid van die Amanzimtoti Vroue Instituusie. In 1945 het sy na Durban verhuis, waar sy talle vriende gehad het.

Me Loulie Albee Mathews en haar vriendin, me Ophelia Crum het Agnes Carey gedurende 1948 in Durban besoek. Sy was baie bly om, na 'n lang afwesigheid van Bahà'is, weer 'n Bahà'ì in Suid-Afrika

te ontmoet en het gevolglik verskeie praatjies met betrekking tot die Bahà`i-geloof by die Teosofiese Vereniging in Durban gereël. 'n Verdere hoogtepunt in Agnes Carey se lewe was haar bywoning van die Bahà`i-konferensie in Kampala, Uganda in 1952. Sy het daarna gedurig van hierdie byeenkoms gepraat en telkemale opnuut na die lang vlug na Uganda verwys.

Professor en mev Bishop Brown, twee Bahà`i-pioniers wat in 1953 van die Verenigde State van Amerika na Suid-Afrika gekom het, het Agnes Carey in Augustus van daardie jaar in Durban ontmoet. Hulle het ook vriende gebly tot en met haar dood in 1958.

Agnes Carey (1879-1958)



(Susan Ford, ... , p 51)

3.7 Die Vader van die Bahá'ís in Suid-Afrika

Reginald ("Reg") Ernest George Turvey is op 29 Augustus 1882 in Ladybrand gebore en op 11 Oktober 1882 in die Ladybrand Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk gedoop (45). Sy vader was George Henry Turvey wat vanaf 1895 tot 1897 as lid van die Vrystaatse Volksraad gedien het. Hy het ook vanaf 1891 tot 1899 en weer vanaf 1907 tot 1910 op die Stadsraad van Ladybrand gedien en verskeie plase en 'n winkel in Ladybrand besit. Reg Turvey se oupa was Edward Ford Turvey wat, net soos sy kleinseun later, 'n kunstenaar was. Hy het die Turvey London Party van die 1820-Setlaars op die **SS Sir George Osborn** na Grahamstad gelei. Die gesin het eers in Grahamstad gebly, waarna hulle na die Vrystaat verhuis het (46).

Turvey het by die bekende Grey College in Bloemfontein skoolgegaan, maar nooit gematrikuleer nie. In 1902 het hy kuns bestudeer onder **Frans Oerder** in Pretoria. Die gesin het in 1903 na Londen getrek en Reginald Turvey is in dieselfde jaar vir kunsklasse by die Slade School of Art in Londen ingeskryf. Tydens sy verblyf (tot ongeveer 1907) het hy onder Henry Tonks en Wilson Steer gestudeer. In 1904 het hy die Wilson Steerprys vir portretskilder gewen en aan die einde van 1906 sy studies aan die London School of Art voortgesit, waar hy saam met JM Swan en nog later saam met die bekende Australiese skilder, Lambert, verder studeer het (47). Tydens laasgenoemde been van sy studie het hy die bekende beeldhouer, Bernard Leach ontmoet. Hulle sou lewenslange vriende bly. Reg het in 1910 vir Leach en sy vrou na Japan gevolg, waar Leach 'n kunsskool geopen het en Turvey 'n onderwyser sou wees. Weens die besoldiging, en ook omdat hy gesukkel het om by die Oosterse kultuur aan te pas, het Reginald Turvey in 1911 na Suid-Afrika teruggekeer (48).

Sy sielswroeging word moontlik die duidelikste beskryf in 'n brief aan sy ouers, gedateer 7 Oktober 1910 (49). Sy familie wat plaasboere en besigheidsmense was, het hom nie verstaan nie en hy het besluit om tog maar te gaan boer en in sy vrye tyd te skilder. In die brief wys hy tog daarop dat skilder sy eerste liefde was. In 1913 verlaat die gesin Ladybrand en vertrek na Kenia om aldaar te gaan boer. Die gesin het hulself in die Nakuru-distrik gevestig. Turvey moes daagliks wild jag sodat die gesin iets sou hê om te eet. Hy het die perdry en natuur geniet, maar die isolasie verafsku.

In 1914 het sy vader aan 'n hartaanval gesterf; in 1917 het hy en sy moeder na Suid-Afrika teruggekeer en hulself in Durban gevestig (50). Gedurende hierdie tydperk het Turvey baie siek geword en was hy weens 'n hartsiekte vir 'n lang ruk bedlêend. In 1922 het sy oom hom oorreed om na Kenia terug te keer en sy erfplaas aldaar te verkoop. Turvey het die plaas verkoop en op 5 Mei 1924 met **Frances (Topsy) Waddell Gunn** in Bloemfontein getrou. Die egpaar vestig het hulself in Cornwall, Engeland gevestig en twee seuns en drie dogters is uit die huwelik gebore. Geoffrey, die oudste seun, het egter in 1930 aan witseerkeel gesterf en die tweede seun, John, is in 1931 gebore.

Gedurende hierdie tyd het Turvey ook 'n besoek gebring aan Durban in Suid-Afrika en in 1928 sy eerste kunsuitstalling gehou. Sy werke het goed verkoop en die Durbanse Kunstgalerie het een van sy werke gekoop (wat vandag nog daar besigtig kan word) (51).

Die Leach-gesin het in 1932 van Japan na Engeland verhuis en het die Turvey-gesin hul huis verkoop en ook na Totnes, naby die nuwe Leach-woning, getrek. Hier het Turvey en Leach met die Amerikaanse skilder, **Mark Tobey**, kennis gemaak en is hulle aan die

Bahà`i-geloof blootgestel. Mark Tobey het hulle van Baha'u'llah se lewe en werke vertel. 'n Kenmerk van Turvey en Leach se vriendskap was hul gesamentlike soeke na waarheid en ware skoonheid, en na hierdie blootstelling het hulle ure lank oor Baha'u'llah en sy boodskap geredeneer en dit bespreek. Hoewel Turvey op 'n stadium ook in teosofie geïnteresseerd was, het hy skynbaar vir die eerste maal in sy lewe antwoorde op sy vrae gevind. In 1936 het hy die Bahà`i-geloof amptelik aangeneem (52).

Die Turvey-gesin het Suid-Afrika weer in 1937 besoek, en in 1940 opnuut hier gevestig weens 'n voedseltekort as gevolg van die oorlog, en ook weens hul seun John se siekte. Hulle het vir byna 'n jaar by Eersterivier in die Kaap gewoon, maar in 1942 na Johannesburg verhuis waar Turvey verskeie uitstallings gehou het. Dit het egter nie finansiëel goed gegaan nie (53).

Gedurende hierdie maer jare het hy verskeie Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika probeer opspoor, maar nie daarin geslaag nie. Dit kan moontlik toegeskryf word aan die swak funksionering van die Bahà`i-Administrasie in daardie jare, en die afwesigheid van kontak tussen hom en die Bahà`i-Wêreldsentrum.

In 1948 is Turvey van sy vrou (54) geskei en het hy sy lewe as skilder in Johannesburg voortgesit, waar hy in 'n klein hotelkamer gewoon het.

Sake het egter in 1953 'n dramatiese wending geneem toe vier Persiese Bahà`is Turvey in Johannesburg besoek het (55). Hulle was Músà Banàní en Dhikru'llàh Khàdem (twee Hands of the Cause) en hulle vroue, wat op versoek van Shoghi Effendi alle Bahà`i-sentra in Afrika besoek het. Die gebeure met betrekking tot Reginald Turvey word onder meer soos volg deur mnr Khàdem, in

'n brief gedateer 19 Maart 1955 beskryf: "... Mr Turvey was the only Bahà`i of that town in that time and it seemed that he never expected anyone to go and see him. He was therefore so overwhelmed with joy that he leaned against the wall Our dear old friend Mr Turvey only shed tears. He was right to do so, because he had been there for more than 14 years and this was the first time that he could meet some Bahà`is in his place and from the East too. During these long years of loneliness he had been trying to serve the Cause. He had given the Message of God to several persons, who had been interested and got books from him to study this wonderful Cause. We were together till about midnight during which we were talking about the progress of the Faith in all lands and specially gave him the glad-tidings of the Holy Land, the Intercontinental Teaching Conference of Kampala, the friends of Iran and other parts of the world ..."(56).

Vermelde besoekers het vir byna 'n week by Turvey tuisgegaan en het hom meegedeel dat 'n groep Bahà`i-pioniers binnekort van Amerika, Kanada en Engeland in Suid-Afrika sou arriveer en dat dié groep die basis sou vorm vanwaar die Bahà`i-geloof opnuut in Suidlike Afrika gevestig kon word (57).

In Julie 1953 het die eerste pioniers gearriveer, naamlik William en Marguerite Sears en hul seun Michael. Die gesin het aanvanklik vir 'n paar maande in Dunbarstraat, Bellevue gewoon en later na 'n plaas in Muldersdrift getrek. Reginald Turvey het daar saam met die Sears-gesin gebly en sy skilderkuns aldaar vanaf die plaas voortgesit. Dit was tydens dié era (vanaf 1953 tot en met 1961) dat Reginald Turvey verskeie plaaslike uitstallings gehou het. Dit was ook die laaste fase van sy ontwikkeling as skilder.

In 1956 (in die ouderdom van 74) het hy op 'n pelgrimstog na

Israel vertrek en verskeie Heilige Bahà`ì-plekke in Haifa en `Akkà besoek. By `Akkà het hy Shoghi Effendi persoonlik ontmoet en het die Beskermheer hom vereer as die Vader van die Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika (58).

Tydens dié besoek het Effendi (die Beskermheer) die Suid-Afrikaanse situasie soos volg aan Turvey beskryf: "The Faith had faded in South Africa mainly because the Administrative Order had not yet been firmly established in the world. A group or groups had been formed in South Africa in 1921-22, but it had reverted to the virgin state. The Administrative Order would prevent that reversion to virginity" (59).

In 1961 en 1962 het Turvey twee suksesvolle een-manuitstallings in Durban en Johannesburg gehou. In April 1963 het hy 'n reünie met Bernard Leach en Mark Tobey by die Bahà`ì Wêreldkongres in die Albert Hall, Londen gehad. Hy verwerf uiteindelik beroemdheid-- tydens die Kaapstadse Uitstalling van 1964 het die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Kunsgallery twee van sy skilderye gekoop (wat tans steeds op uitstalling is). Hierna het sy gesondheid versleg en op 2 Maart 1968 sterf Reginald Turvey in Durban, Suid-Afrika (60).

Reginald Turvey (1882-1968)



(Susan Ford, ... , p 52)

3.8 Die vroeë Bahā`i-Pioniers

Die eerste Bahā`i-pioniers ("sendelinge") het aan die begin van

Shoghi Effendi se sogenaamde Ten Year Crusade in Suid-Afrika aangekom. Op 18 Julie 1953 het die Sears-gesin (William, Marguerite, Mike en Billy) gearriveer en hulself later op die plaas in Muldersdrift vestig. Teen die einde van daardie jaar (1953) was daar 'n verdere 24 pioniers in Suidelike Afrika aanwesig. Uit hierdie groep is slegs 6 pioniers vandag nog in Suid-Afrika woonagtig (61).

Die pioniersgetalle het egter vinnig gegroei en teen die einde van 1954 was daar reeds 53 Bahà`i-pioniers in Suidelike Afrika. Hierdie getal het aan die einde van 1955 op 61 gestaan. Aan die einde van die Ten Year Crusade het 'n verdere 90 pioniers van die Verenigde State van Amerika, Kanada, Engeland en Persië na Suidelike Afrika gekom en die geloof verkondig. Teen 1963 het die getal egter vanaf 90 tot 45 gehalveer.

Die tydvak het egter ook daartoe bygedra dat 17 inwoners van Suidelike Afrika pioniers in ander lande geword het. Vier was Suid-Afrikaners, naamlik: Petal en Joe Arnott (wat na Malawi gegaan het), Joseph Mbata (wat na Zoeloceland gegaan het [Zoeloceland is in daardie dae as 'n onafhanklike land geag]), en Andrew Mofokeng (wat na Lesotho gegaan het) (62).

3.9 Die Bahà`i-groeitydperk

Daar is geen statistiek beskikbaar oor die aantal Bahà`i-gelowiges gedurende die drie jaar tussen 1953 en 1955 nie. Wat wel bekend is, is dat Andries Khorombi die eerste swart Bahà`i was--hy het die geloof op 3 September 1954 in Johannesburg aangeneem. Die tweede swart Bahà`i was William Masehla wat in November 1954 tot die geloof gekom het. Dorothy Senne was die eerste swart vrou wat op 21 Januarie 1955 saam met haar man, Ephens Senne, dié ge-

loof aangeneem het. Hulle was ook die eerste Tswana Bahà`is van Suid-Afrika. Ander bekende bekeerlinge van 1955 was Max en May Seepe (die eerste kleurlinge), Meriane Sandile (die eerste Xhosa), Gladys en Charlotte Ndlovu (die eerste Zoeloes), en Sarah Mamabolo (die eerste Noord-Sotho). Later het Creswell Sisi-lana (die eerste Fingo), die Bismillah-gesin (die eerste Indiërs), die Gallow-gesin (die eerste Maleiers), en Florence Norman en Norman Bailey (die eerste blanke Suid Afrikaners) gevolg (63).

Teen 1955 was daar reeds 15 Plaaslike Geestelike Vergaderings (Local Spiritual Assemblies) in Suid-Afrika. Die eerste vergadering, wat in 1954 gestig is, was die Johannesburgse Plaaslike Geestelike Vergadering wat slegs uit blankes saamgestel was (ooreenkomstig die Apartheidswette) en wat ook as interim Nasionale Geestelike Vergadering (National Spiritual Assembly) (1954-1956) in Suidelike Afrika gedien het (64) en (65).





Plaaslike Geestelike Raad van Johannesburg



(The Bahà`is, A Profile ... , p 13)

Dié dramatiese uitbreiding van een na vyftien Plaaslike Geestelike Vergaderings binne een jaar, het die Guardian aangemoedig om te versoek dat die heel eerste ware Nasionale Geestelike Vergadering in Suid-Afrika vir die Bahà'is van Suid- en Wes-Afrika saamgestel moet word. Hierdie Nasionale Geestelike Vergadering is amptelik verkies in April 1956 deur 19 afgevaardigdes (aangewys deur Shoghi Effendi, die Beskermheer) en was in Johannesburg gesetel. Die verkose lede was: William Masehla, Andrew Mofokeng, William Sears, John Allen, Walther Dlamini, John Robarts, Festus Chambeni, Robert Miller en Max Seepe. Walther Dlamini het in Januarie 1957 bedank en Marguerite Sears is in sy plek verkies (66).

Ander Plaaslike Geestelike Rade:

	
<p>Durban</p>	<p>Roodepoort</p>
 	
<p>Kaapstad</p>	<p>Umlazi</p>
<p>(Susan Ford, ... , p 38)</p>	

Teen April 1956 was daar ook reeds verskeie ander Plaaslike Geestelike Rade op die volgende plekke gevestig: Angola (1), Basoetoland (Lesotho) (5), Betsjoenaland (Botswana) (1), Mauritius (3), Madagaskar (1), Mosambiek (1), Noord-Rhodesië (Zambië) (1), Suid-Rhodesië (Zimbabwe) (2), Reunion (1), Swaziland (1) en Suid-Afrika (9).

Teen 1956 was daar alreeds 496 swart en kleurling Bahà`is en 71 blanke Bahà`is in Suidelike Afrika. Tog was daar gedurende hierdie tydperk slegs 326 Bahà`i-belydeniskaarte in die lëers aanwesig, omdat baie van dié kaarte na die Verenigde State van Amerika versend is. Hierna het dié geloof tot en met 1963 met 300 gelowiges per jaar gegroei. Die getal gelowiges het ook van 1956 tot 1963 van 2302 na 7145 gespring. Gevolglik het die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade geleidelik toegeneem, van 26 in 1956 na 86 in 1963. Die jaar 1963 was ook die einde van Shoghi Effendi se Ten Year Crusade. Dit is met verskeie oorwinningsfeeste gevier. Die verkose lede van die Nasionale Geestelike Raad het ook in 1963 na Haifa, Israel, gegaan om die eerste **Universele Huis van Geregtigheid** te verkies. Nog ander Bahà`is het die eerste Bahà`i Wêreldkongres in die Albertsaal in Londen gaan bywoon.

'n Jaar later, in 1964, het die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Geestelike Raad die moederliggaam van twee ander nuwe Nasionale Geestelike Rade geword. Die Nasionale Raad van die Indiese Oseaan en die Nasionale Raad van Suid-Sentraal-Afrika is die twee Bahà`i Nasionale Geestelike Rade wat uit die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Geestelike Raad gebore is. Hierdie Geestelike Rade het van 1964 af saam met die Suid-Afrikaanse Geestelike Raad bestaan. Dit het verskeie aanpassings in die Bahà`i-gemeenskap in Suidelike Afrika genoodsaak, veral omdat lede uit verskeie streke afgestaan is: Betsjoenaland (Botswana), Noord- en Suid-Rhodesië (Zambië en

Zimbabwe) en Njassaland (Malawi) aan die Nasionale Raad van Suid-Sentraal-Afrika, en Reunion en Madagaskar aan die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Indiese Oseaan. Dit het Suid-Afrika se Nasionale Geestelike Raad met Angola, Basoetoland (Lesotho), St Helena, Suidwes-Afrika (Namibië), Suid-Afrika en Swaziland gelaat, sodat die ledetal dramaties gedaal het van 7145 na 3585. Die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade het vanaf 86 na 36 geval (67).

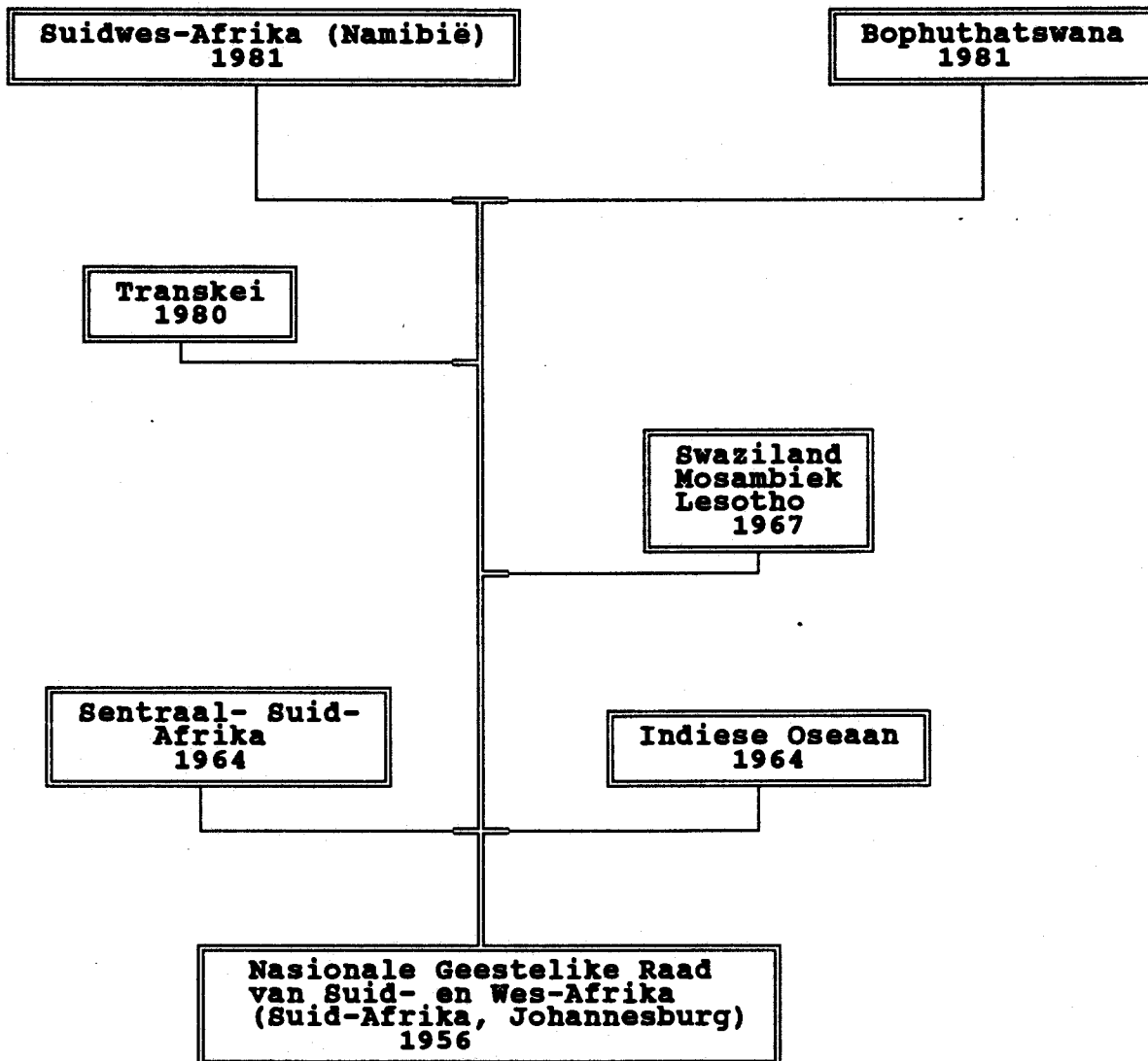
Hierdie gebeure is opgevolg deur die **Universele Huis van Geregtigheid** se negejaarplan, wat veroorsaak het dat die Bahà`i Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid Afrika weer eens as moederliggaam van 'n ander Nasionale Geestelike Raad sou optree, die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Swaziland, Mosambiek en Basoetholand (Lesotho). Die ledetal binne Suid-Afrika het in 1967 dus opnuut na 2568 gedaal en daar was slegs 23 Plaaslike Geestelike Rade oor. Dit mag voorkom of daar 'n agteruitgang in die Bahà`i-geloof te bespeur was, maar daar was inderwaarheid vooruitgang. So het die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Sentraal-Afrika, wat oorspronklik vir Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambië en Botswana ingesluit het, in 1967 geboorte geskenk aan nog 'n nuwe Nasionale Raad, die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Zambië. Hierdie gebeure het in 1970 gekulmineer in die stigting van nog drie Rade, naamlik die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Botswana, Malawi en Rhodesië (Zimbabwe) onderskeidelik.

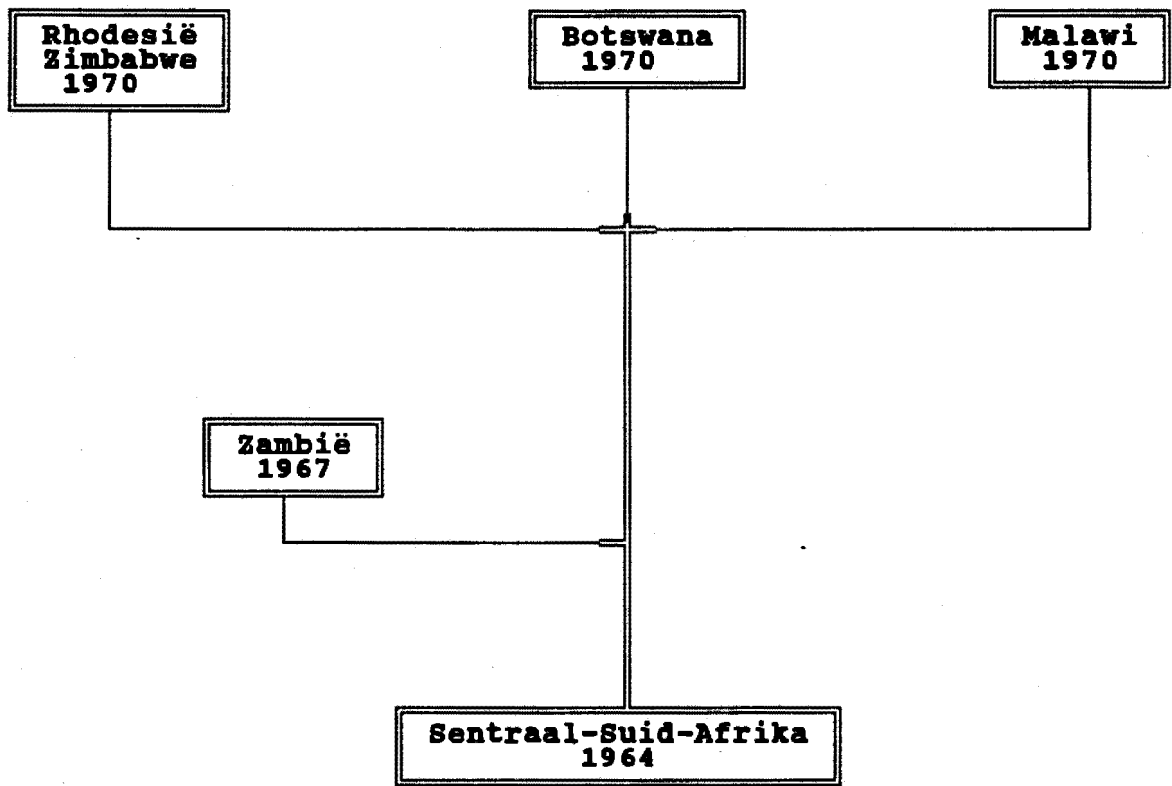
Uit die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Indiese Oseaan wat onder andere uit Mauritius, die Chagos-Eilandgroep, Madagaskar, die Seychelle-eilande, die Comoro-eilande en Reunion bestaan het, het die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Seychelle in 1969 voorgekom, asook die Nasionale Geestelike Rade van Reunion, Madagaskar en Mauritius in 1972.

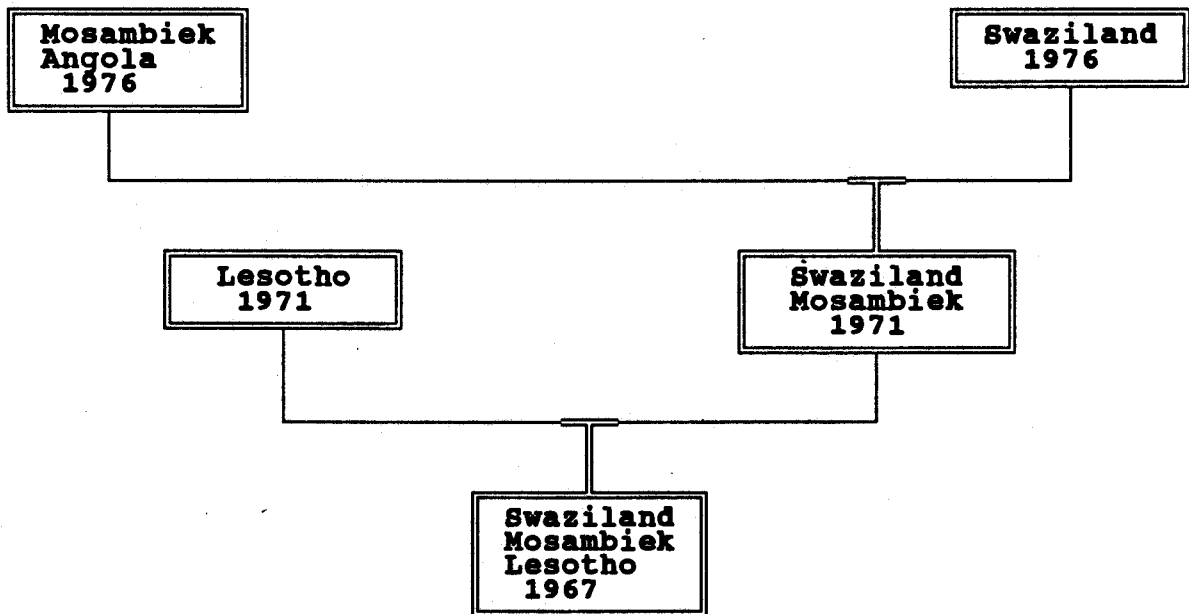
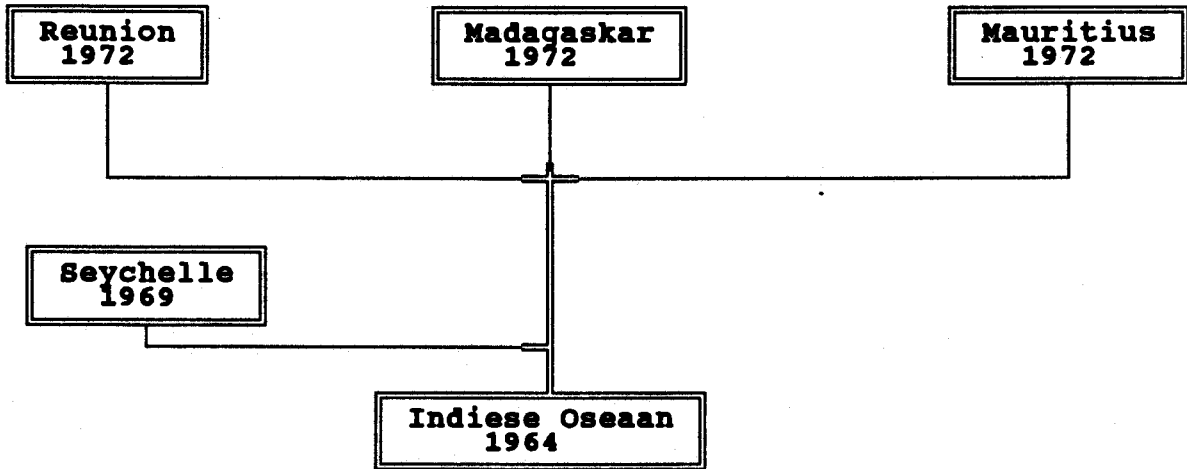
In 1970 het die Bahà`i Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Swaziland, Mosambiek en Lesotho, wat in 1967 ontstaan het, onderverdeel in 'n aparte Nasionale Raad vir Lesotho, en 'n Nasionale Raad vir Mosambiek en Swaziland gesamentlik. Laasgenoemde het in 1976 verdeel om 'n Nasionale Geestelike Raad vir Mosambiek en Angola te vorm, terwyl Swaziland se Raad apart bly voortbestaan het. Die Nasionale Geestelike Rade van Swaziland, en van Mosambiek en Angola, het in 1977 onder direkte beheer en leiding van die **Universele Huis van Geregtigheid** geresorteer (68).

Die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid- en Wes-Afrika het sedert 1967 (tot en met 1980) vir Suid-Afrika, Suidwes-Afrika (Namibië) en St Helena, sowel as die destydse tuislande van Transkei, Bophuthatswana en Venda (in Suid-Afrika) geadministreer. Die apartheidsgebeure en die stigting van sogenaamde tuislande het in 1980 gelei tot die geboorte van die Transkei se Nasionale Geestelike Raad en in 1981 tot die tweeling geboorte van die Nasionale Raad van Bophuthatswana (69) en dié van Suidwes-Afrika (Namibië). Dus was die eerste Nasionale Geestelike Raad ten tye van sy 25-jarige herdenkingsfees die moeder van ses dogterliggame (en uit drie van hulle het tien ander Bahà`i Geestelike Rade ontstaan). Dit het die totaal gebring tot 14 Nasionale Geestelike Rade wat die behoeftes van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suidelike Afrika administreer (70).

Hierdie gebeure en ontwikkelings met betrekking tot die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Afrika, wat die hele Suidelike Afrika bedien het en as die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid- en Wes-Afrika bekendgestaan het, kan skematies soos volg voorgestel word:







Die Bahà`is se Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis kry gedurende April 1995 'n verder kinkel in die kabel. Suid-Afrika het in April 1994, 'n jaar tevore, hul eerste demokratiese verkiesing gehou. Dit het daartoe gelei dat die ou tuislande se Nasionale Geestelike Rade soos dié van Transkei, Venda en Boputhatswana, weer eens in April 1995 met die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Afrika verenig is. Die Transkeise voorsitter, mnr De Villiers Ziphete, is tydens die 1995-Bahà`i-verkiesing as die nuwe voorsitter van die Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Raad verkies, terwyl Krish Naidoo (die vorige voorsitter) die huidige ondervoorsitter is.

Hoewel die amptelike ledetal tans steeds nie bekend is nie, kan vermeld word dat die Bahà`i-geloof in 1995 oor 90 Plaaslike Geestelike Rade (teenoor die 23 van 1967) binne Suid-Afrika beskik. Die Bahà`i-geloof word ook tans in 260 verskillende lokaliteite binne die RSA gevind (71).

3.10 Die Maleier-Bahà`is

Die mondelinge oorlewering toon dat die Bahà`i-geskiedenis in die Kaap gedurende die tydperk 1955 tot 1961 vir verskeie interessantheite gesorg het. Dit het begin deurdat 'n Bahà`i-verbondsbreker (72), ene Abdula Fazal alias Joseph Perdu, sogenaamde Islam-klasse vir die Kaapse Moslems aangebied het.

In 'n onderhoud beskryf 'n mnr Q dit self soos volg: "Kyk, daardie tyd het die manne nie geweet dat Joseph Perdu (in Frans beteken sy naam 'die verlore een') lank gelede 'n Bahà`i was nie. Hy het deur Islam gepraat en selfs ook pamflette (wat in Afrikaans was) uitgegee. Die pamflette was soos 'n boekie en die naam van die boekie was 'AL-MU'MINUN'. Die vertaling daarvan bete-

ken: 'Verily the believers are brothers'" (73). Hy sê voorts dat die Islam-klasse Donderdagaande by die kafee wat as **Snappie Snacks** bekendgestaan het, plaasgevind het. Die eerste ses gelowiges was: "Toyar Gallow, Amin Gallow, Azim Gallow, Sue Hofmeyer (eerste Afrikaner vrou), Yasmine Gallow en Isqaac Gallow" (74).

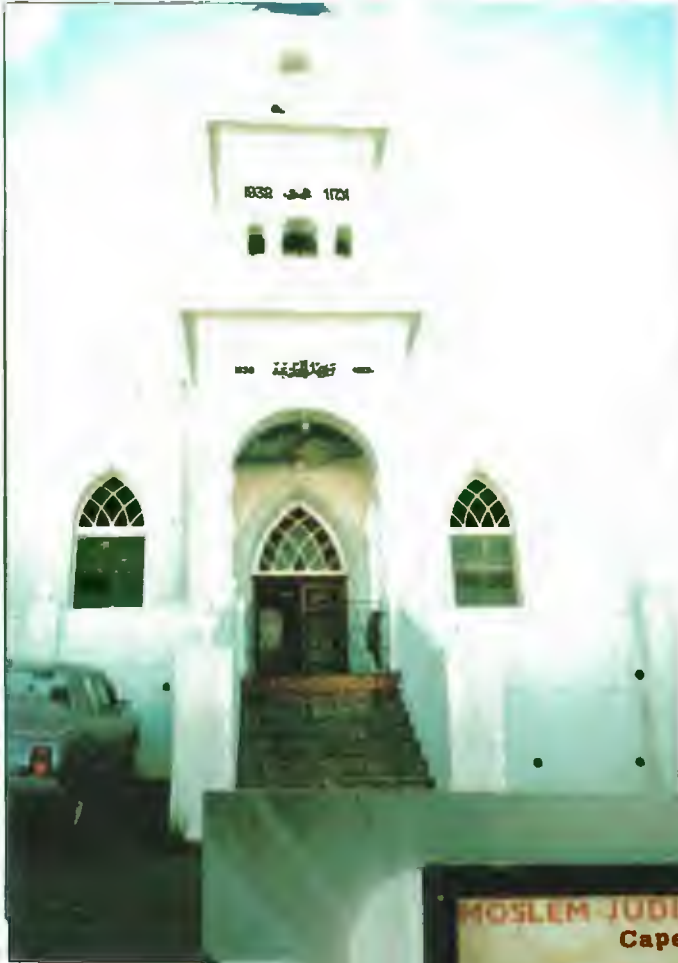
Perdu het op 27 Desember 1958 (75) die laaste keer by die Snappie Snacks winkel opgetree. Hy het agtergekom dat sekere persone na sy agtergrond en geskiedenis ondersoek instel en het met mnr Q gereël om hom te waarsku wanneer die ander mense kom. Daardie aand het hy toe die plek verlaat en vroeg die volgende oggend (Sondag 28 Desember 1958) by mnr Q en mev Y se woning in Queensroad 25, Warmersbay, aangekom en gevra dat hulle 'n brief moet teken. Hoewel dit nie 'n brief was nie, maar 'n skoon vel papier, het hulle dit geteken. Op dié vel papier het Perdu 'n brief aan die Bahà`i Wêreldsentrum (die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid het nog nie bestaan nie) in Haifa, Israel geskryf. Die Bahà`is het gereageer deur aan die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Afrika (toe nog die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid- en Wes-Afrika) te skryf. Laasgenoemde het met Lowell Johnson in verbinding getree en hy het vir mnr T versoek om ondersoek in te stel. Meneer T het ook na aanleiding hiervan die naam as "Bahà`i spy" (76) van die Gallow-familie ontvang (77).

Nadat die Gallow-familie en me Sue Hofmeyer opgespoor is, is hulle vir twee jaar onder kwarantyn gesit. Hulle het, tot die groot verbasing van die ander Kaapse Bahà`is, egter alreeds oor sekere Bahà`i-literatuur beskik, soos "The Dawn Breakers, Kitāb-i-Iqān, Quidance for Today and Tommorrow, en The Promise of All Ages". Meneer Q en me Hofmeyer was na bewering die twee voorste lesers van die ses persone wat by Snappie Snacks vergader

het (78). Hulle het op 21 Maart 1960 bely en is toe amptelik as Bahà`is aanvaar (79).

Dié gebeure het egter verskeie reaksies onder die Moslem-gemeenskap tot gevolg gehad. Die Moslems het Toyar Gallow se motor se bande stukkend gesny en die Gallows se huis onder klippe gesteek. Meneer Q sê ook dat baie van die Moslems gemaak het asof hy nie vir hulle bestaan nie-- as hy aan die eenkant van die straat geloop het, het hulle na die oorkantste sypaadjie oorbeweeg. Daar is ook sekere borde by die ingange van die Moskees en Barbierwinkels geplaas, waarvolgens enige Ahmadea's ('n ander Moslem-sekte) en Bahà`is verbied is om die betrokke plekke te betree (80).

'n Moskee (op die hoeke van Chiappini- en Kasteelstraat,
Distrik 6, Kaapstad) waar so 'n bord steeds vertoon word



Dié reaksie van die Moslems het daartoe aanleiding gegee dat die Nasionale Geestelike Raad 'n besluit uitgevaardig het dat die Bahà`i-geloof nie aan Moslems verkondig mag word nie.

In 'n onderhoud met 'n mnr J sê hy dat hierdie verbod steeds binne Suid-Afrika geld (81). Hy gaan voort deur daarop te wys dat so lank as wat die verbod geld, 'n Bahà`i slegs vrae oor sy of haar geloof mag beantwoord wanneer 'n Moslem dit aan hom of haar stel. As só 'n Moslem nie verdere vrae vra nie, mag die Bahà`i ook nie met die skoling voortgaan nie. Indien hy of sy wel verder uitvra, moet hy of sy, na die beste van die Bahà`ise vermoë geskool word (82). Die Moslem en Bahà`i "konflik" het sy oorsprong in Iran. Islam is die prominente godsdiens aldaar en Bahà`is word steeds vir hul geloof vervolg en selfs gemartel (vervolgings het egter drasties afgeneem sedert die Verenigde Nasies se versoeke insake menseregte in 1985) (83). Meneer J sê dat die situasie in Iran moontlik een van die redes is waarom Bahà`is tot omsigtigheid jeens die Moslems gemaan word (84).

Die Kaapse Bahà`is was net so gretig soos die ses persone onder kwarantyn (die Gallow-familie en Sue Hofmeyer) dat die tweejaar-tydperk (1958-1960) moes verbygaan. Die rede hiervoor was dat die Nasionale Raad nuwe riglyne insake die Plaaslike Rade se grense uitgevaardig het. Die Kaapse Plaaslike Raad het gevolglik in twee verdeel en kon nie meer selfstandig funksioneer nie (85). Die nuweling sou dus die getalle kon aanvul sodat 'n nuwe Raad in dié verband verkies kon word. Meneer Q het, volgens hom, vanaf 1960 tot en met 1987 op die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad gedien (86).

3.11 Die Bahà`i-Driejaarplan (1993-1996)

Die Bahà`i doelwitte:

BAHÁ'Í THREE YEAR PLAN

1993-1996

GOALS OF THE THREE YEAR PLAN

1. Turn to God daily in prayer and meditation and seek His guidance and confirmation.
2. Whether individually or in a group have regular, systematic word-by-word study of the Holy Writings which are the source of our spiritual growth.
3. Apply the laws and teachings of the Faith to every aspect of life, with the conviction and understanding that the Writings contain guidance on all matters.
4. Be of service to the Baha'i Community at both the personal and institutional level, be ready to use your talents in any way to help the Faith and realize that servitude is the greatest station of the individual.

5. Develop true friendships with fellow believers and express care and concern. Act to make the lives of others easier.
6. Develop and support the 19 Day Feast as the foundation of Baha'i Community life. Recognize the sacredness and its role.
7. Develop a better understanding of the Baha'i Fund and give it full support. It is the privilege and duty of every Baha'i to contribute to the Baha'i Fund to whatever extent he or she is able.
8. Strengthen the local Baha'i Community so that it can become a source of nurturance for the believers, and comfort and inspiration for the rest of society.
9. Strengthen the relationships with the Baha'i family.
10. Make teaching a natural part of daily life. Understand its spiritual significance.
11. Become increasingly aware of the sacred law of Huququllah and its application.

(Bahá'í Boekwinkel, Bahá'í Nasionale Sentrum, Houghton)

3.12 Eindnote

- (1) Susan Ford, 1992, A Pictorial History of the Bahà`i Faith in South Africa, 1911-1992, p 5; en Our Silver Jubilee, 1981, p 2 (ongepubliseerde Bahà`i werk, tydens die Vyf en Twintigste Herdenking van die Eerste Nasionale Geestelike Vergadering van die Bahà`is in Suid- en Wes-Afrika).
- (2) Me Fanny Knowbloch het tydens haar tweede besoek aan Suid Afrika in 1924 vir William Fraetas opgespoor. Meneer Fraetas word ook ooreenkomstig The Bahà`i Faith in Africa: The Early Days, ongepubliseerde werk en ongedateerd, p 8 beskryf as die eerste manlike Bahà`i binne Suid Afrika.
- (3) Our Silver ..., p 2.
- (4) Pionier is die tegniese term wat deur Bahà`is gebruik word om aan te toon dat die betrokke persoon deur die Guardian en/of die Universal House of Justice gemagtig is om as sendeling binne 'n spesifieke plek te fungeer. Die begrip moet egter onderskei word van sendeling omdat dit die eerste persoon versinnebeeld na daardie spesifieke land of plek. S6 'n persoon is ook vir sy eie brood en botter verantwoordelik en moet volgens Bahà`i beginsels in elk geval ook die geloof bevorder. Daarom gebruik ek ooreenkomstig die Bahà`i-geloof die woord pionier eerder as sendeling.
- (5) Ford, A Pictorial ..., p 16 en Our Silver ..., p 2.
- (6) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 4.

- (7) Ibid, pp 4 en 5.
- (8) Ibid, p 5.
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Die inhoud van die Heilige Tablet is: "To the maidservant of God, Fanny Knobloch, the sister of Miss Alma Knobloch. Unto her be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious! He is God! O thou dear maidservant of God! ... It may be that the goverment of those regions will check thee. Thou shouldst say: 'I am a Bahà`i and am friend to all religions and nations. I consider all to be of one race and count them as my relatives. I have divine love and not racial and sectarian love. According to the ... written command of Baha'u'llah I do not pronounce a word pertaining to politics, because we are forbidden to interfere in political affairs. We are concerned with affairs which are heavenly. We are servants unto the world of morality. We consider that racial, religious, political and national prejudices are destructive to the the world of humanity. We believe that the surface of the earth constitutes one home and all mankind forms one family. With all we are in the utmost sincerity and kindness.' Upon thee be the glory of Abha!", geteken `Abdu'l-Bahà Abbas. (The Bahà`i Faith in ..., pp 5 en 6).
- (11) Ibid, p 6.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Our Silver ..., p 2.

- (14) Ibid.
- (15) Cape Times, Saturday, 13th December 1924, Woman's Realm, An American Visitor, p 23.
- (16) Ibid; The Cape Argus, Monday, 15th December 1924, To Bring Peace on Earth, Miss Root's World Mission, p 7; The Cape Argus, Wednesday, 17th December 1924, The Way to World Peace, How South Africa Can Assits, p 13; Cape Times, Saturday, 20th December 1924, Woman's Realm, Miss Martha Root, p 4; The Cape Argus, Wednesday, 24th December 1924, Science and Religion, p 11; Rand Daily Mail, Johannesburg, South Africa, Wednesday, January 14, 1926, People in the News Today, Miss Martha Root, the American lecturer and journalist, arrived yesterday in Johannesburg, and is staying at Heath's Hotel, p 6; Rand Daily Mail, Thursday, January 15, 1925, p 5; Rand Daily Mail, Friday, January 16, 1925, The Bahà'i Movement, Miss Martha Root Explains Its Principles, col. 2, p13; Rand Daily Mail, Saturday, January 17, 1925, People in the News Today, p 8; Rand Daily Mail, Monday, January 19, 1925, People in the News Today, p 6; Rand Daily Mail, Tuesday, January 20, 1925, Photo of Martha Root and the Chinese Consul's Family, p 5; Rand Daily Mail, Wednesday, January 21, 1925, Another World War, and then-- Peace, A Woman's View of the League of Nations, col. 6, p 9; Natal Advertiser, Durban, Natal, South Africa, Wednesday, 28th January 1925, To Bring Peace on Earth, col. 3, p 10; en Natal Advertiser, Durban, Natal, South Africa, Tuesday, 3rd February, 1925, Page for Women, col. 3, p 10.

- (17) The Cape Argus, Monday, 15th December 1924, To Bring Peace on Earth, Miss Root's World Mission, A Sojourner in many Lands, p7.
- (18) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 6; The Cape Argus, Monday, 15th December 1924, To Bring Peace on ..., p 7 en Rand Daily Mail, Tuesday, January 20, 1925, Photo of Martha ..., p 5. Die woorde van die Rand Daily Mail is soos volg: "Miss Martha Root visited the Chinese Consul for Johannesburg on Sunday and addressed a gathering of several hundred of Chinese residents of the Rand ...".
- (19) The Cape Argus, Monday, 15th December 1924, To Bring Peace ..., p 7.
- (20) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 7.
- (21) Vergelyk die artikel in die Rand Daily Mail, Wednesday, January 21, 1925, Another World War ..., p 9. Dr. Johan Hannes wys ook tydens sy aanbieding oor die Universal Language, by die Egoli Fireside, Houghton om 20:00 op 5 Mei 1995 daarop dat Bahà`is ook oor 'n eie Bahà`i Esperanto Groep beskik.
- (22) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 8.
- (23) Ibid, p 9.
- (24) Ford, ..., p 16.
- (25) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 9.
- (26) Ibid, p 10.

- (27) Die Nasionale Geestelike Raad in Suid-Afrika het versoek dat die besonderhede van mnr en mev B _____ nie bekendgemaak word nie.
- (28) The Bahá'í Faith in ..., p 11.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid, p 13.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Ibid.
- (33) Ibid, p 14.
- (34) Ford, ..., p 17.
- (35) Peter Kasenene, 1992, Religion in Swaziland, p 102.
- (36) Lowell Johnson, 1986, Reginald Turvey/Life and Art, George Ronald, Oxford, p 101.
- (37) Ibid, p 15-20.
- (38) Kasenene, Religion ... p 105.
- (39) The Bahá'í Faith in ..., p 14.
- (40) Sien Florence Norman se weergawe insake Agnes Carey in The Bahá'í Faith in ..., p 28.

- (41) Ibid, p 28 en 29.
- (42) Ibid, p 14-15.
- (43) Ibid, p 15.
- (44) Sien Florence Norman se weergawe ..., Ibid, p 29.
- (45) Johnson, Reginald Turvey ..., p 1 en 113.
- (46) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 19 asook Johnson, Reginald ..., pp 98, 103 en 104.
- (47) Johnson, ..., pp 2 en 98.
- (48) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 19-20 asook Johnson, ..., p 98.
- (49) Johnson, ..., p 22.
- (50) Ibid, p 2 en 3.
- (51) Twee ander skilderye is in 1964 deur die Suid Afrikaanse Nasionale Kuns Gallery in Kaapstad aangekoop. Na Reginald Turvey se dood het verskeie ander gallerye ook van sy werke begin uitstal. Kyk Johnson, ..., p 58 en verder.
- (52) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 20.
- (53) Johnson, ..., p 4 en 5.

- (54) Topsy was wel 'n Bahà`i, maar nooit werklik haar geloof aktief beoefen nie. Later het sy dié geloof prys gegee. (Johnson ..., p 5).
- (55) Hierdie amptelike Bahà`i-afvaardiging kon tydens daardie besoek slegs vir Reginald Turvey en Agnes Carey as Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika opspoor. Dit is moontlik die rede waarom hulle die titel van Vader en Moeder van die Bahà`i-geloof in Suid-Afrika ontvang het.
- (56) Johnson ..., p 5.
- (57) Volledige brief verskyn in Johnson ..., p 113 en verder.
- (58) Ibid, pp 5 en 101.
- (59) The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 23.
- (60) Johnson, ..., p 5 en 101 en The Bahà`i Faith in ..., p 23.
- (61) Our Silver ..., p 2.
- (62) Ibid, p 3.
- (63) Ibid, p 2 en Ford ..., pp 44-48.
- (64) Johnson, Reginald ..., p 101
- (65) Die geskiedenis kry egter ook 'n kinkel in die kabel deurdat hierdie Plaaslike Geestelike Raad, danksy die nuwe munisipale indeling, tot en met 31 Maart 1995

voortbestaan het, waarna dié Raad ontbind het en in die nuwe munisipale grense se onderskeie Geestelike Rade opgeneem is. Diegene wat dus, byvoorbeeld, met die nuwe indeling binne die Sandton-grense geval het, is dienooreenkomstig by Sandton se Plaaslike Geestelike Raad ingeskakel, en so ook met die ander dele ooreenkomstig die nuwe grense.

(66) Our Silver ..., p 3 en Ford, A Pictorial ..., p 21.

(67) Our Silver ..., pp 2 en 3.

(68) Ibid, p 4.

(69) Dit dien vermeld te word dat die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid die sogenaamde Suid-Afrikaanse tuisland beleid aangegryp het en verskeie pioniers na vermelde gebiede gestuur het om die geloof aldaar te vestig. Die rede hiervoor was dat blanke-beweging in swart gebiede vergemaklik was en dat die pioniers se werksaamhede dus nie meer (soos in Suid-Afrika onderhewig aan apartheids-wetgewing) so ingeperk was nie. Sedert April 1994 is die tuislande weer amptelik by die Republiek van Suid-Afrika ingelyf, en behoort hulle onder die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid-Afrika te geresorteer het. Hierdie stap het egter eers met die amptelike Bahà`i verkiesing in April 1995 gerealiseer.

(70) Our Silver ..., p 4.

(71) Gegewens soos verskaf deur die sekretaris van die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika op 30

Augustus 1995 by die Roodepoortse. Bahà`is se openbare byeenkoms by die Florida Biblioteek.

(72)

Tydens die gesprek was mnr Q baie emosioneel en hy het daarop gewys dat hy nie kan verstaan dat 'n man met soveel wysheid wel 'n verbondsverbreker kon wees nie. Hy het ook daarop gesinspeel dat só 'n persoon 'n mens nie na die Bahà`i-geloof sal lei nie (Band 3, 181-184). Meneer J het het gereageer deur te sê dat hy 'n ander siening insake 'n verbondsbreker het en dat daar verskeie redes is waarom 'n persoon binne die Bahà`i-geloof 'n verbondsbreker kan word. Een van die redes is onder andere dat die Bahà`i-geloof altyd een moet bly en nooit mag óf kan verdeel nie. Dit is ook belangrik dat die ware leerstellings verkondig sal word en dat elkeen dit sal gehoorsaam. Dit is die rede waarom daar dus 'n amp-telike en persoonlike interpretasie binne die Bahà`i-geloof bestaan. Daar word ook gesê dat daar binne die Bahà`i-geloof 'n ewigdurend dag sal wees, wat nooit deur 'n nag opgevolg sal word nie. Dit beteken dat dié geloof eerste vir Baha'u'llah, toe vir `Abdu'l-Bahà, hierna die Guardian en laastens die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid het wat die geloof moet bestuur en voortdurende leiding aan die Bahà`is moet gee. Die verbreking van die verbond verdeel die geloof van sy eenheid. Die Bahà`i-geloof is verseker van sy eenheid en as iemand daarvan wegbeweeg of verseker is van 'n sekere posisie in dié span, dan moet só 'n individu onthou dat dié geloof nie vir hom gegee is nie. Dit is met ander woorde baie belangrik dat iemand nie veronderstel om iets te wees, wat hy nie is nie. Mevrouw Y en mnr Q reageer onmiddelik deur te erken dat Perdu 'n verbondsverbreker was omdat

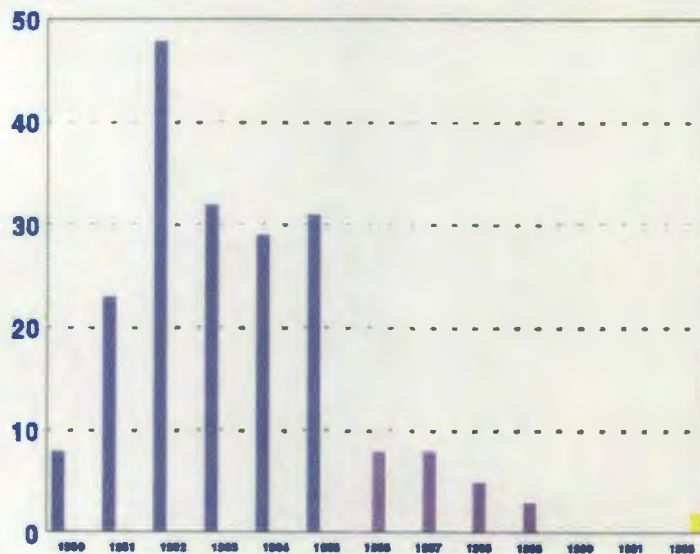
hy teen die Beskermheer [Shoghi Effendi] was. Meneer J sluit af deur te sê: "Ons stem dus saam!" (Band 3, 184-215).

- (73) Band 3, 396-401 en 473-476.
- (74) Meneer Q het die ses name self in sy eie handskrif vir die skrywer neergeskryf. Melding is ook tydens ons gesprek daarvan gemaak, Band 3, 171-173.
- (75) Die datum kon egter met akkuraatheid bepaal word deurdat die skrywer by mnr Mike Walker 'n brief gesien het waarin mev Edith Johnson op 30 November 1959 rapporteer dat sy vasgestel het dat mnr Joseph Perdue [sic] op 28 Desember 1958 per skip vanaf Kaapstad na Durban vertrek het. Meneer Perdu het egter weer op 15 Januarie 1959 vanaf Durban na Engeland vertrek. Die skrywer het om 'n afskrif van vermelde skrywe versoek, maar die Nasionale Geestelik Raad van Suid-Afrika het egter toestemming geweier.
- (76) Band 13, 122.
- (77) Bande 13, 072-130 en 3 291-294.
- (78) Band 3, 460-466.
- (79) Band 3, 552-554.
- (80) Band 3, 370-384.
- (81) Band 4, 335.

(82) Band 4, 335-343.

(83) Skematies kan die vervolgings van die 350 000 Bahà'is in Iran soos volg uiteen gesit word:

AANTAL BAHÀ'IS WAT IN IRAN GESTERF HET 1980-1992



(The Bahá'ís ..., p 59)

(84) Band 4, 341-353.

(85) Band 13, 664-666.

(86) Band 3, 282-284.

SEKERE BAHÀ'Ì WETTE EN VERORDENINGE:

Elke Bahà'ì moet:

- * elke dag bid en uit die Heilige Geskrifte lees
- * die Bahà'ì-vas vanaf 2 tot 21 Maart nakom
- * God se Boodskap verkondig
- * bydra tot die Bahà'ì-fonds
- * Bahà'ì-heilige-dae onderhou en die Negen tiendedag-fees bywoon
- * werk as aanbidding beskou
- * alkoholiese drank en die gebruik van nie-mediese dwelmmiddels vermy
- * Bahà'ì-trouwette nakom
- * die Regering van die dag respekteer en gehoorsaam, terwyl deelname aan party politieke aktiwiteite vermy word
- * die verspreiding van gerugte en skinderpraatjies vermy.

HOOFSTUK 4 DIE MENSLIKE SAAMLEEF

4.1 Inleiding

Baha'u'llah se boodskap dek verskeie aspekte van die geloofslewe: sommige van sy leerstellings vertel individue hoe om 'n lewe op aarde te lei wat God tevrede stel; ander beskryf hoe die mensheid 'n nuwe God-gesentreerde gemeenskap op aarde moet vestig. Verskeie van hierdie beginsels is universele waarhede wat, volgens Bahà`is, alreeds deur die ander manifestasies van God (openbaarders van ander godsdienste en/of gelowe) aan die mense van die verlede geopenbaar is. Tog word nuwe sosiale en geestelike beginsels tans benodig, want die mensheid lewe vandag in 'n nuwe era met eiesoortige probleme wat opgelos moet word. Dit is hierdie unieke siening van sosiale vormgewing en die kweek van 'n totaal ander lewenswyse wat in hierdie hoofstuk bespreek sal word.

4.2 Uitgangspunt van die Bahà`ise sosiale etiek: persoonlike outonomie

Die eerste opvallende kenmerk van die Bahà`ise sosiale etiek lê in hul voorgeskrewe benadering tot 'n ander persoon, naamlik om die mens altyd menswaardig te ag. Dit blyk uit die wyse waarop ander mense nie-voorskriftelik en nie-argumentatief na die waarheid begelei word. Dit word moontlik die beste deur die volgende woorde van `Abdu`l-Baha geïllustreer: "One ought to say: `right, admitted, but look at the matter in this way, and judge for yourself whether it is true or false" (1). Hierdie eienskap van die Bahà`is is verskeie kere gedurende die skrywer se navorsing gedemonstreer en is inderdaad opmerklik. Die leser word

daarop gewys dat voorgaande die skrywer se persoonlike ervaring is, en word aangemoedig om self die werke te lees en self te oordeel. Dit sluit dan ook aan by die Bahà`i-benadering met betrekking tot die vrye wil. Bahà`is glo dat die mens volwasse en gereed is om sy of haar eie keuses te maak en self te besluit oor wat reg of verkeerd is. Gevolglik benodig die mensheid ook nie meer 'n priester om as tussenganger op te tree nie (2). In 'n onderhoud met 'n mnr K beskryf hy dit soos volg: "Die mens weet hoe om die voorskrif van God vir 'n regte lewe op aarde self toe te pas. As jy dit self doen, dan ervaar jy daaglik hoe aangenaam jou lewe is! As jy dit nie doen nie, sal die lewe nie aangenaam vir jou wees nie omdat jy in die donker funksioneer. As jy 'n voorskrif vir die lewe ontvang, wat meer soek jy?" (3).

Nog 'n persoon waarmee 'n onderhoud gevoer is, mnr A, wys daarop dat alle religieë van die verlede sowel as die hede gerespekteer word en dat Bahà`is so 'n persoon (van 'n ander religie) sien as 'n individu wat nie genoeg onafhanklike ondersoek gedoen het nie. So 'n individu word ook nooit afgeskryf of verwerp nie; hy of sy is steeds deel van die mensheid en 'n lid van die menslike familie. Meneer A sê voorts: "Dit is vir Bahà`is ondenkbaar om so 'n persoon af te skryf of om hul oortuigings op so iemand af te dwing. Daar word gevoel dat daardie persoon sy of haar eie idees en denkwyses het. Wanneer so 'n persoon wel genoegsame ondersoek ingestel het, sal hy of sy weer nadink en tot die volle waarheid kom" (4). Teen hierdie agtergrond wys 'n mnr J daarop dat sy pa te streng was en dat hy as kind toe reeds besluit het, om nie 'n Bahà`i te word nie. Hierdie siening het hy egter tydens sy kos-skooldae gewysig omdat die Kanadese mense by wie hy naweke gekuier het, geen druk op hom uitgeoefen het nie. Hy was toegelaat om te kom en te gaan soos hy wou. Hulle het egter altyd boeke op strategiese plekke geplaas sodat hy dit kon lees. Dit het veroor-

saak dat hy wel die boeke gelees het en op die ouderdom van 16 jaar dié geloof aanvaar het. Hierdie optrede van die Kanadese egpaar het volgens mnr J veroorsaak dat hy nie anders kon as om die Bahà`i-geloof aan te neem nie: "Hierdie vryheid was met ander woorde die deurslaggewende faktor vir my!" (5).

Verskeie ander onderhoude toon dat Bahà`is elk hul eie unieke bekeringsverhaal ervaar het; as individu wat op persoonlik-individuele vlak erns met sy of haar geloof gemaak het. Die meerderheid het na 'n beter verhouding met God gesoek of daarna gestreef om hul eie outentieke antwoorde op wesentlike probleme vanuit die Heilige Geskrifte te kry. In 'n onderhoud met 'n meneer D vertel hy dat sy moeder byvoorbeeld op 'n Metodiste sendingkursus was, waar sy nie met die boodskap oor die verskillende religieë saamgestem het nie. Na verdere ondersoek het sy later self 'n Bahà`i geword, en hulle gesin was die eerste pioniers om die geloof in Swaziland te vestig (6).

Ander bekeerlinge (vanuit die Christelike perspektief) vertel ook van 'n persoonlike soeke, wat soms gepaardgegaan het met negatiewe ervarings met hul plaaslike leraars. In 'n tipiese geval het 'n mev F haar leraar versoek om hul suster se kind te begrawe. Die leraar het geweier, omdat mev F nie 'n gereelde kerkganger was nie. Sy het die kerk verlaat en begin soek na 'n geloof wat haar vrae insake 'n meer regverdige God sou beantwoord (7). Mevrouw A se man het haar weer (nadat hy die Bahà`i-geloof aangeneem het) met die feit gekonfronteer dat Christus alreeds gekom het. Na 'n persoonlike worsteling en verskeie aande se bespreking (waartydens sy gereeld die kos verbrand het!) het sy met behulp van die lees van onder andere die Bahà`i-gebedsboek dié geloof aanvaar en later ook selfs 'n persoonlike verskyning van die Openbaarder gehad. Hierdie gebeurtenis was so groots dat dit vir

haar totale berusting gebring het. Sy het haar man vertel en hy het vir haar gesê: "Hoekom stry jy nog daarteen? Hoekom stry jy nog so teen Baha'u'llah? Baha'u'llah is die groot lig, hierdie helder lig wat die vrede tussen jou en jou broer gebring het. Jy het 'n persoonlike verskyning van Hom gehad!" Hierna het dié geloof haar hele lewe gewysig (8).

Nog ander persone het weer sekere kritiese of soekende vrae gestel en dan het hul plaaslike leraars of medegelowiges gereageer deur te sê dat so 'n vraag nie beantwoord kan word nie en dat 'n mens dit net sonder kritiek en in die geloof moet aanvaar (9). Hierdie houding het ook in talle gevalle veroorsaak dat die betrokke individue van kerkverband verander het, in 'n poging om bevredigende antwoorde te kry. Ander het weer vrae oor die ou apartheidopset binne Suid-Afrika gevra, veral weens hul ervaring van ongelykhede tussen blankes en nie-blankes. Sulke persone het ook na 'n meer regverdige bestel gesoek en wanneer hul betrokke geloof nie die antwoorde en oplossings op hul spesifieke probleme kon bied nie, het hulle verder gesoek (10). Meneer K beweer dat sy Hindoe-geloof nie vir hom antwoorde op die probleme van die wêreld kon bied nie. Sy eie ondersoek het hom gelei tot die Bahà`i-geloof en hy het aldaar die antwoord gevind. Hierdie gebeure was nie soseer 'n afsweer van sy geloof nie, maar eerder 'n bekragtiging en verbetering daarvan (11). Dieselfde word ook onomwonde deur Christen Bahà`i-bekeerlinge bevestig.

Die onafhanklike ondersoeke van hierdie individue het hulle met Bahà`is in aanraking gebring. Die kontak het deur middel van boeke en gesprekke geskied en het die betrokke persone tot hul eie onafhanklike konklusies gelei. Eie ondersoek en die strewe om self tot bevredigende antwoorde te kom, is geloofselemente wat volgens Bahà`is eie aan vandag is, en staan binne dié geloof

bekend as "Independent Investigation of Truth". Hierdie onafhanklike, persoonlik outonome ondersoek na die waarheid is een van hul mees prominente geestelike beginsels (12).

4.3 Hoe word 'n mens 'n Bahà`i?

Om 'n Bahà`i te word, beteken "to have conviction in the Oneness of God, oneness of religions and oneness of mankind; to realise that religion is progressive and continuous and is for the sake of unity rather than disunity. A Bahà`i, moreover, is convinced that all religions are divine in origin and are equal. However, a Bahà`i believes that Baha'u'llah (the Glory of God) is the Manifestation of God for this age. And He, Baha'u'llah, like the Manifestations in the past, has come to open a new era of happiness and unity for us in this age. When one becomes a Bahà`i, he finds the love of Baha'u'llah in his heart. When this conviction is there, we are Bahà`is. No ceremony, baptism or change of name is necessary to enrol a person into the Bahà`i Faith" (13).

Wanneer iemand besluit om Baha'u'llah as God se boodskapper vir vandag te aanvaar en daarna die lidmaatskapskaart invul, is daardie individu egter nog nie 'n Bahà`i nie. Die persoon belowe slegs ooreenkomstig hierdie kaart die volgende: "I accept Baha'u'llah, God's Messenger to mankind for today and I promise to study, practice and spread His divine Teachings" (14). So 'n belydenis is dus slegs die begin van 'n proses. Daarom word 'n Bahà`i se lewe soos volg beskryf: "He is a true Bahà`i who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavor, whose most cherished desire is so to live and act as to enrich and illuminate the world, whose source of inspiration is the essence of Divine virtue, whose aim in life is

so to conduct himself as to be the cause of infinite progress. Only when he attains unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a true Bahà`i. For in this holy Dispensation, the crowning glory of bygone ages, and cycles, true Faith is no mere acknowledgement of the Unity of God, but the living of a life that will manifest all the perfections and virtues implied in such belief" (15).

Hierdie strewe en soeke na 'n outentieke lewe is deel van die proses om God se prioriteite vir ons lewens te ontdek en vind nie plaas buite die Bahà`i-gemeenskap nie (16). Lowell Johnson vra, "How does living in a Bahà`i community make a difference?", en hy antwoord self soos volg: "The difference is in the assistance you get" (17). Met dié kaart verbind die bekeerling homself of haarself dus daartoe om God se wil op die aarde te probeer uitvoer. Laasgenoemde geskied ook vir sy of haar voorbereiding op die hiernamaals.

4.4 Die Bahà`i-gemeenskap

Bahà`is beskou hul gemeenskapslewe as die model waarop die menslike samelewing in die toekoms geskoei sal word. Hierdie lewenswyse word regoor die wêreld in elke kultuur en volk (tans reeds in 253 lande) gevestig (18) en word beskryf as die beginpunt vir die nuwe samelewing van die toekomstige wêreld, wat tans begin vorm kry. Die vergestaltung van die nuwe samelewing geskied regoor die wêreld volgens dieselfde geestelike beginsels en riglyne. Bahà`is glo dat hierdie riglyne die antwoorde op die hedendaagse probleme bied. Gevolglik kan enige mens dus na enige plek in die wêreld gaan en hy of sy sal altyd welkom wees, liefdevol en vriendelik behandel word omdat hy of sy deel van hierdie universele, toekomstige Bahà`i-familie is.

Die groot Bahà`ì-uitdaging; die avontuur en voorreg is daarin geleë dat elke gelowige self besig is om te help om God se Koninkryk op aarde deur eenheid en harmonie na die wêreld te bring. Bahà`is beskou hierdie eienskap as een van hul sterkste punte omdat hulle eerstens deur hul Geskrifte antwoorde vir die huidige probleme in die wêreld bied en tweedens voortdurend onder goddelike leiding van die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid werk, via die Nasionale Geestelike Rade wat die werk verenig en die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade wat die oplossings prakties implementeer (19). Hierdie bestuurstyl (soos hiernaas uiteengesit word) verloop in 'n proses van konsultasie (20). Volgens `Abdu'l-Baha beteken Bahà`ì dus "to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood" (21). Dié universele proses geskied enersyds deur hul betrokkenheid by die eiesoortige gemeenskapsaktiwiteite en andersyds deur die unieke Bahà`ì administrasie.

4.4.1 Die Bahà`ì-administrasie

Bahà`is se goddelike plan vir die wêreld van vandag kan ooreenkomstig sekere fases soos volg geïllustreer word:

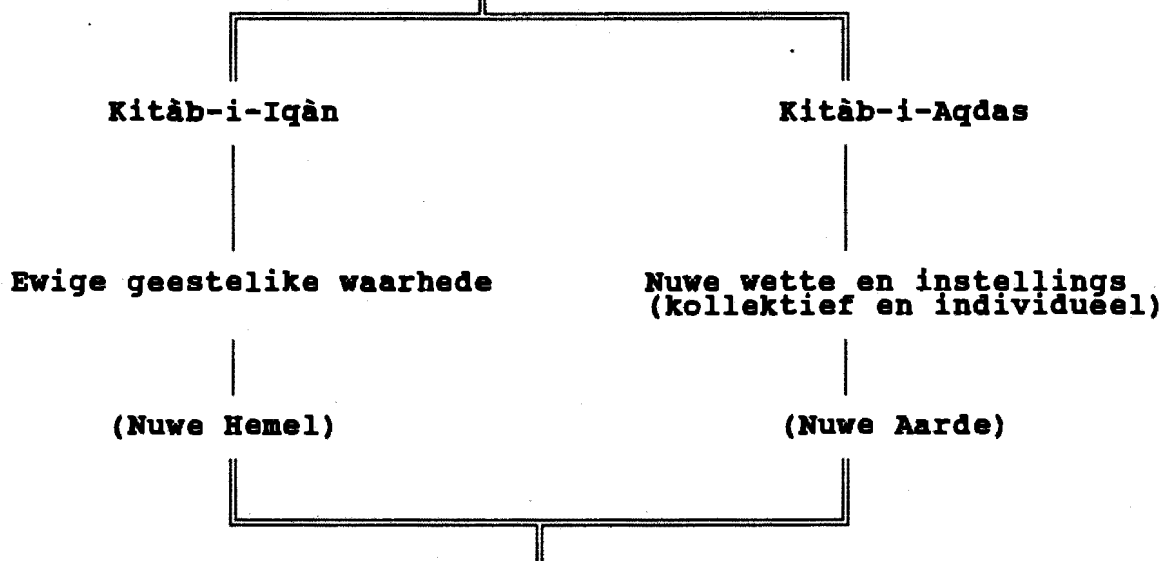
Fase 1:

Tweeledige manifestasie:

(1) Bab (die beginpunt)

Verkondig dat hy die wegbereider vir God se nuwe manifestasie is.

(2) Baha'u'llah (Openbaarder van God se boodskap)



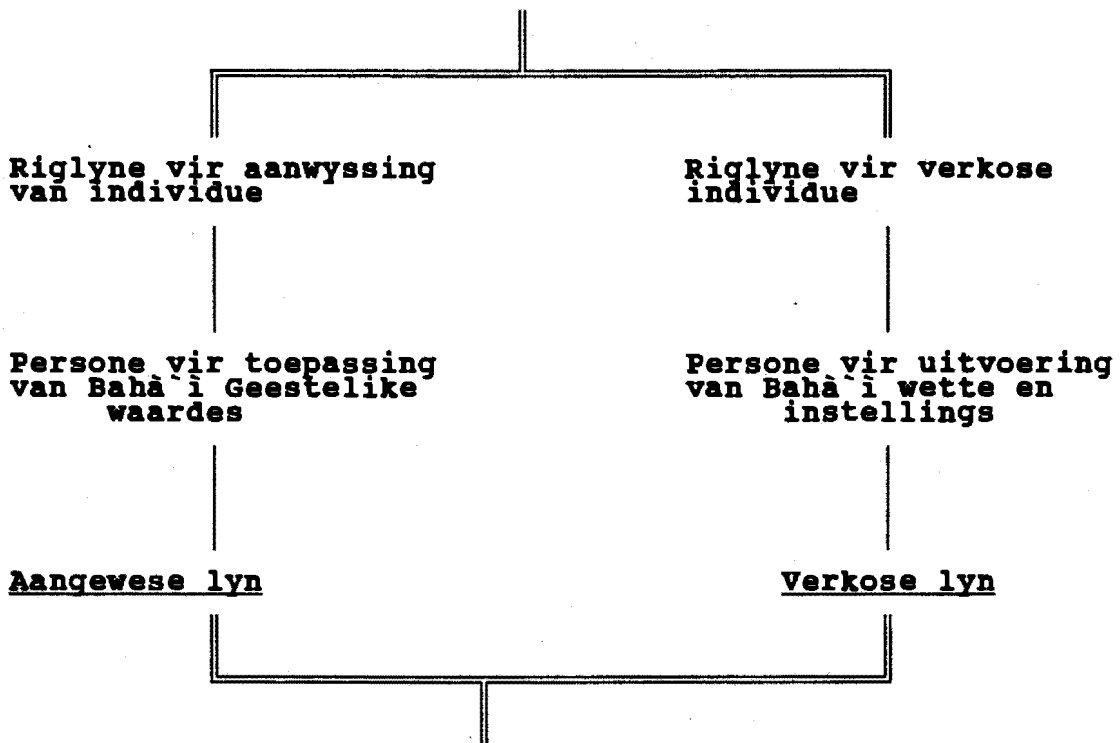
Fase 2:

Baha'u'llah stel sy seun Abdu'l-Bahá aan as die hoeksteen van God se verbond.

Fase 2 (verv):

‘Abdu’l-Bahā

Amptelike interpreteerder en uitlegger van Baha’u’llah se werke en boodskap.



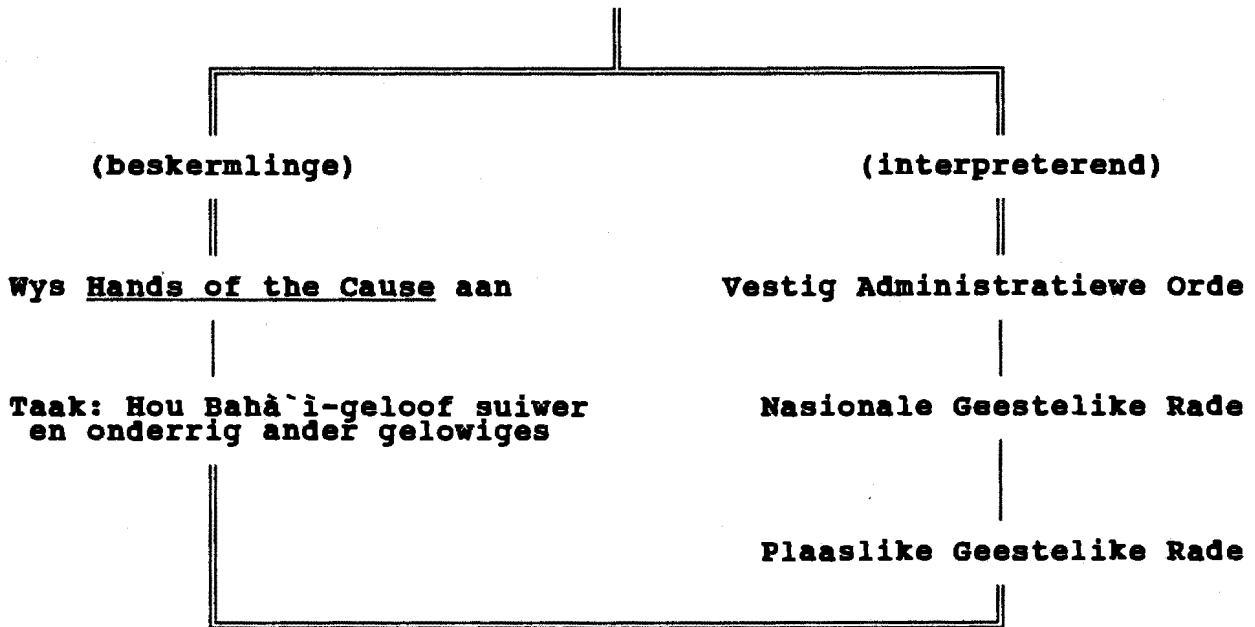
Fase 3:

‘Abdu’l-Bahā wys sy kleinseun Shoghi Effendi aan as amptelike beskermheer en interpreteerder van die Bahā’i-geloof.

Fase 3 (verv):

Tweeledige Instellings

Shoghi Effendi (beskermheer en interpreteerder)



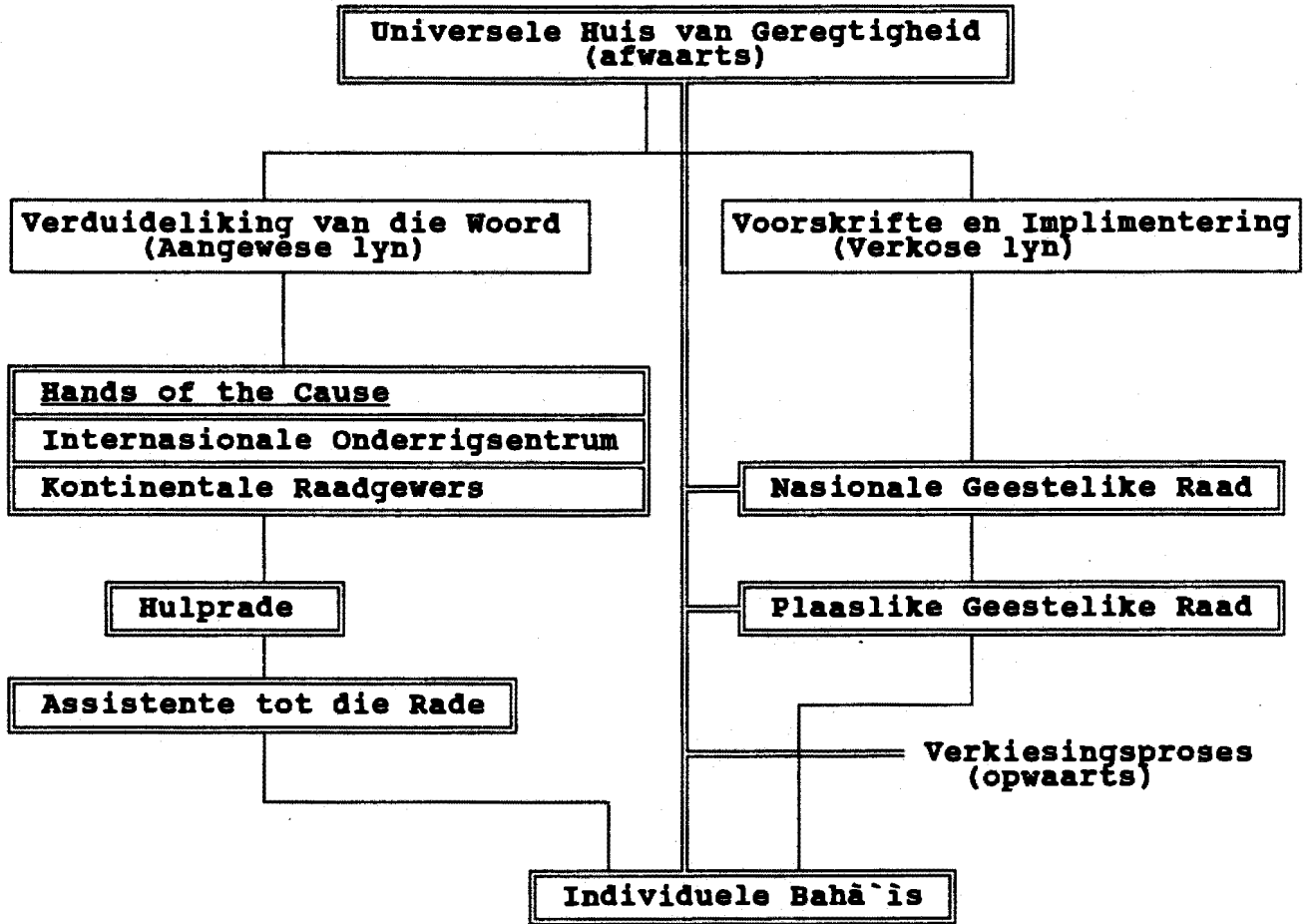
Fase 4:

Shoghi Effendi sterf.

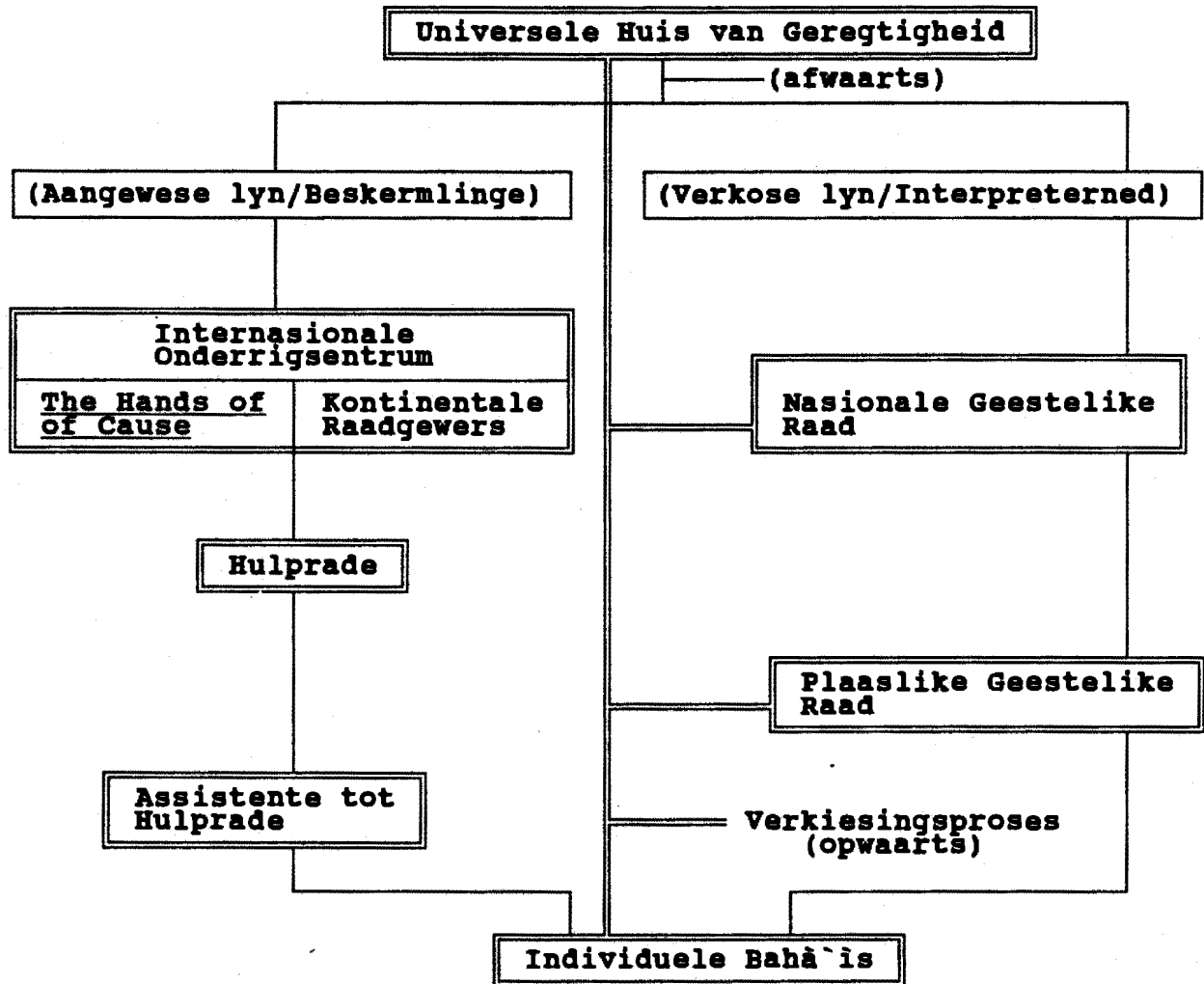
Hands of the Cause funksioneer as Kurator-groep

Administratiewe Orde wys Universele Huis van Geregtigheid aan

Fase 4 (very):



Praktiese funksionering van Bahā`i-administrasie:



Die skematiese voorstelling begin by die tweeledige openbaring van God se boodskap. Anders as al die ander wêreldgodsdienste, begin die Bahà`i-geloof by die Bab (kyk hfst 3). Die Bab het in 1844 bekendgemaak dat God ooreenkomstig die Moslem-verwagting 'n nuwe Manifestasie na die wêreld sou stuur. Hierdie openbaarder was Baha'u'llah. Bahà`is verwys telkens met die Christen-voorbeelde van Johannes die Doper en Jesus Christus na die Bab en Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah het vir hierdie wêreld ewige geestelike waardes (soos uiteengesit in sy Kitâb-i-Iqân) asook nuwe wette en instellings (ooreenkomstig sy Kitâb-i-Aqdas) gebring. Baha'u'llah interpreteer die verbond met God tweeledig (22). Hy verskaf eers- tens die riglyne in terme van God se boodskap aan die mens en dan stel hy (volgens Bahà`is vir die eerste keer in die mens se geskiedenis) 'n unieke persoon aan wat sy woorde kan verklaar en uitlê (kyk die skematiese voorstelling, fase 2). Phil Christensen beskryf hierdie unieke gebeurtenis soos volg: **"As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Baha'u'llah, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for any one to create a new sect or faction of belief"** (23)

Verskeie werke toon dat Baha'u'llah sy volgelinge hierop voorberei het: **"... turn, one and all, unto the Most Great Branch (`Abdu'l-Bahà`)"** (24). `Abdu'l-Baha het hierdie opdrag ernstig opgeneem en self gewaarsku dat die Bahà`i-gemeenskap sonder die verbond binne een dag in **"a thousand different sects as was the case in former ages"** sou verdeel (25). Hy het die verskeie werke en riglyne van Baha'u'llah so oortuigend geïnterpreteer dat die volgelinge vandag nog graag sy voorbeeld volg. Sy foto word

ook in verskeie Bahà`i-huise opgemerk. Hy het ook verskeie riglyne vir die daarstelling van die Bahà`ise Administratiewe Orde geskep. `Abdu'l-Bahà het volgens Bahà`is ook reeds in sy dagboek sekere Hands of the Cause aangewys, en in sy testament verskyn nog 'n instruksie: "After the passing away of this wronged one, [the believers must] ... turn unto Shoghi Effendi ... as he is the sign of God ... " (26).

Die geskiedenis neem 'n verdere wending deurdat God se plan van nou af met 'n "Tweeledige Instelling" (fase 3) bestuur sou word. Vir sekere werksaamhede sou funksionariesse aangewys word, terwyl ander weer verkies sou word. So word Shoghi Effendi as (laaste) amptelike Interpreteerder en Beskermheer (Guardian) van die Bahà`i-administrasie aangewys. Hy vestig die Bahà`i Wêreldsentrum in Haifa (toekomstige wêreldhoofstad, volgens Bahà`is) en gee vorm aan Baha'u'llah se voorgeskrewe administratiewe orde (27) met betrekking tot die Nasionale en Plaaslike Geestelike Rade. Hy stel net soos Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Bahà ook Hands of the Cause aan. Anders as sy twee voorgangers, maak hy die aanstellings amptelik bekend. Die Hands of the Cause ontvang die taak om die geloof te beskerm en gelowiges te onderskraag en te onderrig. Shoghi Effendi was egter die laaste persoon wat die Hands of the Cause nog kon aanwys. Sedert 1957 bestaan hierdie amp nie meer nie. Daar is vandag slegs drie Hands of the Cause in die wêreld oor (28).

Na die dood van Shoghi Effendi (fase 4), het die Hands of the Cause 'n liggaam van nege individue vanuit eie geledere gekies. Hierdie verkose persone het in Haifa, Israel agtergebly om na die Bahà`i-werksaamhede by die Wêreldsentrum (wat later in meer detail bespreek word) om te sien. Hulle het as die Kurators (Custodians) bekend gestaan. Die ander Hands of the Cause het oor die

hele wêreld versprei om met die Tienjaarplan te help en hul opgelegde take te voltooi (29).

Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid is deur die Administratiewe Orde saamgestel, na die dood van Shoghi Effendi in 1957 (fase 4). Hierdie liggaam sou nou die uitsluitlike bevoegdhede hê om die boodskap van Baha'u'llah aan die hand van die Bahà`i-geskrifte uit te lê en te verduidelik. Terselfdertyd sou hulle voorskrifte vir implementering via die verkose lyn deurgee. Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid se besluite is goddelik geïnspireerd en is foutloos (30). Dié nege persone (slegs mans wat vir 'n tydperk van vyf jaar verkies word om op die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid te dien) (31) het besef dat die belangrike werksaamhede van die Hands of the Cause sou uitsterf. Hulle het toe met die oorblywende Hands of the Cause onderhandel en in 1968 die Kontinentale Raad van raadgewers in die lewe geroep. Hierdie raadgewers het dieselfde taak as die Hands of the Cause.

Die Internasionale Onderrigsentrum (koördineer verpligtinge van die Kontinentale Rade) is in 1974 gestig. Sedert sy ontstaan het verskeie Raadgewers saam met die Hands of the Cause in Haifa, Israel, op hierdie liggaam gedien. Die Kontinentale Raadgewers word bygestaan deur die lede van die Hulprade (oorspronklik aangewys om die Hands of the Cause by te staan). Sommige van dié lede dien as verkondigers en leermeesters van die Bahà`i-geloof terwyl ander weer die geloof suiwer hou en die eenheid beskerm. Die lede van die Hulprade kan egter weer Assistentie aanwys. Diésulkes dien egter as ondersteuning en voer hul opgelegde taak dienooreenkomstig uit. Laasgenoemde is die laagste vlak in die aangewese lyn.

Die verkose lyn het sy oorsprong in Baha'u'llah se verordening

dat, waar daar nege of meer Bahà`is in 'n gemeenskap woonagtig is, 'n Plaaslike Geestelike Raad aldaar gestig moet word (32). In plekke waar daar nie nege volwasse Bahà`is (21 jaar en ouer) woonagtig is nie, kan geen verkiesing gehou word nie. Die Univer-sele Huis van Geregtigheid gee toestemming, waar geen Nasionale of Plaaslike Geestelike Raad vantevore saamgestel is nie, dat so 'n nuwe Plaaslike Geestelike Raad verkies kan word. Die grense word bepaal ooreenkomstig riglyne soos neergelê deur die Nasio-nale Geestelike Raad en gevolglik verleen die Nasionale Geeste-like Raad (waar reeds ingestel in 'n land) toestemming vir die verkiesing van so 'n Plaaslike Geestelike Raad. Hierdie samestel-ling geskied jaarliks op die eerste dag van Ridvân (na sononder op 20 April of voor sononder op 21 April) (33), maar kan ook met die toestemming van die Nasionale Raad uitgestel word tot op die laaste dag van Ridvân (sononder op 2 Mei). Die Rade word ooreen-komstig 'n gemeenskapsarea soos 'n stad, dorp of plattelandse dorpie saamgestel. Bahà`is wat buite so 'n gebied of area bly, kan wel Rade ooreenkomstig distrikte, woonbuurtes of beheerge-biede vorm.

Al die Bahà`is van 'n gegewe gemeenskap kom vir die verkiesing byeen. Hulle doen dan gebede vir leiding en onderskraging en dan vind die verkiesing plaas. Die Bahà`i-verkiesing is uniek in dié opsig dat dit sonder enige nominasie, propagering of verkiesings-kampanjes geskied en dat elke volwasse Bahà`i (manlik of vroulik) verkies kan word. Geen persoon mag ook enige iemand in sy of haar keuse beïnvloed nie. Hierdie punt word so sterk beklemtoon dat 'n getroude paar nie eens weet wie van hulle vir watter persoon ge-stem het nie, omdat elk se keuse (volgens verskeie gesprekke met Bahà`is) 'n geheim tussen die betrokke persoon en Baha'u'llah bly. Geen aangewese Kontinentale Raadgewer is egter verkiesbaar nie, terwyl 'n Hulpraadslid wat verkies word, self besluit of hy

of sy op die Plaaslike Raad wil dien en/of eersgenoemde verpligting wil nakom. Stembriewe word uitgedeel en elke volwasse Bahà`i skryf nege name (niks meer en niks minder nie) op die brief neer. So word 'n voorsitter, ondervoorsitter, sekretaris, tesourier en ander ampsdraers (soos die Raad dit nodig ag) verkies. Persone wat nie kan skryf nie, word deur 'n betroubare persoon gehelp. Die persone wat die meeste stemme (meerderheid van vyf) kry, is verkies. As twee persone of meer presies dieselfde stemtotaal kry of nie 'n meerderheid behaal nie, word daar weer vir die betrokkenes oorgestem. Die voorsitter moet byvoorbeeld, waar slegs nege Bahà`is teenwoordig is, minstens vyf van die nege stemme op hom of haar verenig om wel as voorsitter verkies te word.

Die nege lede van die Plaaslike Rade verkies op soortgelyke wyse die Nasionale Geestelike Raad. Alle volwasse Bahà`is (waarvan die ander reken dat hul oor die vaardighede en eienskappe beskik) is verkiesbaar. Die uitsondering is egter die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid omdat slegs mans verkiesbaar is. 'n Persoon wat nie die verkiesing kan bywoon nie, kan sy of haar lys met die name van die nege persone aan die sekretaris van die Plaaslike Raad stuur, vooraf oorhandig of saam met 'n vertroueling stuur (34). Wanneer al die Plaaslike Rade verkies is, kom die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade (van Suid-Afrika as voorbeeld) byeen om die Nasionale Geestelike Raad (van Suid-Afrika) te verkies. Al die Nasionale Geestelike Rade wêreldwyd kom elke vyf jaar byeen om die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid te verkies (die laaste een is in 1993 verkies) (35). Op hierdie wyse word die kringloop van die Bahà`i-administrasie voltooi.

4.4.1.1 Geestelike Rade se funksie

Die Geestelike Rade het volgens `Abdu'l-Baha die volgende ten

doel: "These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction" (36).

God se plan kan egter nie sonder koördinering geskied nie en daarom is elke Bahà`i by die Administratiewe Orde betrokke deur middel van opsig en tug, verkiesings, betrokkenheid by 'n spesifieke komitee en/of as 'n dienende lid. Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid stel verskeie doelwitte en planne saam deur die hele situasie te bestuur en riglyne aan die Nasionale Geestelike Rade wêreldwyd te gee. Die Nasionale Rade kanaliseer hierdie werksaamhede na die onderskeie Plaaslike Geestelike Rade. Die Rade voer dit tot op die grondvlak en so word die plan deeglik bestuur. Die uitbreiding van die Bahà`i-geloof gedurende die Tienjaarplan (en veral in 1953) is maar net een van die vele voorbeelde. 'n Verdere voorbeeld is die Ark Fund (37) vir fondse om die geboue vir die Wêreldsentrum in Haifa te voltooi. Hiernaas stel die Nasionale Rade ook doelwitte vir hul betrokke lande. Die Nasionale Raad van Suid-Afrika word ook deur verskeie respondente vir hul werksaamhede in dié verband aangeprys. Die boek getiteld: Overcoming Racial Prejudice en die stigting van die organisasie getiteld: Arts for Unity is enkele voorbeelde in dié verband (38).

Geen Bahà`i is bo die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad verhewe of beskik oor enige bevoeghede om die Raad te verontagsaam nie. As 'n gelowige voel dat die Geestelike Raad werklik gefouteer het, dan kan so 'n persoon na die Nasionale Geestelike Raad appelleer om die aangeleentheid in heroorweging te neem. Die appèl kan ook na die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid (hoogste gesag) geneem word. Tydens dié proses bly so 'n persoon gebonde aan die oorspronklike besluit en moet die individu daardie besluit gehoorsaam (39).

Die rol van die Geestelike Raad kom ook byvoorbeeld duidelik na vore insake die vraag hoe Bahà`is die problematiek van homoseksualiteit moet hanteer. Tydens 'n onderhoud met 'n mnr J en mev J, het hulle dit onder andere genoem as 'n saak wat deur die Plaaslike Raad gehanteer sal word. Mevrouw J het daarop gewys dat, "indien die betrokke persone in die kuisheidswette glo, hulle sal weet dat hulle nie met 'n ander persoon van dieselfde geslag kan trou nie. Indien diésulkes wel trou, sal die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad hulle inroep en oor die hele aangeleentheid gesprek voer. Daar sal aan hulle verduidelik word dat hulle fouteer en dat Bahà`is nie sulke gedrag as korrek aanvaar nie. Sodoende sal daar gepoog word om hulle sover te kry om hierdie praktyk te staak. Indien die betrokke persone nie reageer nie, sal die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad (of aangewese komitee en/of professionele hulp) dié aangeleentheid na die Nasionale Geestelike Raad verwys. Dan sal die Nasionale Raad met die betrokke partye praat en as hulle steeds nie konformeer nie, sal hulle hul stemreg ontnem word" (40).

Laasgenoemde blyk die swaarste straf vir enige Bahà`i te wees, maar "die situasie sou nie sover uitgekring het nie omdat die persone tydens dié proses, indien hulle hul nie sou bekeer het nie, sou gesê het dat `ek nie meer 'n Bahà`i is nie'" (41).

Die huidige Administrasie is die enigste erkende gesagsliggaam in die Bahà`i-gemeenskap (hoewel Bahà`is die regering van die dag moet gehoorsaam) en word voorts beskou as die embrio en model van die toekomstige wêreldregering (42). Die Plaaslike en Nasionale Rade sowel as die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid sal dus hierdie "... legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the Bahà`i community" (43) bly uitvoer en laat uitkring (44) totdat die wêreld se stelsel van regering in hierdie stelsel opgeneem word met die aanbreek van die Bahà`is se verwagte vredesryk (45).

4.4.1.2 Huidige stand van die Geestelike Rade

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Geestelike Rade is volgens die meeste Bahà`is (se reaksie insake die uitgestuurde vraelys) 'n sigbare weer-spieëling van die "eenheid in die verskeidenheid". Die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-gemeenskap word verder beskou as die beste voorbeeld ter wêreld van die oorbrugging van ras- en kultuurverskille. Ander huldig weer die mening dat die Suid-Afrikaners die rasse-eenheid oorbeklemtoon en sodoende al die ander Bahà`i-beginsels agterweë laat. So meld sekere plaaslike respondente onder andere dat die Bahà`i-beginsels in Iran meer nougeset nagevolg word as in Suid-Afrika (46).

Volgens plaaslike Bahà`is is die grootste bedreiging vir die Bahà`i-geloof dat die geestelike beginsels en leerstellings nie deel van die gelowige se daaglikse handel en wandel gemaak word nie. Ander sê weer dat die geloof verafrikaniseer moet word. Verskeie Bahà`is huldig die mening dat hierdie toedrag van sake enersyds toegeskryf kan word aan die blote werwing van lede ter wille van getalle en andersyds aan die groot invloed wat die Westerse kultuur steeds op die doen en late van mense uitoefen. 'n Ander respondent het dit moontlik meer korrek beskryf deur te sê dat daar baie mense is wat nie kan lees nie en dus eintlik 'n leraar benodig, terwyl ander weer nie vir hulself bid nie omdat hulle so gewoon is daaraan dat die priesters dit vir hulle doen.

Verskeie ander respondente meld ook dat die Bahà`i-gemeenskappe baie meer verspreid en geïsoleerd is. Gevolglik beskik hulle Rade nie oor die nodige hulpmiddele om te kan doen wat werklik nodig is nie. Ander sê weer dat die Verenigde State van Amerika, Iran en Nederland se Rade meer vaartbelyn funksioneer en ook beter ontwikkel is as die Suid-Afrikaanse Rade. Hiermee saam beskik die

Suid-Afrikaanse Rade ook nie oor genoegsame hulpbronne om dit wat werklik nodig is, te laat realiseer nie. Nog 'n ander respondent meld dat die Malawi-gemeenskap meer as sy Suid-Afrikaanse bondgenoot vermag op die sosio-ekonomiese terrein deur projekte, terwyl Suid-Afrika weer meer programme vir die jeug aanbied en ook baie meer literatuur tot die beskikking van Bahà`is stel.

Die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-gemeenskap se geestelike stand sowel as die rol wat die Plaaslike Rade hierin vertolk, blyk waarskynlik die duidelikste uit die antwoorde op die vraag wat oor nood gehandel het:

- (1) Vier-en-dertig persent van die Bahà`i respondente neem in tye van nood hul toevlug tot God.
- (2) 'n Verdere 30 persent gaan ooreenkomstig die betrokke vraelys self na die Geestelike Rade.
- (3) Tien persent wend hulself tot gebed.
- (4) Nege persent gaan na hul Bahà`i vriende.
- (5) Die oorblywende 17 persent wend hulle egter tot familie, vriende en kollegas (47).

Samevattend blyk dit dus dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-gemeenskap tans steeds besig is om te ontwikkel maar dat baie nog op die grondvlak gedoen sal moet word. Sekere Bahà`is huldig die mening dat baie groei en ontwikkeling by ander internasionale Bahà`i-gemeenskappe te bespeur is, maar dat daar in Suid Afrika niks gebeur nie. Die ontwikkeling wat by die internasionale gemeenskappe te bespeur is, word volgens diésulkes via die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-nuusbriefe en -tydskrifte gekweek, terwyl daar niks oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Bahà`i-ontwikkeling vermeld word nie. Die een respondent het (anoniem) soos volg op die vraelys gereageer: "Ons lees altyd van die internasionale ontwikkeling en dan sien ons niks van hierdie tipe ontwikkeling binne [woonbuurte I] nie. Suid Afrika is dood!" (48).

Die gebrek aan voldoende hulpbronne en die geografiese verspreiding is moontlik een van die redes vir die relatiewe swakhede in die Suid-Afrikaanse opset. 'n Ander moontlike rede is dat Bahà`is tans hul aanvanklike sirkelomtrek van eerste bekeerlinge bereik het en nou eers sal moet konsolideer alvorens hulle die volgende sirkelomtrek kan uitbrei. Die pioniers se rol is iets van die verlede, en die plaaslike gelowiges moet nou self inisiatief begin neem en uitbrei. Die vraelys het onomwonde getoon dat die Bahà`i-geloof reeds diep wortel geskied het as plaaslike godsdiens in Suid-Afrika.

4.4.2 Die Bahà`i-kalender

Bahà`is wys daarop dat elke Manifestasie (soos Zoroaster, Moses, Christus, Mohammed en Baha'u'llah) sy eie boodskap en kalenders na die wêreld bring. Bahà`is se lewens word grootliks deur die **Badi-kalender** beïnvloed. Die Bahà`i rig sy of haar lewe in met verwysing na twee verskillende temporele verwysingsraamwerke. Die Huidige Era begin volgens die Bahà`i-kalender op die dag toe die Bab verklaar het dat hy die Een is wat die weg vir die verskyning van God se Manifestasie voorberei. Gevolglik begin die Bahà`i Era (BE) ooreenkomstig die Moslem-kalender op die aand van 5 Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1260 Anno Hegirae (AH) [Year of the Emigration] en op 23 Mei 1844, ooreenkomstig die Christen-kalender. Die dag begin, net soos die geval by Jode en Moslems is, met sonsondergang. Daar is voorts negentien maande (totaal van 361 dae) wat uit negentien dae elk bestaan-- dit is nes die Christen-kalender op die sonjaar van 365 dae en 5 ure, 48 minute en 46 sekondes gebaseer. Die skrikkeljaar-beginsel word ook elke vier jaar toegepas, tensy dit aangepas moet word om saam met die lentinagewening te val. Die dae ontvang, net soos die maande, name wat die eienskappe van God weerspieël (49). Hierdie negentien maande wat 'n

jaar vorm, word weer in 'n siklusse van negentien jaar opgeneem. Een so 'n siklus staan bekend as 'n **`Vahid'** (wat die eenheid van God simboliseer). Negentien siklusse maak weer 'n periode op, wat as die **`Kulli-i-Shay'** (alle dinge) bekend staan. Laasgenoemde verwys na God se skeppingskrag wat alles weer nuut maak (50).

4.4.3 Bahà`i-feeste

Twee belangrike sosiale gebeurtenisse is die Negentiendedag-fees, wat op elke eerste dag van die nuwe maand gevier word, en die **`Ayyam-i-Hà'** (intercalary days of die dae van Hà).

Die Negentiendedag-fees is die middelpunt of die hartklop van die Bahà`is se geestelike en gemeenskapslewe. Dit is soortgelyk aan die Joodse Sabbat of die Christene se Sondag en word ooreenkomstig drie vaste en ewe belangrike dele, naamlik **aanbidding (devotional)**, **konsultasie (consultative)** en **samesyn (social part)** ingerig. Die toewydingsdeel (of aanbidding) gaan met Bahà`i-gebede en die lees van passasies vanuit die werke van die drie sentrale figure, die Bab, Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Baha gepaard. Hierdie gedeelte kan ook deur 'n besoeker bygewoon word en die Geskrifte of gebede kan ook aan die hand van musiek voorgehou word ('n gebed kan bv gesing in plaas van gelees word). `Abdu'l-Baha het onder andere opgemerk dat Bahà`is God moet aanroep **"with perfect joy and fragrance, [and] sing the verses, glorifications and praises of the Self-subsistent Lord ..."** (51).

Die tweede deel van die fees staan bekend as die konsultasiedeel en is nie toelaatbaar vir nie-Bahà`is nie omdat die interne sake van die Bahà`i-gemeenskap daar bespreek word. Die aanwesiges kan nou enige iets wat hulle as belangrik vir die gemeenskap beskou,

bespreek. Daar moet ook terugvoering oor die Plaaslike Raad se aktiwiteite gegee word en die aanwesiges het die reg om vrae te vra en voorstelle of aanbevelings te maak. Die gemeenskap mag byvoorbeeld beplan om kinderklasse aan te bied of om 'n openbare byeenkoms te hou. Dit sal dan die regte tyd wees om hul gedagtes oor die onderwerp te opper en om voorstelle te maak. Die konsultasie-deel kan ook begin met die voorlesing van briewe, waarna die gemeenskap om kommentaar gevra word. Die aanwesiges mag moontlik ook oor 'n suksesvolle Fireside (word later volledig bespreek) gesels, en met voorstelle en kommentaar in dié verband kom. Ook word die Nasionale sowel as die Plaaslike Rade se finansies gewoonlik tydens dié gebeure bespreek (52). Hierdie deel word ook deeglik deur die sekretaris met behulp van 'n notule geboekstaaf.

Die laaste deel is die sosiale deel (samesyn) en kan ook deur nie-Bahà`is bygewoon word. Verversings word aangebied en Bahà`is kuier saam. Sodoende word vriendskapsbande gesmee en assosieer die gelowiges met mekaar "in the utmost love, joy and fragrance" (53).

Die `Ayyam-i-Hà is die vier dae wat die jaarlikse vastyd (2 tot 20 Maart) voorafgaan. Dan mag Bahà`is tussen 15 en 70 jaar (uitgesonderd die wat reis, siek is of nog babas versorg) geen kos of vloeistof tussen sonsopkoms en sonsondergang neem nie. Dit is 'n tyd van gasvryheid, vrygewigheid aan hulpbehoewendes, diens aan die gemeenskap, en vernuwing van ou vriendskapsbande. Dit dien ook as Bahà`is se voorbereiding vir hul nuwe jaar, Naw-Rûz, wat op 21 Maart begin (54). Naw-Rûz word ook dikwels gevier deurdat familie en vriende bymekaarkom om gebede op te sê en Skrifge-deeltes te lees en daarna gesellig saam te verkeer, moontlik met musiek en dans. Daar is geen voorgeskrewe formaat of tradisies

wat met betrekking tot dié fees nagekom moet word nie. Gevolglik volg Bahà`is baie keer die formaat van 'n gewone amptelike feesdag, soos die herdenking van Baha'u'llah se afsterwe (29 Mei), die marteling van die Bab (9 Julie), die Bab se geboorte (20 Oktober), Baha'u'llah se verjaarsdag (12 November), die Dag van die Verbond (26 November) en die Bab se dood (28 November). By sulke geleenthede word die toewydingsdeel en die sosiale deel in baie gevalle (soos die Sandton-byeenkoms insake Baha'u'llah in 1993, en die Houghton-byeenkoms met betrekking tot die Bab in 1994) as die twee elemente gebruik wat aan die feesverrigtinge vormgee. Hierdie feesdae staan ook bekend as Heilige Dae (55): **"Nine days in the year have been appointed on which work is forbidden"** (56). Hierdie dae vier Bahà`is soos Christene Kersfees en Paasfees vier. Die verskil is egter dat die Bahà`is die betrokke feestelikhede ten koste van vakansieverlof by hul werksplekke doen. Hul kinders offer ook ter wille van hul geloof die 100%-skoolbywonings sertifikate op, omdat die kind op feesdae van die skool afwesig is.

4.4.4 Firesides en openbare byeenkomste

Firesides het geen vaste voorskrifte en rituele nie, maar oefen wel 'n invloed uit op elke Bahà`i se lewe en die gemeenskap. Baha'u'llah verlang wel dat elke persoon ten minste eenmaal per maand 'n Fireside sal aanbied. In 'n onderhoud sê mnr A: "Jy mag meer hou, maar dit is jou keuse" (57). Hy beskryf dit voorts soos volg: "Aangesien die Bahà`i-geloof geen kerklike ampte het nie en omdat elke gelowige self vir die onderrig van God se boodskap minstens eenmaal per maand aan ander mense verantwoordelik is, word 'n Fireside by die huis van 'n gelowige gehou. 'n Sessie word aan God opgedra, veral vir diegene wat in God geïnteresseerd is. Jy moenie enige iemand forseer nie, maar hulle uitnooi. Dit

is soos Jesus Christus se woorde: "Baie is genooi, maar min is getrou". Ons nooi baie, ons vriende en nie-vriende, maar min mense reageer. 'n Klein groepie mense reageer op God en Sy woord. Baie mense noem hierdie tipe byeenkoms ook nie eers 'n "Fireside" nie. Hulle sê dat dit slegs 'n samekoms is, waar mense byeenkom om te praat oor die dinge wat hulle glo en nie poog om jou geloof te verander nie. Dit is hoe ons dit doen" (58).

So 'n byeenkoms kan enige dag van die week plaasvind en daar is geen vaste formaat wat gevolg moet word nie. Die praktyk toon egter dat alle Firesides tog 'n spesifieke patroon volg. Hoewel daar met vrae of met 'n lesing of selfs met 'n video begin mag word, blyk dit dat daar allereers met gebed geopen word. Hierna word die spreker voorgestel, wat gewoonlik 'n tema uit dié geloof behandel (soos "The Oneness of Religion", "The Nature of the Human Soul"; óf "The Bahà`i Community as a Model"). Die spreker bied sy of haar lesing (eintlik is dit meer in die formaat van 'n bespreking of gespreksgemeenskap as 'n lesing) aan. Daarna volg 'n tyd vir vrae. Die gebeure word dan met koffie of tee afgesluit, waartydens informele gesprekke oor die betrokke tema op 'n een-tot-een-basis voortduur.

Openbare byeenkomste word ook van tyd tot tyd gehou. Die praktyk toon ook dat dieselfde prosedure tydens so 'n byeenkoms gevolg word. Die Roodepoort Bahà`is se maandelikse openbare byeenkoms by die Florida-biblioteek is 'n voorbeeld van so 'n openbare byeenkoms.

4.4.5 Konsultasie

Gemeenskaplike oorlegpleging is 'n unieke Bahà`i-eienskap wat die gemeenskapslewe sowel as die individu beïnvloed. Hierdie eiesoort-

tige proses geskied volgens 'n mnr D soos volg: "Die feite met betrekking tot die besprekingspunt word eerstens vasgestel. Hierna word die geestelike sowel as die legitieme beginsels dienooreenkomstig bepaal, waarna 'n vrye en oop gesprek plaasvind. Jy sien, ons begin nie met 'n diskussie sonder dat jy ooreengekom het dat jy die feite en beginsels bepaal het nie. Na so 'n bespreking, word 'n beslissing gemaak en dan moet die bevinding uitgevoer word. Dit is die verskillende stappe van konsultasie waarmee besluite gemaak word" (59).

Die reëls waarvolgens hierdie proses funksioneer, is deur Bah'u'llah bepaal en neergelê. Elkeen teenwoordig het die geestelike verpligting om saam te praat en die vermoë om na goeddunke te luister. Met ander woorde, elke lid staan onder die verpligting om sy of haar saak te stel, al dink só 'n persoon dat 'n ander individu dalk meer as hy of sy weet. Nadat die betrokke persoon sy of haar sienswyse oor die betrokke aangeleentheid gestel het, is dit ook verbode vir daardie individu om dié spesifieke gedagtegang te propageer. Die feit dat iemand die betrokke mening gehuldig het, gee dus nie vir daardie persoon die reg om dié spesifieke idee meer as enige ander idee te ondersteun nie. Op dié manier gebruik Bahà'is die proses van konsultasie om konsensus te bereik.

Wanneer Bahà'is egter geen konsensus kan bereik nie, word 'n besluit geneem ooreenkomstig die meerderheidsteun vir dié saak. Nadat so 'n besluit geneem is, is daar geen minderheidsposisie nie. Hierdie gedagtegang word moontlik die beste geïllustreer deur meneer D, wat die proses soos volg beskryf: "Ek dien as lid van die Nasionale Geestelike Raad vir byna 13 jaar. Van die grootste oomblikke op daardie liggaam was vir my die tye wanneer daar 'n besluit geneem is waarmee ek nie saam gestem het nie. Ek

was boonop ook dan versoek om 'n prominente rol in die implementering van daardie besluit te vertolk. Ek het dan uitgegaan en baie hard gewerk om die besluit te implementeer. Hiermee het ek in baie gevalle my fout agtergekom en besef dat die besluit korrek was. Ander kere het ek weer besef dat die besluit nie korrek is nie, maar dan het ek met my leiding voortgegaan, omdat dit hulle besluit was. Op hierdie wyse is die proses van konsultasie uniek en word dit ook in familie-aangeleenthede deur Bahà`is toegepas. Dit is die universele proses van besluitneming" (60).

Meneer K bekragtig ook in 'n onderhoud bogenoemde en sê pertinent dat die mooiheid van die Bahà`i-geloof daarin geleë is dat 'n mens geen vriende het wanneer jy oor 'n sekere saak 'n beslissing moet vel nie. "Jy het geen vriende nie. As jy probeer om sagmoedige Neelsie te wees of poog om niemand verkeerd op te vryf nie, het jy nog nie by konsultasie uitgekom nie! Jy sal nooit by die ware beslissing uitkom nie! Jy moet op die man af wees, liefdevol maar eerlik, sonder om persoonlik te word" (61).

4.4.6 Bahà`i-wette

Baha'u'llah het as God se Manifestasie sekere wette en leerstellings na die mensheid op die aarde gebring sodat hulle God se koninkryk op aarde kan vestig. Baie van hierdie wette is bekend en kan, volgens Bahà`is, ook in al die ander religieë gevind word. Ander wette is egter nuut en word slegs binne die Bahà`i-geloof aangetref. Hierdie leerstellings en wette moet daaglik deur elke Bahà`i uitgeleef en gehoorsaam word.

4.4.6.1 Totale oorgawe aan die Wil van God

Baha'u'llah leer: "The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment in His holy will and

pleasure" (62). God is alwetend en dus ken Hy ook al sy volgelinge se behoeftes deeglik. As iemand hom of haar aan die Wil van God onderwerp en Sy wette gehoorsaam, wandel só 'n persoon volgens Bahà`is op die pad van geluk en geestelike vooruitgang. Bahà`is sê verder dat geen geskape persoon sy of haar Skepper ten volle begryp óf verstaan nie. Die betrokke individu is ook nie by magte om altyd die goddelike wysheid met die wette van God te verbind nie! Tog moet hy of sy die wette van die manifestasie van God gehoorsaam en uitleef. Gehoorsaamheid is dus 'n bron van beskerming. Daarom glo Bahà`is dat elke mens se geestelike groei en die welstand van die mens se gemeenskap deur gehoorsaamheid aan hierdie wette beskerm en verseker word.

Ware vryheid vloei vir Bahà`is voort uit 'n totale oorgawe aan God se wil. Dit veroorsaak ook dat die mens terselfdertyd vrygemaak word van slawerny, haat, vooroordele, selfsugtigheid, alkohol, dwelms en ander strikke van die wêreld. So word die mens se menswaardigheid en stand ook, aldus Bahà`is, beskerm.

4.4.6.2 Vrywillige gebed en vas

Die versoek om daaglik te bid en een maand een maal per jaar te vas, is volgens Bahà`is 'n kosbare geskenk van God omdat dit die mens vernuwe, reinig en selfs ook sy of haar siel versterk en verkwik. Gehoorsaamheid hieraan verseker geestelike groei en vooruitgang vir Bahà`is.

`Abdu'l-Bahà is eenmaal, aldus Bahà`is, gevra waarom dit vir die mens nodig is om te bid, aangesien God reeds vooraf al die behoeftes van elke siel weet en reeds al die aspekte ooreenkomstig Sy wysheid aanspreek. Hy het gesê: **"The wisdom of prayer is this, that it causes a connection between the servant and the True One"** (63).

Hy het ook gesê: "Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the strong One and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, the bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His ocean. This supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being" (64).

Tydens gebed behoort die persoon wat bid, sy of haar dank teenoor God vir Sy seëninge te betuig. `Abdu'l-Bahà sê: "Thank thou the kind Father ... that the world of creation and the heart of the universe found comfort in His mercy" (65). Tog is die mees belangrike vir Bahà`is om voortdurend na God se wil te streef en dit altyd na te volg.

Hoewel 'n persoon daagliks soveel keer as wat hy of sy wil bid, kan bid; beveel Baha'u'llah aan dat elke mens ten minste eenmaal per dag behoort te bid. Hy het ook drie vrywillige gebede geopenbaar. Elke gelowige is vry om te besluit watter een van die drie (soos vervat in die Bahà`i Gebedsboek) hulle wil bid, en moet dan die stappe volg ooreenkomstig die opgetekende teks. Die kort gebed word eenmaal per dag tussen die middag en sonsondergang gebed, terwyl die gebed van gemiddelde lengte in die oggend, middag en met sonsondergang opgesê word. Die lang gebed kan enige tyd van die dag of nag gebruik word. Verskeie ander gebede (ook gebede vir spesifieke geleenthede soos huwelike, begrafnisse, ongebore babas en afgestorwenes) wat deur Baha'u'llah, die Báb en `Abu'l-Bahà geopenbaar is, is ook in die gebedsboek vervat. Dit dien ook vermeld te word dat Shoghi Effendi self ook gebede in Persies en Arabies geskryf het. Hierdie gebede sal moontlik nooit vertaal word nie en is tans nie deel van die amptelike gebedsboek nie (66).

Elke Bahà`i-individu kan egter ook sy of haar eie gebed uit die diepte van sy of haar hart formuleer en bid; maar die gebede van Baha'u'llah, die Báb en `Abu'l-Bahà het spesiale krag. Hulle dien ook as 'n voorbeeld, om aan die mens te toon hoe om met eerbied en waardigheid tot God te nader. Terselfdertyd toon dié gebede aan Bahà`is vir wat en waarvoor daar gebid behoort te word: "I render Thee thanks, O Thou Who hast lighted Thy fire within my soul, and cast the beams of thy light into my heart, that Thou has taught Thy servants how to make mention of Thee, and revealed unto them the ways whereby they can supplicate Thee" (67).

Die tydperk van die vas word gekenmerk deur die reiniging en opbou van die liggaam. Die onthouding van voedsel en drank toon vir Bahà`is dat die mens 'n geestelike sowel as 'n vleeslike wese is. Dit is egter nie net genoeg om die liggaam tussen sonsopkoms en -ondergang van vloeistof en kos te weerhou nie-- Bahà`is moet ook meer tyd aan gebed en meditasie spandeer. Tydens hierdie gebeure behoort Bahà`is ook hul eie lewensomstandighede in oënskou te neem en dan self te evalueer waar hulle hul eie lewe kan verbeter en verryk. Die vas is dus die tydperk waarin die betrokke persoon spesiale aandag skenk aan sy of haar selfsugtige neigings, vooroordele en ander onsuiverhede en hoe hy of sy hul liggaam hiervan kan reinig. Hierdie geestelike eienskappe help die individu om die nuwe jaar, wat direk na die vas 'n aanvang neem, reg te begin.

Die vas is dikwels ook 'n tyd van nabyheid tussen die Bahà`is. Baie van hulle kom gedurende hierdie tyd voor sonsopkoms of na sonsondergang bymekaar om saam te bid of te eet en om mekaar te onderskraag.

4.4.6.3 Skoling

Iemand wat vir Baha'u'llah as Saligmaker aangeneem het, is met leiding en inspirasie vanuit Sy Geskrifte geseën en sal dit ook graag met ander wil deel. Skoling van ander is vir Bahà`is beide 'n voorreg en 'n verpligting: "Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahà, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorius of all deeds!" (68).

Priesters en predikante het, volgens Bahà`is, in die verlede slegs die Heilige Boeke bestudeer, gelees en geïnterpreteer. Dit het egter later so ontwikkel dat die gewone mense self die Geskrifte in hul eie taal kon lees. Tog het die predikante, priesters en teoloë, volgens Bahà`is steeds die Woord van God bestudeer, geïnterpreteer en ook uitgelê. Volgens Bahà`is het die mens die afgelope 150 jaar só ontwikkel dat daar tans nog 'n nuwe manier is waarmee God se boodskap versprei word: omdat die meeste mense regoor die wêreld vandag leer om te lees, te skryf en om selfstandig te dink, glo Bahà`is dat predikante en leraars nie meer nodig is nie. In plaas daarvan het elke Bahà`i self die verantwoordelikheid om die Geskrifte te bestudeer en ander met betrekking tot die geloof te onderrig.

Daar is verskillende maniere waarop die skoling kan geskied. Elke Bahà`i kan daarna streef om in sy of haar lewe die Woord van God ooreenkomstig die openbaring van Baha'u'llah uit te leef. Sy of haar daade en optrede sal dan van die geestelike krag van dié geloof getuig. Elke Bahà`i kan ook sy of haar vriende of bure nooi om die boodskap van God te hoor (die sogenaamde fireside). Baha'u'llah leer dat die leiding van j'n mens se bure na God alles oortref. Hy sê ook dat elkeen wat iemand van God wil leer,

hulp en onderskraging sal ontvang: **"Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-wise"** (69).

Dit is egter vir Bahà`is belangrik om die kennis van Baha'u'llah met elke mens te deel. God het elke hart voorberei om die boodskap te ontvang en daarom kan geen Bahà`i besluit wie die boodskap mag hoor en wie nie. Dus moet elke gelowige die mensheid om God se ontwil skool. Hy of sy moet ook die reaksie wat sy of haar skoling by die betrokke individu ontlok, aanvaar. Elke individu moet self besluit of hulle die boodskap sal aanvaar, al dan nie! Niemand kan 'n ander persoon forseer om 'n Bahà`i te word nie.

4.4.6.4 Arbeid

'n Basiese Bahà`i-wet is dat elke persoon 'n werk, ambag of professie moet beoefen, waarmee so 'n persoon sy of haar brood en botter verdien. Baha'u'llah sê: **"The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds"** (70). Enige vorm van eerlike werk is aanvaarbaar!

Die individu se benadering en gesindheid met betrekking tot sy of haar werk is, volgens Bahà`is, meer belangrik as die tipe werk wat hy of sy verrig. Wanneer werk verrig word in die gees van "diens aan God en jou medemens", word dit tot die vlak van aanbidding verhef. Die armes en rykes ervaar daaglik ook tydens hul werksaamhede en verblyf op aarde dieselfde versoekings. Dit mag dalk veroorsaak dat die armes tot bedelary oorgaan, terwyl die rykes weer op hul beurt agteroor sit en uit hul rykdom leef. Beide is egter vir Bahà`is ewe onaanvaarbaar: Baha'u'llah verbied

bedelary, terwyl Hy ydelheid ten sterkste afkeer. Hy sê: "The most despised of men before God is he who sits and begs" (71). Die laagste vlak waartoe die mens kan daal is diegene "that yield no fruit on earth. Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than those idle and worthless souls" (72).

Bahà'is voel somtyds dat die verkondiging van dié geloof meer belangrik as werk is. Hul wil dus alle tyd tot hul beskikking wy aan die verspreiding van dié geloof en verwag dat ander hulle dienooreenkomstig moet onderhou. Hoewel die motief suiwer is, is só 'n benadering nie aanvaarbaar nie. Shoghi Effendi sê 'n goeie Bahà'ì "is the one who so arranges his life as to devote time both to his material needs and also to the service of the Cause" (73).

4.4.6.5 Kuisheid

God het die mens, volgens Bahà'is, geskape om 'n gelukkige en liefdevolle wese te wees. Hy het die mens ook die vermoë geskenk om op vele wyses die rykdom van die lewe te ervaar. Die seksuele verhouding tussen man en vrou is inderdaad so 'n geskenk van God. Dit het onder andere, volgens Bahà'is, ten doel om kinders in die wêreld te bring wat God sal dien en Sy boodskap sal verkondig, en ook om man en vrou na aan mekaar te bring. Seks kan dus, ooreenkomstig Bahà'is, met brandstof vergelyk word. Wanneer brandstof binne die motor se masjien ontplof, is dit baie nuttig want dit veroorsaak dat die voertuig vorentoe beweeg. Maar indien dit buite die masjien sou ontplof, veroorsaak dit 'n brand wat groot skade kan aanrig. Insgelyks glo Bahà'is dat wanneer seks binne die huwelik plaasvind, dit gesond en opbouend is. Wanneer dit egter buite die huwelik gebeur, is dit vernietigend en veroorsaak

dit hartseer. Kuisheid is dus 'n fundamentele deel van die Bahà`is se leefwyse.

Bahà`is glo dat elke mens 'n kuise en heilige lewe moet lei, wat voorhuwelikse en buite-egtelike seksuele verhoudings uitsluit. Hulle behoort ook dié kuisheid in terme van kleredrag, taal, vermaaklikheid en optrede teenoor persone van die teenoorgestelde geslag te demonstreer. Shoghi Effendi sê "chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behaviour and conduct of all Bahà`is, both in their social relations with the members of their community, and in their contact with the world at large" (74). Deur die toepassing van hierdie beginsel, glo Bahà`is dat hulle ook die geloof deur hul doen en late kan verkondig en versprei.

4.4.6.6 Huwelike en egskeiding

Bahà`is glo dat die huwelik een van God se ewige wette is. Dit het uitsluitlik ten doel om die getroude paar met hul geestelike groei te onderskraag en om 'n goeie opvoeding vir kinders te verseker.

Trou is vir Bahà`is 'n ernstige besluit, wat vereis dat die paartjie wat tot so 'n stap wil oorgaan, eers mekaar se karakters deeglik sal ondersoek. Die paartjie behoort liefde, eenheid, vriendskap en respek as oogmerk te hê. Hul troue moet op geestelike en fisiese bande geskoei wees. Somtyds gebeur dit dat die eenheid, volgens Bahà`is, slegs op die fisiese bande gebaseer word. Dit is 'n tydelike band, en dan volg skeiding gewoonlik. Die permanente en ewigdurende verbintenis setel in geestelike en fisiese harmonie in elke faset van die lewe. Sodoende is die egpaar, volgens Bahà`is, by magte om mekaar met hul geestelike ontwikkeling te help en sal hulle vir altyd, in al God se wêreld, by mekaar bly.

Wanneer 'n paartjie besluit om te trou, moet hulle ooreenkomstig Bahà`i-voorskrifte beide se natuurlike ouers se toestemming verkry, omdat eenheid die hoofdoel van die Bahà`i-geloof is. Trou is nie net die eenwording van die twee wat trou nie, maar ook die eenwording van die families wat daarby betrokke is. Die familie is ook die bousteen waarop die samelewing geskoei word; en die verkryging van ouers se toestemming beteken dat die huwelik in 'n atmosfeer van eenheid en sekuriteit geskied, wat ook uiteindelik die gemeenskap versterk.

Daar word ook van Bahà`is wat trou verwag om 'n Bahà`i-huwelikseremonie te ondergaan, selfs al is net een van die betrokke partye 'n Bahà`i. Nie-Bahà`is kan ook in die meeste lande van die wêreld so 'n Bahà`i-troue hê, op voorwaarde dat só 'n paartjie bereid is om alle Bahà`i-voorskrifte met betrekking tot die huwelik uit te voer. Die seremonie is eenvoudig en wissel, volgens Bahà`is, in styl van kultuur tot kultuur. Die enigste voorvereiste is dat die bruid en bruidegom die gelofte sal neem deur te sê: **"We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God"** (75). Laasgenoemde moet in die teenwoordigheid van twee goedgekeurde Bahà`i-getuies (goedgekeur deur die betrokke Plaaslike Geestelike Raad) geskied. Die paartjie kan self ook sekere gebede, voorlesings en enige vorm van musiek wat tot 'n blye en betekenisvolle geestelike atmosfeer mag bydra, as onafhanklike elemente tot die gelofte byvoeg. Die Bahà`i gelofte dien ook as 'n herinnering aan die getroude paartjie dat hulle 'n gesamentlike verhouding met God aangegaan het en dat hierdie verbintenis die middelpunt van hul eenheid en waardesisteem sal uitmaak.

Bahà`i-egpaar op hul troudag



(The Bahá`i Faith, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of South Africa, ISBN 0 908420 91 9, 1990)

Die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad is die instansie wat moet toesien dat die Bahá`i-huwelikswette gehoorsaam word. Die ouers se toestemming word ontvang en die getuies wat namens die Raad optree, hoor aflegging van die huweliksgelofte aan. Die Plaaslike Raad is ook, volgens die Bahá`is, beide voor en gedurende die huwelik vir pastoraat en konsultsie beskikbaar indien die paartjie om hul hulp sou vra. Indien 'n Bahá`i wat met die huwelikswette vertrou is sonder 'n Bahá`i-seremonie trou en nie by magte is om die situasie te korrigeer nie (hetsy deur egskeiding, of deur die hou van 'n Bahá`i-seremonie) sal so 'n Bahá`i al sy of haar regte van lidmaatskap tot die Bahá`i-gemeenskap verloor.

Ernstige probleme ontstaan somtyds binne die huwelik, wat deur middel van gebed, die Heilige Boeke en ope gesprek tussen man en vrou opgelos behoort te word. As die situasie nie verbeter nie, kan die man en vrou by die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad om hulp aanklop.

Egskeiding word ten sterkste deur Baha'u'llah afgewys, maar Hy verleen wel toestemming daartoe dat sy volgelinge in uiterste gevalle (soos in die geval van weersin of afkeer) wel mag skei. Sulke egpare moet vir een jaar uitmekaargaan en ook op alparte plekke bly. Gedurende hierdie tydperk moet hulle gesamentlik met die Plaaslike Raad konsulteer, en moontlik selfs 'n huweliksbe-rader raadpleeg, en verder alles in die stryd werp om weer te versoen. Dié periode staan onder Bahà`is bekend as die Jaar van Geduld.

Wanneer 'n egpaar se weë skei met die oog op 'n egskeiding, sal hulle óf saam óf alleen na die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad gaan en hul probleem uitspel. Die betrokkenes sal ook die Plaaslike Raad versoek dat die 'Jaar van Geduld' ingestel moet word. Terselfder-tyd moet hulle onbevooroordeeld bly en die advies van die Geeste-like Raad ter harte neem. As die Raad dan vind dat die egpaar se probleme wel ernstig is, stel hulle 'n datum wat as die begin van die sogenaamde Jaar van Geduld sal geld. As die egpaar na daardie jaar nie hul probleme kon oplos nie, mag hulle met wetlike stappe vir 'n egskeiding begin.

Die Nasionale Geestelike Raad bekragtig, volgens Bahà`is, dat die vereistes vir 'n egskeiding nagekom is wanneer beide partye die Jaar van Geduld (76) voltooi het, en sodra 'n siviele egskeiding bekom is. Daarom is 'n Bahà`i wat nie hierdie vereistes nagekom het nie dus ook nie geregtig om weer met iemand anders in die huwelik te tree nie.

4.4.6.7 Verbodsbepalings

Bahà`is glo dat Baha'u'llah wette vir 'n nuwe sosiale orde (God se Koninkryk op aarde) gebring het. Deur die voorskrifte te gehoorsaam, wandel Bahà`is op die regte pad en geniet diésulkes ware vryheid wat deur totale oorgawe aan God gekweek word.

Alkohol en Dwelms: Baha'u'llah verbied die gebruik van alkohol en dwelms. Bahà`is moet enige kontak daarmee vermy. `Abdu'l-Bahà sê dat drank die grootste oorsaak is vir "... chronic diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind" (77). Nie alleen word die verstand en liggaam deur hierdie middels beïnvloed nie, maar die siel lei ook daaronder. Dit word volgens Bahà`is gedemonstreer deurdat 'n individu wat onder die invloed van dwelms of alkohol is, dinge doen waaroor hy of sy agterna baie spyt is. Die betrokke individu mag selfs die respek van sy of haar familie en vriende verloor en belemmer, ooreenkomstig Bahà`is, self die vereistes vir sy of haar eie geestelike ontwikkeling. Gehoorsaamheid aan dié wet beskerm volgens Bahà`is die individu en verseker menswaardigheid (78).

Dobbel: Baha'u'llah het sy volgelingen opdrag gegee om nie te dobbel nie. Dobbel beteken dat die betrokke persoon sy of haar vertrouwe in 'n kans, eerder as op God plaas. Die wet teen dobbel beteken nie dat 'n individu nie aan speletjies mag deelneem nie. Baie speletjies is beide vermaaklik en skadeloos, maar enige spel raak skadelik wanneer dit in 'n mors van geld ontaard (79).

Skinderpraatjies: Bahà`is is verbied om oor ander te skinder. `Abdu'l-Bahà beskou skinderpraatjies as een van die grootste sondes. Dit benadeel beide die dader sowel as die persoon waaroor geskinder word. Dié geloof se groei word verder ook deur sulke

praatjies benadeel omdat dit verdeeldheid en wantroue tot gevolg het. Die drang om te skinder, sal dus eers oorkom moet word alvorens die doel om harmonie en eenheid te bewerkstellig, bereik sal kan word. Bahà`is moet dus ook oor die foute van ander stil bly en slegs oor hul goeie eienskappe praat. Baha'u'llah waarsku: "Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner" (80).

Gerugte en skinderpraatjies benodig 'n gewillige luisteraar. Bahà`is wat skinderpraatjies oor ander hoor, moet weier om daarna te luister en die betrokke persoon met sy of haar storie na die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad verwys. Sulke optrede sal help om die verspreiding van gerugte en skinderpraatjies hok te slaan (81).

Lidmaatskap van ander religieuse organisasies: Hoewel Bahà`is in alle gelowe wat deur God se manifestasies gebring is, glo; beteken dit nie dat Bahà`is lidmate van sulke gelowe of nie-Bahà`i-institusies kan word, óf selfs voort mag gaan om te bly funksioneer in die geloof waaruit hulle moontlik afkomstig is nie. Elke Bahà`i moet sy of haar tyd en energie vanaf sy of haar vorige ouerinstelling, ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah, na sy nuwe instelling verplaas. Byvoorbeeld, wanneer 'n Christen vir Baha'u'llah as Verlosser aanneem, dan verloor of gee só 'n persoon nie sy of haar liefde vir Christus prys nie, maar aanvaar die betrokke persoon vir Baha'u'llah as die Beloofde wederkoms van Christus. Dit is noodsaaklik dat elke Bahà`i sy of haar kerklidmaatskap moet opsê om dan 'n sterk en aktiewe lid van die Bahà`i-gemeenskap te word. Die Christen-kerke wag steeds op Christus se wederkoms ooreenkomstig die Bybelse profesieë. Bahà`is weet dat Christus weer gekom het en dat hulle besig is om aan Sy Koninkryk op aarde, ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah se goddelike plan, te bou (82).

Predikante: In die verlede was predikante en leraars, volgens Bahà`is, dikwels die enigste mense wat kon geles het. Hulle het die Heilige Boeke bestudeer en die individue vertel wat om te glo. Hulle het ook alle religieuse aangeleenthede behartig. Aangesien baie mense vandag egter self leer om te lees en te skryf, het die mensheid volgens Bahà`is so ontwikkel dat byna almal selfstandig kan dink en doen. Baha'u'llah leer dat predikante en leraars dus vandag nie meer nodig is nie. Elke individu is vir sy of haar eie bestudering van die Geskrifte en sy of haar kennis en liefde vir God self verantwoordelik! Niemand behoort ook, volgens Bahà`is, in iets te glo bloot omdat sy of haar ouers, vriende of religieuse leiers daarin glo nie. Elke Bahà`i moet op grond van sy of haar eie studie en gebed glo.

4.4.6.8 Begrafnisse en Testamente

Baha'u'llah het verskeie wette aangaande begrafnisse en testamente gegee. Elke Bahà`i moet 'n wettige testament agterlaat. Dit moet uitspel hoe die betrokke individu sy of haar geld en eiendom verdeel wil hê, en dit is raadsaam om in die testament te laat opteken dat hy of sy 'n Bahà`i is en dat hy of sy ooreenkomstig die Bahà`i-gebruike begrawe wil word. Laasgenoemde is belangrik omdat baie Bahà`is nie-Bahà`i-familielede het wat nie met die Bahà`i-prosedures vertrou is nie (83).

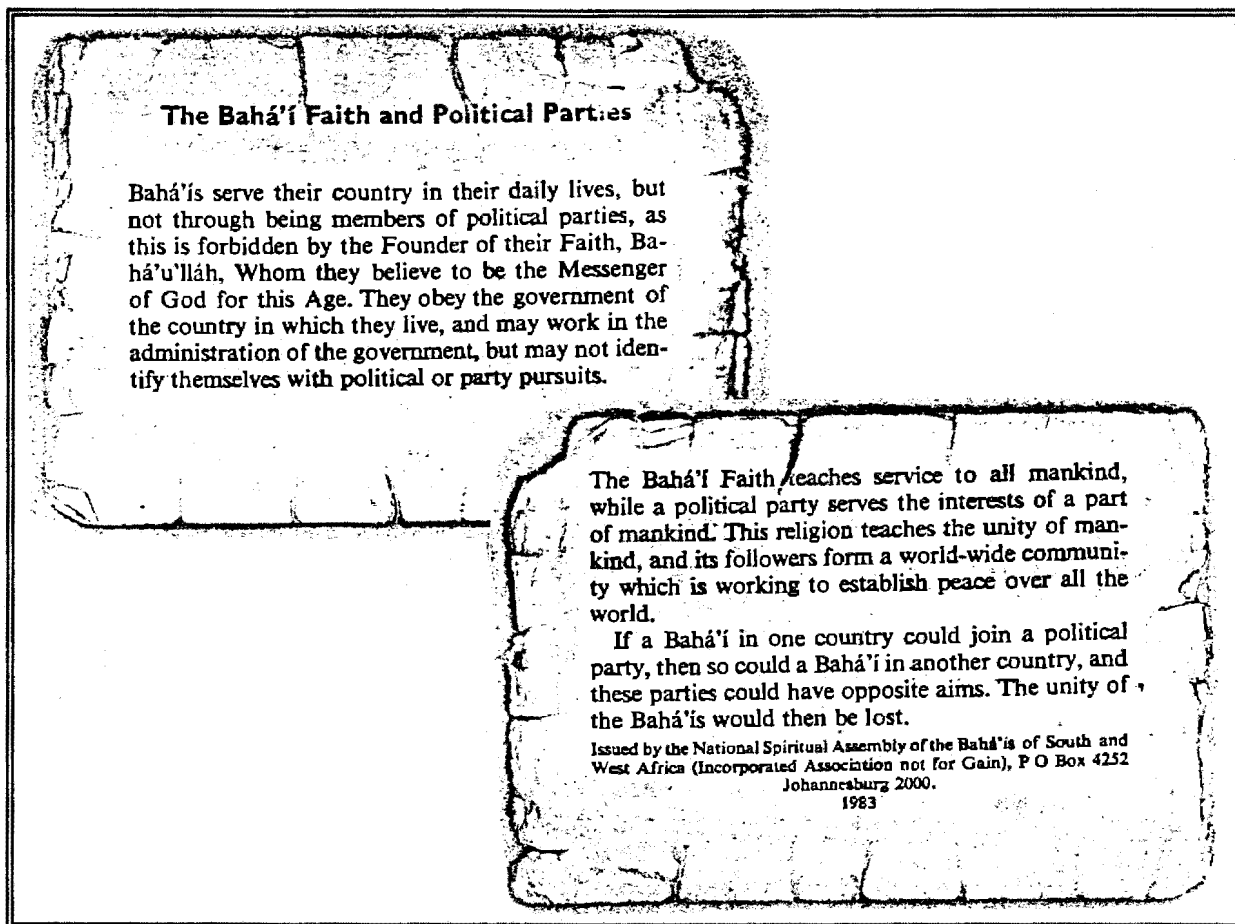
Enige Bahà`i mag 'n begrafnis hou, alhoewel dit die verantwoordelikheid van die Plaaslike Geestelike Raad is om toe te sien dat alles goed georganiseer word. Die verrigtinge is eenvoudig en sonder enige tierlantyntjies. Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Bahà het pragtige gebede met betrekking tot die afgestorwenes geopenbaar. Hierdie word gewoonlik in samehang met ander gebede en passasies vanuit die Heilige Boeke aangevul. 'n Nie-Bahà`i mag ook 'n Bahà`i-begrafnis ontvang, indien die betrokke persoon dit verkies.

Bahà`is mag nie veras word nie-- liggame moet begrawe word en die teraardbestelling moet binne een uur se reis vanaf die plek van afsterwe geskied.

4.4.6.9 Lojaliteit teenoor Regering

Bahà`is erken dat regerings 'n instelling is waardeur harmonie en orde in die samelewing gehandhaaf word. Hulle moet dus die Regering van die dag gehoorsaam en ondersteun. `Abdu'l-Bahà beklemtoon die feit dat dislojaliteit jeens die regering ook dislojaliteit teenoor God beteken. Hy sê dat selfs die wens van "... evil to the government [is] a transgression of the Cause of God" (84).

Bahà`is mag ook nie by partypolitieke-aktiwiteite betrek word nie. Meneer K verduidelik hierdie deur te sê dat die Bahà`i-geloof 'n wêreldorganisasie is en dat party politieke aktiwiteite sal meebring dat daar Bahà`is aan alkante van die betrokke politiese spektrums is. Dit sal met ander woorde tot verdeeldheid lei, en die Bahà`i-geloof staan dan juis vir harmonie en eenheid. Daarom kan hulle nie by die party politieke aspekte betrokke raak nie. Hy toon voorts 'n kaart, wat hy lank in sy beursie saamgedra het en waarin die Bahà`i se posisie uiteengesit word (85). Die afdruk hiernaas weerspieël die inhoud:



4.4.7 Die Bahá'í-fonds

Bahá'ís glo dat elke gelowige op 'n gereelde grondslag, net soos hy of sy gereeld hulle gebede opsê, tot die Bahá'í-fonds moet bydra. So 'n gereelde bydrae is volgens mnr K 'n vrywillige, persoonlike en vertroulike saak tussen God en die gewer. Geen bydrae kan ontvang word van 'n persoon wat nie 'n Bahá'í is nie. Bahá'ís word ook deur die Nasionale Geestelike Raad aanbeveel om ten minste een maal gedurende elke Bahá'í-maand so 'n bydrae te maak. Bahá'ís gee gewoonlik hul bydraes tydens die Negentiendedag Fees. Nog 'n beginsel is dat die individu wat bydra iets moet opoffer.

Meneer A sê dat dit nie moeilik is nie, byvoorbeeld as jy 'n motor vir R85 000-00 wil koop, dan koop jy eerder 'n ander voertuig ter waarde van R65 000-00. Die oorblywende R20 000-00 gee jy as jou offerande aan God. So 'n opoffering is in die ware sin van die woord eintlik iets kleins. Hy gaan voort deur daarop te wys dat 'n ander persoon eerder, in plaas van die R85 000-00 voertuig, 'n R80 000-00 een koop en dan die oorblywende R5 000-00 as sy vrywillige bydrae gee. Dit is 'n saak tussen hom en God (86).

Mevrou J het ook op die feit gewys dat daar verskeie fondse binne die Bahà`i-fonds is waartoe bygedra kan word. Bahà`is dra maandeliks tot die gemeenskapsfonds by, of kan vir die Ark Fund (fonds vir die Bahà`i-geboue in Israel) bydra. Daar is met ander woorde plaaslike, nasionale, kontinentale en internasionale fondse, en die lede besluit waarvoor hulle hul geld wil laat gaan. Dit geskied deur 'n inbetaling by die Plaaslike Raad se tesourier en daar word gespesifiseer waarheen die geld moet gaan (87).

Die Bahà`i Fonds moet ook, ooreenkomstig mev J, van die "Huququ'llah" (die Reg van God) onderskei word. Die Reg van God word bereken op 'n sekere profyt wat die lid vir daardie jaar of 'n sekere maand gemaak het. Nadat alle uitgawes afgetrek is, en as daar dan 'n wins is, behoort 'n sekere bedrag van daardie wins aan God (88). Baha'u'llah sê: "Should anyone acquire one hundred mithqàls of gold, nineteen mithqàls thereof are God's and to be rendered unto Him, the Fashioner of earth and heaven" (89). Meneer K beskryf dit self treffend deur te sê: "Dit [Huququ'llah] is om van jou fondse te neem en vir God te gee ... om tot sy Fonds by te dra. Jy meet jou liefde vir God deur jou bydraes tot die Fonds! Niemand weet dit nie! Slegs jy en die tesourier. Dit is 'n uiters vertroulike gebeurtenis" (90).

Meneer K wys ook daarop dat "die Reg van God" nuut vir Bahà`is is en merk ook dan op: "Dit is iets wat ons as Bahà`is nog moet baasraak. Dit is 'n Bahà`i-kultuur. ... Sommige van ons doen dit. Ander doen dit nog nie. Jou geloof word nie daardeur negatief beïnvloed nie. Dit is die wonderlike ding! Jy doen dit. Jy bring dit as individu as gevolg van jou liefde vir God en vanweë jou omstandighede ... uit dankbaarheid!" (91).

Hierdie geld word dan by die plaaslike tesourier inbetaal en die persoon ontvang 'n kwitansie daarvoor. Die tesourier besorg dit op sy beurt aan die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid. Dié metode is, volgens mev J, baie meer regverdig deurdat almal regoor die wêreld oor dieselfde kam geskeer word (92).

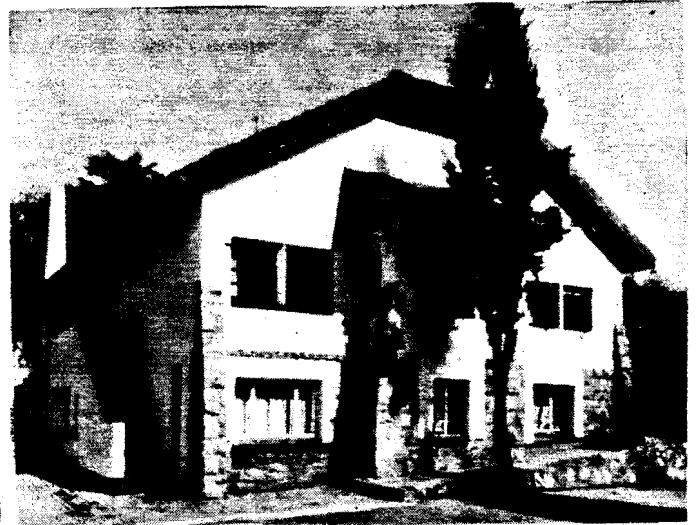
4.5 Die Bahà`i-geboue

Die Bahà`i-geloof word tans vanaf hul Nasionale Sentrum op die hoek van Louis Bothastraat en Acornlaan georkestreer. Voorts beskik Bahà`is ook oor 'n plaas in Elandsdrift. Laasgenoemde is aangekoop vir die oprigting van 'n tempel en huisves tans die Bahà`i Instituut vir Opvoeding en die Bahà`i Sosio-ekonomiese Program vir Suid-Afrika. Bahà`i-konferensies word gewoonlik ook op die Bahà`i-plaas aangebied. 'n Foto van die Bahà`i plaas sowel as die Bahà`i Nasionale Sentrum word hiernaas vertoon (93):

Bahà`i-plaas



Bahà`i Nasionale Sentrum



(Susan Ford, A Pictorial History of the Bahá'í Faith, 1911 to 1992, p 15)

Bahá'is regoor die wêreld dra finansieël by tot die instandhouding en daarstelling van hul Bahá'í-geboue in Israel. Naas die reeds voltooide Shoghi Effendi-geboue, sal die ander oorblywende geboue moontlik teen die jaar 2000 voltooi wees. Laasgenoemde is tans vir baie Bahá'is 'n prioriteit omdat die daarstelling daarvan hand aan hand met sekere profesieë van Baha'u'llah loop.

Die pelgrimstog wat deur verskeie Bahá'is onderneem word na hul wêreldsentrum in Haifa, Israel, word gewoonlik ook as die belangrikste gebeurtenis in hul lewe beskryf. Hulle kan ook nie uitgespraat raak oor hoe mooi die geboue is en hoe so 'n besoek elkeen se geloof opnuut versterk het nie. Mevrouw J het ook gesê dat sy tydens haar besoek aan die Bahá'í Wêreldsentrum en -geboue so beïndruk en oorweldig was, dat sy nou nie anders kan as om gereeld tot die Ark Fund by te dra nie. Sy beskou dit as een van haar

grootste voorregte-- om te help bou aan die plek vanwaar die hele wêreld eendag geregeer sal word (94).

Die Ark Fund is die fonds vir die daarstelling van al die Bahà`i-geboue, vanwaar die bestuur van dié geloof (maar later van die hele wêreld) behartig word. Bahà`is beskryf hierdie gebeure op die berg Karmel onder andere as die daarstelling van God se troon: "O Carmel ... Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His Throne ..." (95). Shoghi Effendi sê dat hierdie Bahà`i Wêreldsentrum ook sal dien as die "nerve centre of a world civilization" (96). 'n Twaalfjarige kind se brief toon ook hoe belangrik hierdie gebeure vir die Bahà`is is: "My dear ones, my friends and I know how important the construction of the buildings on Mount Carmel is. Therefore, we have collected our monies to present to the Blessed Beauty. We know it is very little, but believe that if it were possible for us to give our lives, we would do so" (97).

Mevrou T beskryf die uitleg insake die Arkvormige Bahà`i-gebouekompleks in Haifa, Israel soos volg: "Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid is die hoofgebou en vorm die middelpunt van dié kompleks. Dan kry jy die Internasionale Onderrig Sentrum. Die Raadgewers wat sal help met die uitbouing van die Bahà`i-geloof en die wat dié geloof moet beskerm sal hierin gehuisves word. 'n Verdre gebou sal die Heilige Geskrifte van die Bahà`i-geloof, soos onder andere die Bab se werke ensovoorts, huisves. Hierdie gebou sal as die Sentrum vir die Studie van die Heilige Geskrifte bekend staan. Voorts beplan hulle 'n groot biblioteek, 'n Wêreld Biblioteek wat as die Internasionale Biblioteek bekend sal staan asook 'n gebou waarin die administratiewe personeel hul werksaamhede sal verrig. Hiermee saam het ons ook die Bab se Heiligdom, met sy 18 terrasse. Die terrasse simboliseer sy 18 dissipels en

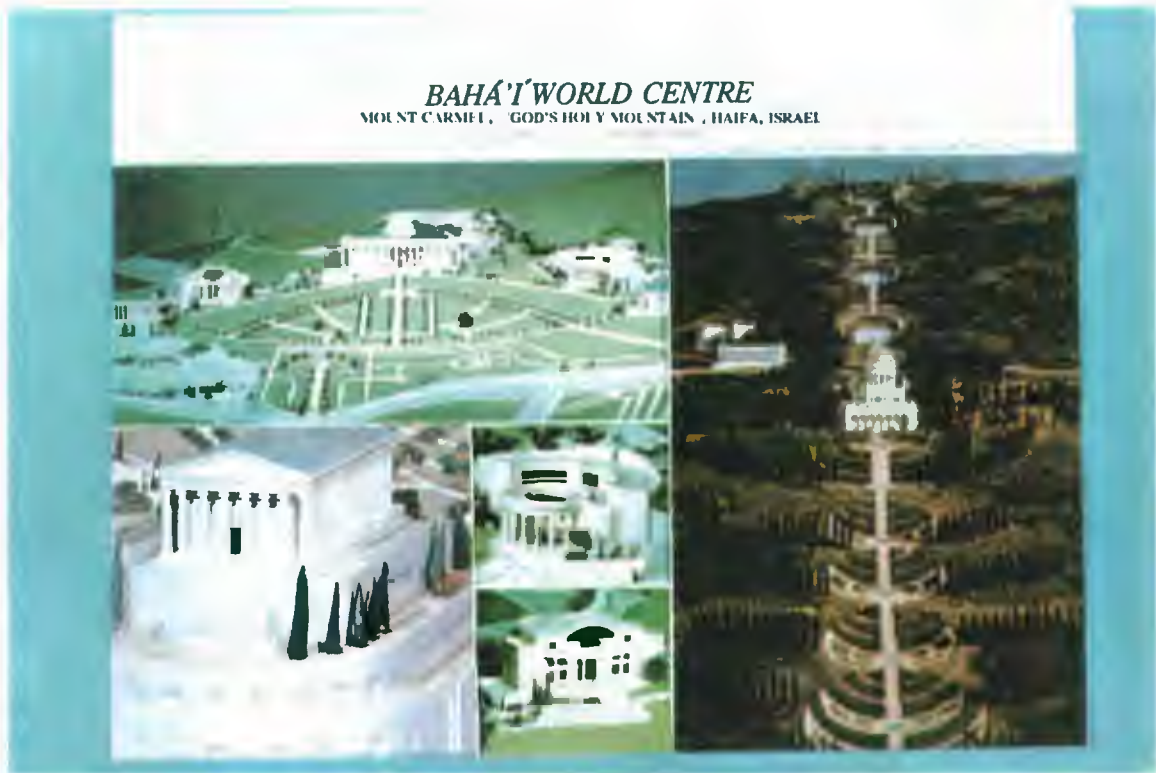
sterk vanaf die jongste dissipel tot by die enigste vroue dissipel" (98). Mevrouw J wys daarop dat die Bab se Heiligdom en die 18 terrasse saam 19 maak, om die 19 Lewende Briewe ("Living Letters") uit te beeld (99).

Hierdie geboue word, volgens mev T, baie groot gebou omdat dit in die toekoms al die verteenwoordigers van die verskillende nasies se regeerders sal moet kan huisves. Sy sê ook dat, "Bahà`is geleer word dat, wanneer hierdie geboue klaar gebou is, daar die een of ander vorm van verlossing sal kom. Daar word ook voorspel dat al die konings en regeerders van die wêreld aan die Bab se Heiligdom eer sal betoon. Daar is ook 'n Bybelse profesie wat sê dat die wêreld na die Here se Berg sal gaan. Hierdie berg is Karmel en dit is hoekom ons glo dat die konings en regeerders van die wêreld na die Berg Karmel sal kom" (100).

Dit dien ook gemeld te word dat die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid tans reeds voltooi is, terwyl al die ander geboue met die uitsondering van die Internasionale Biblioteek teen die jaar 2000 klaar gebou behoort te wees (101).



Foto van hoe die Bahà`i Wêreldsentrum teen die jaar 2000 mag lyk



(Gekoop by die Nasionale Bahà`i Sentrum)

Internasionale Bahà`i Biblioteek



(Gekleurde fotostaat van die Foto)



International Teaching Centre

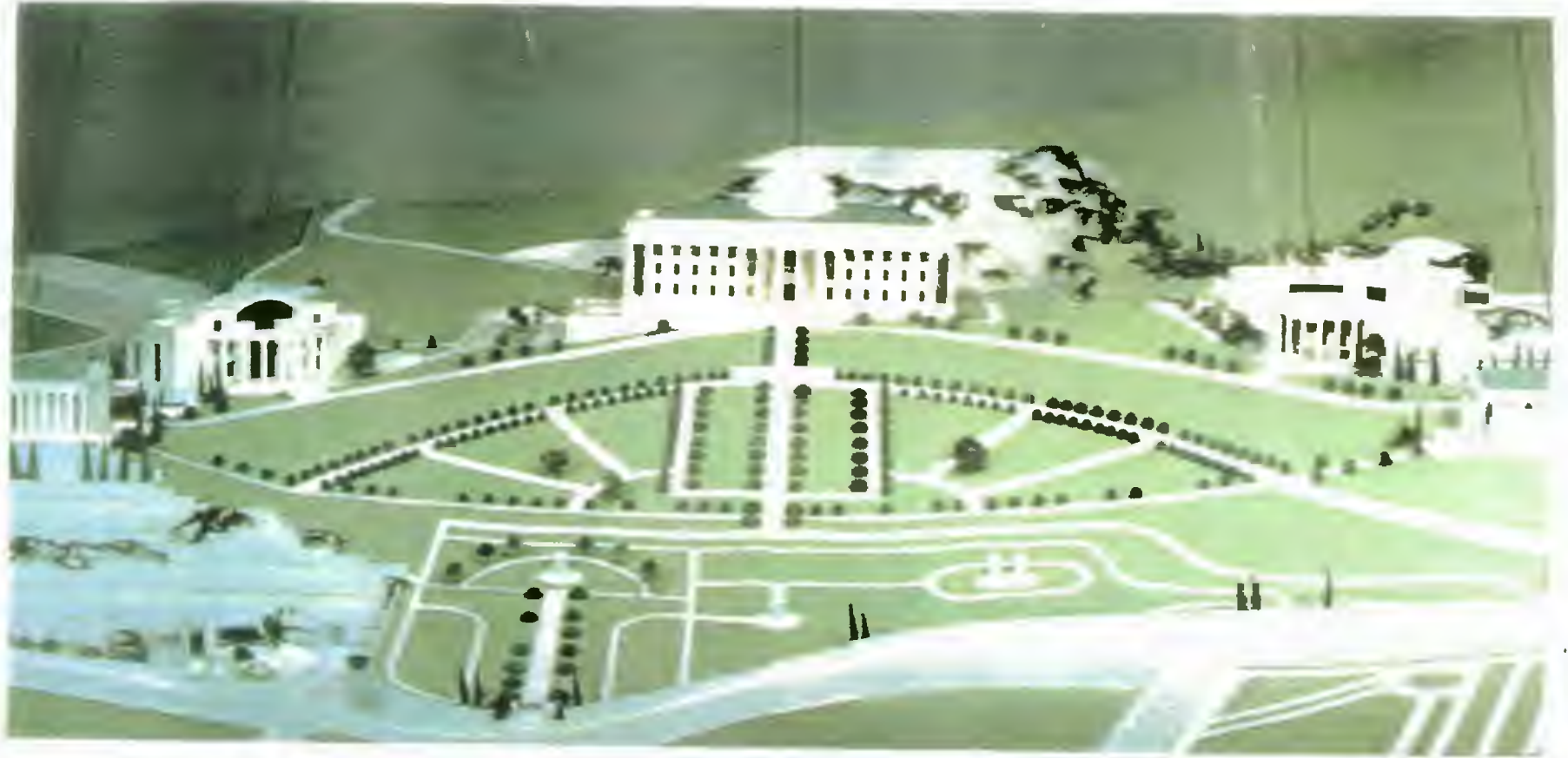
Internasionale Onderrigsentrum (Gekleurde Fotostaat)



Center for the Study
of the Holy Texts

Sentrum vir die Studie van die Heilige Geskrifte (Gekleurde fotostaat)

Seat of the Universal House of Justice



The Shrine of the Bab and eighteen terraces

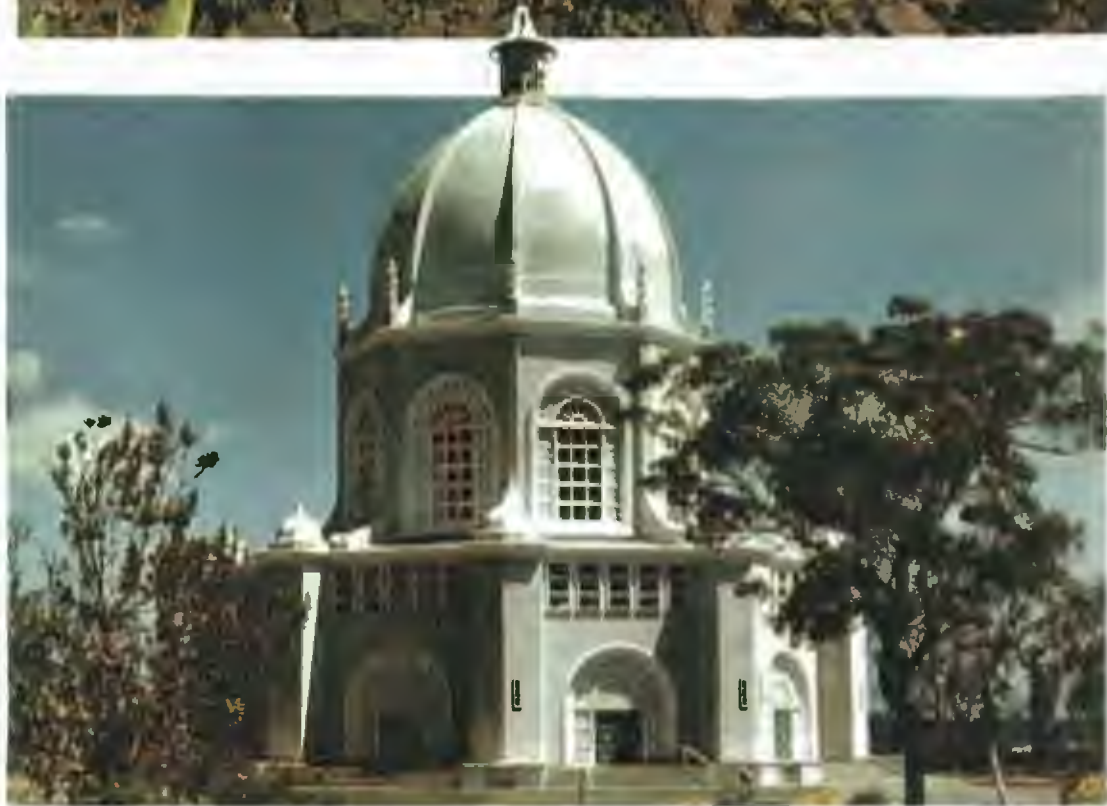


Naas hierdie wêreldsentrum beskik Bahà`is ook oor ander geboue, onder andere Bahà`i Tempels. Dié tempels word Universele Huise van Gebed genoem omdat die Bahà`i-geloof 'n universele religie is. Wanneer Bahà`is hulle tempel bou, dra hulle dit aan die mense van die wêreld op. Die tempel in Indië is so 'n voorbeeld, omdat hierdie gebou in die vorm van 'n Lotusblom as een van die gewildste besienswaardighede in Indië beskou word (102). Voorts word al die Geskrifte van die verskillende religieë binne dié Gebedshuise gelees (103).

Die struktuur van die Tempels versinnebeeld eenheid en vertoon telkens iets wat eie aan die landstreek is waar dit gebou word. Hulle het elkeen nege kante met nege deure. Al die deure lei na die sentrale saal onder die koepel. Die nege kante en deure simboliseer die nege godsdienste van die wêreld, sowel as die eenheid tussen die religieë. Hushmand Fathea'zam meld ook die volgende: "When we are in the central hall looking around we see beautiful doors on all sides. There is no front or back door in a Bahà`i temple, all doors open on all sides, all receiving light and sending light to the central hall where peoples of all kinds have gathered together to worship God. This is a wonderful way to show in a building equality and unity of religions" (104).

Meneer A wys ook daarop dat daar, volgens Baha'u'llah, rondom hierdie tempels skole, weeshuise, hospitale en ouetehuise gebou behoort te word. Dit behoort eintlik die gemeenskap se middelpunt van sosiale bedrywigheide te wees. Dit is ook die wyse waarop die Bahà`i-geloof in die toekoms sal funksioneer, en hoe die mensheid van vooroordeel sal ontslae raak. Tans is daar egter slegs agt Tempels in die wêreld gebou, en wel in Uganda (Kampala), Europa (Duitsland), Australia (Sydney), Samoa, Noord-Amerika (Chicago), Kanada, Indië (New Delhi) en Panama (105):

Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Latyns-Amerika naby die stad Panama



Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Australië (Inglewood, naby Sydney)

(Hidāyatu'llah Ahmadiyyih, The Bahà`i Faith, Bahà`i Canada Publications, United States of America, ongedateer)

Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Noord Amerika (Wilmette, naby Chicago)



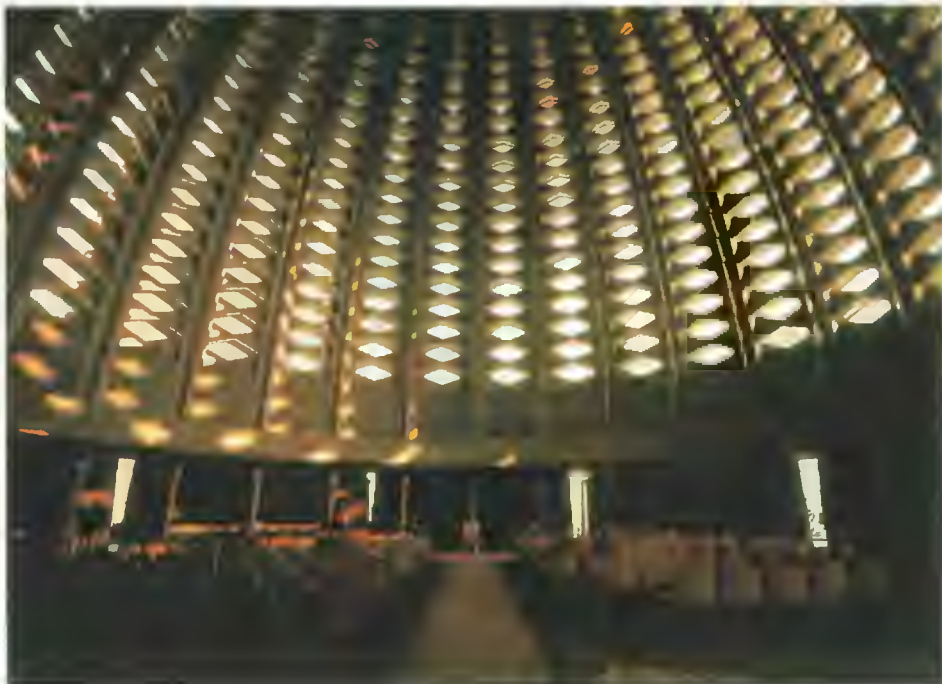
Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Afrika (Kampala, Uganda)
(Hidâyatullah Ahmadiyyih, The Bahà`i Faith,)

Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Europa (Langenhain/Hofheim,
Frankfurt, Duitsland)



(Hidāyatu'llah Ahmadiyyih, The Bahà`i Faith,)

Foto van die interieur van die Bahà`i Tempel in
Wes Duitsland se binnekant



(The Bahà`is , A Profile of the Bahà`i Faith..., p 39)

Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Indië (naby Nieu Delhi)



**Eerste Bahà`i Tempel in Wes Samoa (naby Apia)
(Hidâyatu'llah Ahmadiyyih, The Bahà`i Faith,)**

Sulke tempels moet volgens Bahà`is in elke land en elke stad van die wêreld opgerig word sodat dit die fokuspunt van elke gemeenskap se sosiale en ekonomiese ontwikkeling sal wees (106). Meneer A wys ook daarop dat Baha'u'llah self bepaal het dat elke land 'n Nasionale Geestelike Raad met 'n Bahà`i-sentrum moet hê (107).

Uit die negentien onderhoude, verskeie informele gesprekke en "Firesides" was dit ook duidelik dat Bahà`i s hierdie instellings en geboue graag in Suid-Afrika gevestig wil hê. Die jeugdigheid van dié geloof sowel as die finansiële aspek is tans die remmende faktore. Dit word verder bemoeilik deur die feit dat slegs Bahà`is tot die fondse kan bydra. Dit blyk dat die wêreldsentrum tans egter voorrang geniet. Die ander Bahà`i-geboue en instellings sal na die voltooiing van die wêreldsentrum verder gevestig word. Laasgenoemde blyk ook onder meer uit Hushmand Fathea'-zam se opmerking dat daar reeds 119 plekke vir Tempels geïdentifiseer is (108).

4.6 Eindnote

- (1) `Abdu`l-Bahā soos aangehaal in Hana, Bible Proofs ..., pp xi en xii.
- (2) Band 1, 140-145 en 497-501.
- (3) Band 11, 332-342.
- (4) Band 2, 635-649.
- (5) Band 3, 943-964 en 4, 004-041.
- (6) Band 1, 010-035.
- (7) Band 7, 020-054.
- (8) Band 13, 1090-1130.
- (9) Band 14, 002-016.
- (10) Vergelyk Band 8, 006-040 en 10, 020-042.
- (11) Band 10, 022-072.
- (12) Fathea'zam, The New Garden ..., pp 54-58.
- (13) Ibid, p 150. Hierdie siening is ook deur verskeie onderhoude bekragtig (Band 14, 040-044; 12, 058-074, 8, 450-456 en 7, 152-178).
- (14) Hiermee 'n fotostatiese afdruk van albei kante van die Lidmaatskapskaart:

*Ukubhalwa
eNkalweni yobuBahá'í*

Ngamkela uBahá'u'lláh ukuthi UyisiThun-
nywa sika Nkulunkulu esithunyelwe isintu
namhlanje; ngiyathembisa ukufunda, nge-
nze futhi ngandise iziMfundiso Zakhe
ezingwele.

.....
Ukusayina kwekholwa elisha



*Enrolment in
the Bahá'í Faith*

I accept Bahá'u'lláh, God's Messenger
to mankind for today and I promise to
study, practise and spread His divine
Teachings.

.....
Signature of new believer

Particulars of New Believer
Imininingwane ye KcKholwa Elisha
Please print — Siza uprinte

Name
Igama Mrs
Miss
Mr

Date of birth
Usuku lokuzalwa

Tribe or
minority
Uhlanga

Languages
Izilimi

Occupation
Umsebenzi

Residential
address
Ikheh
ikuhlala

Postal
address
Ikheh
leposi

Phone number
Inombolo yefoni

Community
Umgwamanda

Date of enrolment
Usuku lokubhalwa

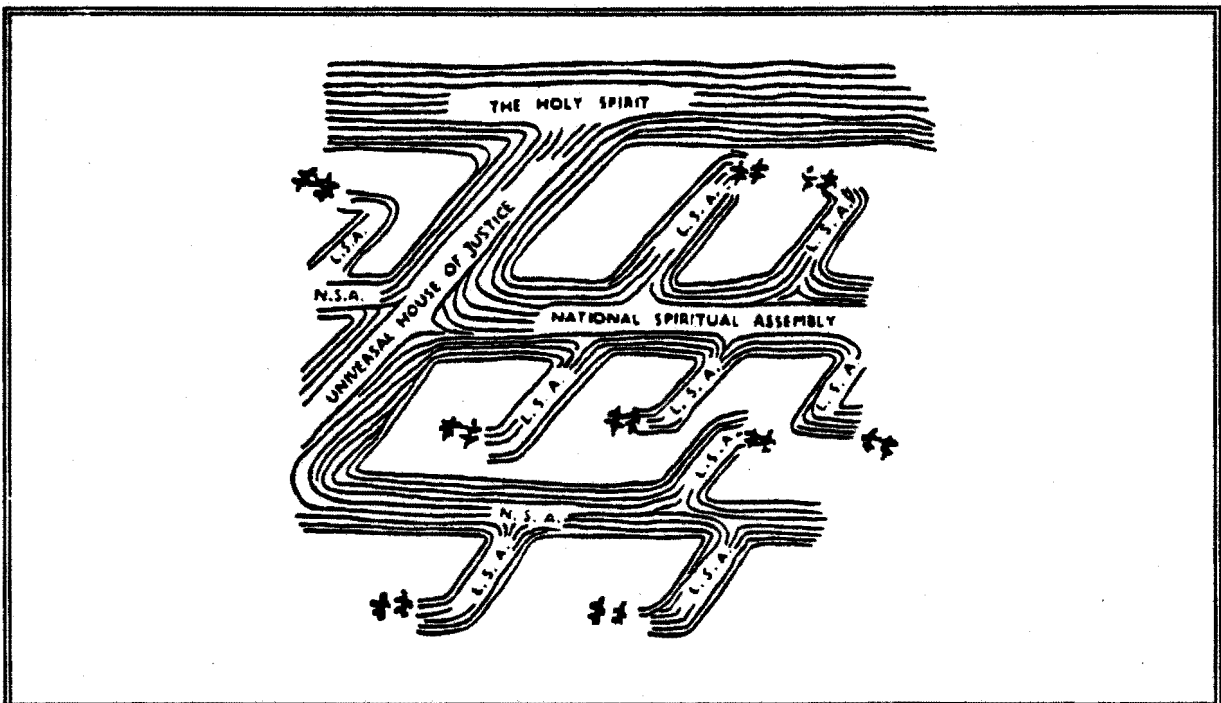
Teacher
Utisha

Zulu

(15) Bahá'í World, 1, 12, p 261 soos aangehaal deur Lowell
Johnson, How To Become a Bahá'í?, Johannesburg Fireside,
Houghton, 16 Desember 1994.

(16) Johnson, How To Become a ...

- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Band 9, 484-488.
- (19) Hierdie kan ook skematies soos volg ooreenkomstig Hushmand Fathea'zam se voorstelling in *The New Garden* (p92) voorgestel word:



- (20) Band 1, 235-301.
- (21) 'Abdu'l-Bahā soos aangehaal in *Fathea'zam*, *The New ...*, p 150.
- (22) Phil Christensen het myns insiens die verbond by die Zimbabwe Bahā'ī Internasionale Kongres gedurende

Desember 1994 soos volg omskryf: "A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man in return for which he takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way. There is, for example, the Greater Covenant which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers, promising that in the fulness of time a new manifestation will be sent, and taking from them the undertaking to accept Him when this occurs. There is also the Lesser Covenant that a Manifestation of God makes with His followers that they will accept His appointed successor after Him. If they do so, the Faith can remain united and pure. If not, the Faith becomes divided and its force spent. It is a Covenant of this kind that Baha'u'llah made with His followers regarding 'Abdu'l-Bahà and that 'Abdu'l-Bahà perpetuated through the Administrative Order ...".

- (23) The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahà during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, pp 455-456".
- (24) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, God Passes ..., p 239.
- (25) 'Abdu'l-Bahà in Baha'u'llah en 'Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1976, p 358.

- (26) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Will and Testament of `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i Publi- shing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1944, p 11.
- (27) Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid beskryf die Administratiewe orde soos volg: "This Administrative Order consists, on the one hand, of a series elected councils, universal, secondary and local, in which are vested legislative, executive and judicial powers over the Bahà`i community and, on the other, of eminent and devoted believers appointed for specific purposes of protecting and propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah under the guidance of the Head of that Faith" (Constitution, Preamble to By-Laws).
- (28) Band 14, 300-386.
- (29) Fathea'zam, The New ..., p 48.
- (30) Vgl The Light of Baha'u'llah, ..., p 72, asook Band 14, 328-332.
- (31) Mevrou J wys daarop dat vroue by die besluit berus. Bahà`is haal gewoonlik `Abdu'l-Baha se woorde aan, waar hy gesê het dat slegs die toekoms sal toon hoekom slegs mans op die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid mag dien. `Abdu'l-Baha sê dat die `wisdom of the Lord God's' met betrekking tot hierdie onderskeiding `will ere-long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon' (`Abdu'l-Bahà, Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Centre, 1978, p 80). Vergelyk ook Bande 11, 160-188, 12, 022-050 en 14, 300-386.

- (32) Baha'u'llah sê: "The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahà (9) ... It behooveth them to be trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth" (The Light of ..., p 84). Die "House of Justice" verwys na die Plaaslike Geestelike Rade. John S Hatcher sê "... For example, the National Spiritual Assemblies will become Secondary Houses of Justice and the Local Spiritual Assemblies will become Local Houses of Justice ..." (The Arc of Ascent, George Ronald, Oxford, 1994, p 293).
- (33) Die fees van Ridvàn (21 April-2 Mei) is die mees heilige en belangrike gebeurtenis in die Bahà`l jaar. Die fees herdenk die laaste 12 dae van Baha'u'llah, sy familie en vriende se samesyn in die tuine naby Bagdad voor sy verdere ballingskap. Dit was tydens hierdie gebeure wat Baha'u'llah sy amptelike roeping as die Openbaarder van God bekend gemaak het. Die belangrikheid en vreugde van hierdie gebeurtenis word weerspieël in die naam wat Bahà`is aan dié tuin gegee het: die Garden of Ridvàn, beteken die 'Tuin van die Paradys'. Die eerste, negende en twaalfde dag van Ridvàn word as spesiale Feesdae herdenk. Tydens hierdie feesvierings is daar ook die erkentenis van geestelike hernuwing by elke Bahà`i aanwesig. Dit is ook die tyd wanneer Bahà`is hulle verkiesings met betrekking tot die verkose lyn van die Administrasie hou.
- (34) Bande 2,006-060 asook Bahà`is se Leiding vir Plaaslike Geestelike Rade, Tweede Uitgawe, Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid Afrika, Johannesburg, 1990, ISBN 1 874801 11 8.

- (35) Band 9, 498. Shoghi Effendi sê dat die Administratiewe Orde soos deur Baha'u'llah openbaar is "in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems" (Effendi, World Order, p 204).
- (36) `Abdu'l-Bahà in Baha'u'llah, `Abdu'l-Bahà and Shoghi Effendi, Local Spiritual Assembly, pp 6-7.
- (37) Die Ark Fund verwys na die fonds vir die voltooiing van die Bahà`is se Wêreldsentrum voor die jaar 2000 daargestel is. Die betekenis van die woord Ark word soos volg verduidelik: "In the Bahà`i Writings the term `Ark' is often used to signify the Cause of God, or the Covenant, and Baha'u'llah, the Holy Mariner. For example, the Bab in the Qayyumu'l-Asmà has lauded the community of the Most Great Name, the Bahà`is, as the companions of the Crimson-coloured Ark" (Taherzàdeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, Volume 4, George Ronald, Oxford, 1982, p 361). Gevolglik is "die Ark" ook die simboliese heenwyse na al die Bahà`i Wêreld sentrum geboue wat saam die vorm van 'n ark aanneem omdat dit die simbool van hoop en verlossing (nes die ark vir die volk Israel in die Bybel se tyd verlossing en God se teenwoordigheid gesimboliseer het) vir die hele wêreld sal wees.
- (38) Vgl Bahà`i News, International newsletter of the Bahà`i community of South Africa, July/August '94 - 151 B E, pp 2 en 6.
- (39) Suha Rawhani, Bahà`i Administration, Roodepoort Bahà`is se Openbare byeenkoms, Florida Biblioteek, 10 Mei 1994.

- (40) Bande 14, 294-310 en 2,404-416.
- (41) Band 14, 310-314.
- (42) Band 14, 396-400.
- (43) Die Universal House of Justice, Constitution, Preamble to
- (44) Shoghi Effendi stel dit soos volg: "This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structures certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded" (Effendi, World Order, pp 152-153).
- (45) Band 14, 396-400.
- (46) Reaksie vanuit die vraelys wat regoor die land versprei is en waarin sekere reaksie met betrekking tot die Bahá'í-gemeenskap verkry is.
- (47) Ibid.
- (48) Ibid.

(49) Die Badi Kalender het net soos die Christen-kalender, 52 weke en die dae is soos volg:

Arabies	Afrikaans	Gregoriaanse Ekwivalent
Jaläl	Glorie	Saterdag
Jamäl	Skoonheid	Sondag
Kamäl	Volmaaktheid	Maandag
Fidäl	Genade	Dinsdag
'Idäl	Geregtigheid	Woensdag
Istijläl	Majesteit	Donderdag
Istiqläl	Onafhanklikheid	Vrydag

Die maande se name is:

MAAND	ARABIES	AFRIKAANS	EERSTE DAG
(1)	Bahä	Glansryk	21 Maart
(2)	Jaläl	Glorie	9 April
(3)	Jamäl	Skoonheid	28 April
(4)	'Azamat	Grootheid	17 Mei
(5)	Nür	Lig	5 Junie
(6)	Rahmat	Genade	24 Junie
(7)	Kalimat	Woorde	13 Julie
(8)	Kamäl	Volmaaktheid	1 Augustus
(9)	Asmä'	Name	20 Augustus
(10)	'Izzat	Mag	8 September
(11)	Mashiyyat	Wil	27 September
(12)	'Iim	Kennis	16 Oktober
(13)	Oudrat	Krag	4 November
(14)	Qawl	Praat	23 November
(15)	Masä'il	Vrae	12 Desember
(16)	Sharaf	Eer	31 Desember
(17)	Sultän	Soewereiniteit	19 Januarie
(18)	Mulk	Heerskappy	7 Februarie
(19)	'Alä'	Trotsheid	2 Maart

Die maandindeling van die Bab waaruit bogenoemde oorgeneem is, was soos volg:

MAAND	ARABIES	AFRIKAANS
(1)	Alif	A
(2)	Bā'	B
(3)	Ab	Vader
(4)	Dāl	D
(5)	Bāb	Poort (Gate)
(6)	Vāv	V
(7)	Abad	Ewigheid
(8)	Jād	Vrygewigheid
(9)	Bahā	Prag (Splendour)
(10)	Hubb	Liefde
(11)	Bahhāj	Vreugde
(12)	Javād	Antwoord
(13)	Ahad	Enkel (Single)
(14)	Vahhāb	Milddadig (Bountiful)
(15)	Vidād	Aandoening (Affection)
(16)	Badī	Begin
(17)	Bahī	Stralend (Luminous)
(18)	Abhā	Mees Ophelderend (Most Luminous)
(19)	Vāhid	Eenheid

(The Bahā`i World, Volume XVIII, 136-140, of the Bahā`i Era, 1979- 1983, pp 598-601).

- (50) Margo Westrheim, Calenders of the World, A Look at Calendars & the Ways We Celebrate, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, England, 1994, p 90.
- (51) `Abdu'l-Bahā, Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, 3 volumes, Bahā`i Publishing Society, New York, Vol. II, 1909-1916, p 468.
- (52) The Bahā`is, A Profile of the Bahā`i Faith and its Worldwide Community, Bahā`i International Community, United States of America, New York, ISBN 1-870989-37-6, 1992, p 46.

- (53) Band 8, 616-640 en `Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of ..., p 468.
- (54) Bande 9, 8644-658 asook 4, 424-434.
- (55) Vergelyk afdruk van die Bahá'í Kalender vir die volledige lys van feeste:

1995-96

MARCH 1995							APRIL							MAY								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
			1	2	3	4						1	1	2	3	4	5	6				
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
26	27	28	29	30	31	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31						

JUNE							JULY							AUGUST									
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S			
					1	2	3						1				1	2	3	4	5		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26			
25	26	27	28	29	30	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31						

SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER							NOVEMBER								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31	26	27	28	29	30								

DECEMBER							JANUARY 1996							FEBRUARY								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6						1	2	3		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31	25	26	27	28	29							

Feast Days Holy Days ★ Naw-Rúz
 Period of Fast—Underlined

Bahá'í Holy Days on which work should be suspended:

Feast of Naw-Rúz Mar. 21
 First day of Riqván* Apr. 21
 Ninth day of Riqván* Apr. 29
 Twelfth day of Riqván* May 2
 Declaration of the Báb May 23
 Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh May 29
 Martyrdom of the Báb July 9
 Birth of the Báb Oct. 20
 Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Nov. 12

*Feast of Riqván (Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh),
 April 21–May 2

Other Bahá'í Holy Days:

Day of the Covenant Nov. 26
 Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Nov. 28

Intercalary Days:
 February 26 through March 1

Days of Fasting:
 March 2 through March 20

Printed in U.S.A.

- (56) `Abdu'l-Baha soos aangehaal in The Bahá'í World: An International Record, Volume XIII, 1954-1963, Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel, 1970, p 750.
- (57) Band 2, 746-752.
- (58) Band 2, 746-764.
- (59) Band 1, 245-259.

- (60) Band 1, 277-301.
- (61) Band 11, 452-466.
- (62) Baha'u'llah in, Bahà`i World Faith ..., p 140.
- (63) `Abdu'l-Bahà in Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Bahà, The Divine Art of Living, Selections from the ..., p 27.
- (64) Ibid, p 26.
- (65) Ibid, p 36.
- (66) Hamid Massoudi, Unity of Religion, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 8 September 1995. Een van Shoghi Effendi se gebede word tydens die opening deur hom gesing.
- (67) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Shoghi Effendi, Prayers and Meditation, Bahà`i Publishing Tust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1938, p 283.
- (68) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, Tweede Edisie, Bahà`i Publishing Trust. Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1976, p 283.
- (69) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, Gleanings ..., p 280.
- (70) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Shoghi Effendi, The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i Publishing Trust. Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1939, p 51.

- (71) Baha'u'llah in, Bahà`i World Faith..., p 195.
- (72) Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words ..., p 51.
- (73) Shoghi Effendi, The Bahà`i Life, Exerts from the Writings of the Guardian, Saamgestel deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid, Nasional Spiritual Assembly of the Bahà`is of Canada, Canada, 1974, p 5.
- (74) Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, Derde Hersiene Uitgawe, Bahà`i Publishing Trust. Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1969, p 25.
- (75) Baha'u'llah, The Light of, p 64.
- (76) Gesprekke met verskeie Bahà`is tydens "firesides" en openbare byeenkomste is vermeld al bespreek. Meneer J (band 4) is tans in die `jaar van geduld'. Die stappe is ook met Lowell Johnson al bespreek en verskeie ander voorbeelde kan vermeld word.
- (77) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal in Effendi, The Advent of ..., p 27.
- (78) The Kitàb-i-Aqdas, ..., paragraaf 155, p 75 verwys onder andere.
- (79) Ibid.
- (80) Baha'u'llah, The Hidden ..., p 10.
- (81) Mona Roohani, The Significance of Tests and Tribulations, Randburg, 10 November 1994.

- (82) Baha'u'llah, The Light , p 64.
- (83) The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, . . . , paragraaf 109, p 59 verwys.
- (84) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal in Bahà`i World Faith . . . , p 440.
- (85) Band 2, 052-092.
- (86) Band 2, 570-586.
- (87) Band 14, 190-198 en 210-220. Die verskillende Fondse word ook mooi geïllustreer met die afdruk vanuit die Bahà`i News, July/August '94, pagina 10 hieronder:

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When making donations to any of these funds please supply your name and address

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For maintenance and work of the African Bahá'í Temple in Uganda. Contributions through National Treasurer but mark "Kampala Temple".

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Supports work of the Councillors and ABMs. Either ear marked "Continental Fund" to National Treasurer or direct to Shidan Fathe'azam GD-400, Greendale, Harare, Zimbabwe.

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Supports the work of the National Assembly and Committees and projects. Cheques payable to NSA of the Bahá'ís of South Africa or see back of newsletter for a/c no.

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TO NATIONAL
TREASURER
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Hilton, NATAL
3243

INTERNATIONAL FUND

Supports the work of the Universal House of Justice. Contributions direct to the Universal House of Justice P.O. Box 155 Haifa Israel or ear marked donations to National Treasurer details "National Fund".

(88) Band 14, 198-210.

(89) The Kitāb-i-Aqdas, ..., p 55.

(90) Band 11, 422-426.

(91) Band 11, 436-446. Die metode kan dus soos volg geïllustreer word:

(1) Persoon se totale inkomste vir 'n jaar: R5 000-00

(A)

(2) Sy totale uitgawe was: R3 000-00 (B)

(3) Balans tussen A-B: R2 000-00

(4) As die balans groter of meer as die waarde van 69.0219g (2.22 ons) goud, dan is 19% van die balans

betaalbaar as "Huququ'llah" aan die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid.

Omdat R2 000-00 meer as die prys vir 2.22 ons goud (ongeveer R380-00 per ons) is, moet 19% van R380-00 dus betaal word. Die waarde van 2.22 ons goud word gewoonlik in die media as Amerikaanse dollar geadverteer en soos volg bereken:

Prys van goud (1 ons): \$380 (D)

(as voorbeeld)

Daarom, 2.22 ons van goud: $D \times 2.22 = \$760$

(E)

(Om dit in plaaslike eenheid om te sit vermenigvuldig (E) (\$760) met omruilings-eenheid).

(Bahà`i News ..., pp 4-5).

(92) Band 14, 222-234.

- (93) Ford, A Pictorial ..., 15.
- (94) Band 14, 162-168.
- (95) Bahà`i News ..., p 6.
- (96) Effendi, World Order, p 203.
- (97) Bahà`i News, ..., p 6.
- (98) Band 9, 426-442.
- (99) Band 14, 184-188.
- (100) Band 9, 452-460.
- (101) Band 14, 170-182.
- (102) Lowell Johnson, Bahà`i Art, Houghton Fireside, Vrydag 11 Augustus 1995, en Band 2, 624- 631.
- (103) Fathea'zam, The New ..., p 126.
- (104) Ibid.
- (105) Band 2, 604-624.
- (106) Band 2, 610-618.
- (107) Band 2, 607-610.
- (108) Fathea'zam, The New ..., p 126.

BAHÀ'Ì-OPVATTINGS:

- # Die mens is as edel en geestelike wese geskape.
- # Die gesin is die fondament van die mens se gemeenskapslewe.
- # Die huwelik is 'n instelling waardeur beide partye geestelike ontwikkel word.
- # Konsultasie is 'n dinamiese proses vir die daarstelling van die waarheid en die oplossing van konflikte en probleme.
- # Die lei van 'n moreel-korrekte lewe het 'n direkte invloed op die mens se geestelike geluk en ontwikkeling.
- # Die siel leef voort na die dood.

HOOFSTUK 5

DIE BAHÀ`Ì GODSBESKOUIING EN ESKATOLOGIE

5.1 Inleiding

Bahà`is sê dat ons godsdienst-historiese wêreld alreeds so verander het, dat die mens se siening oor God aan die hand van drie fases (of tydvakke) beskryf kan word. Die eerste fase van die Godsbeskouing is die een waarin die mens erken dat God werklik bestaan en dat God se Gees oral in die mensheid se samelewings aanwesig is. Hierdie erkenning maak daarvan 'n lewende geloof, en is ook die eerste stap in die mensheid se geloof in God. Dié tydvak word gekenmerk deur die aanwesigheid van die Openbaarder op aarde en 'n klein groepie volgelingen wat rondom hom vergader. Tydens dié gebeure is die boodskap, ook volgens Bahà`is, die suiwerste (1).

Uitbreiding en ontwikkeling en die verhoging van lewensstandaard van die mense op aarde gee hierna, ooreenkomstig Bahà`is, aanleiding tot die tweede fase in die mens se Godsbeskouing, naamlik die tydvak waarin die mens se eie spesifieke kultuur belangriker as God word. Teologie neem nou ook die funksie van geloof dien-ooreenkomstig oor. Innerlike oortuiging met betrekking tot die waarheid maak plek vir verstandelike begrip. Gelowiges se gedagtes word tydens hierdie gebeure met interessantheid, eerder as met geestelike waarhede, geprikkel (2).

Hierna vind daar, aldus Bahà`is, nog verdere ontwikkeling by die mensheid plaas, sodat God en kultuur laastens (as die derde fase) vervang word deur materiële mag en fisiese plesieruitinge as die dominante eienskap van die lewe. Gevolglik bly daar, volgens Bahà`is, slegs die dop van 'n eens lewendige en 'n aktiewe gods-

diens oor! Die geloof en leerstellings van die Boodskapper het soos die are van 'n ou mens verkalk en nou beleef die mense ook God en godsdiens as iets wat nie meer met die gebeure van vandag tred hou nie. Baie moderne mense sê dat God nie meer 'n noodsaaklikheid vir vandag se lewe op aarde is nie. God het nie meer 'n plek in die mens se lewe nie. God bestaan dus slegs binne die verwysingsraamwerk van konserwatiewe mense, dié mense wat nie meer tred hou met die hedendaagse gebeure in die wêreld nie en dié wat in die verlede leef. God en godsdiens het so verval dat die eertydse hoofroetes van pelgrimstogte vandag meerendeels besoek word deur toeriste wat nie deur die boodskap aangeraak is nie, maar slegs genot en plesier najaag. Sodoende het die kerklike besienswaardighede in Israel verval in 'n vorm van kommersialisme (3).

Baie samelewings het, volgens Bahà`is, alreeds fases twee en drie bereik. Gevolglik is dit nie verrassend om te sien hoe godsdiens verwerp word nie. Individue woon dienste in kerke, sinagoges, moskees of tempels by, maar met 'n ingesteldheid van ongeloof en wettisisme, en beskou dit as 'n sosiale geleentheid, eerder as 'n ontmoeting met God. Die aanhoorders wil ook net van interessante geloofsaspekte hoor en niks doen nie. Bahà`is beskryf hierdie gebeure soos volg: "The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it" (4). God se medisyne is "... the union of all its [the world's] peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith" (5).

In 'n poging om tot 'n ware Godsbeskouing terug te keer (fase een), sal sekere vrae oor God en Sy boodskappers, volgens Bahà`s, eers beantwoord word: Wie en wat is God? Wat is Sy doel met godsdiens vir die mens?

5.2 Religie is God se antwoord vir die mens

Bahà`is sê dat mense regoor die wêreld tans weens verskillende sieninge verdeeld is. Die een mens haat of vrees die ander omdat hulle velkleure verskil, of omdat hulle van verskillende lande afkomstig is, of omdat die een ryk en die ander arm is. In sekere dele van die wêreld word oorloë weer in die naam van godsdiens gevoer. Soms lyk dit dus of daar geen einde aan verdeeldheid is nie. Kenmerkend van die huidige wêreld is ook dat broers teen broers draai. Ouers en kinders kan ook nie meer met mekaar praat nie, en in baie gevalle kan mans en vroue nie meer saam met mekaar lewe nie.

Die Bahà`i-geloof se leerstellings leer volgelinge om te begryp wat besig is om te gebeur, en om dié gebeure in die wêreld te verstaan en te hanteer. Die haat en verdeeldheid is die sondigheid en donkerte wat voor die nuwe dag moes kom. Die mens se lyding is die geboortepyne van die nuwe orde. Bahà`is sien hulself as die eerste mense wat op die bergtop staan en die eerste sonstrale met die aanbreek van hierdie nuwe dag ervaar. Daarom kan hulle ander mense se lyding en pyn verlig deur hulle op 'n pad weg van vrees en onkunde te lei, wat dit vir almal sal moontlik maak om te sien in watter wonderlike tyd hulle werklik leef. Dit is die begin van die nuwe era waarin die mensheid vrede en eenheid sal beleef (6).

Volgens Bahà`i-insig het Baha'u'llah gekom om die religie wat die mens sal verenig, te bring. Dit mag aanvanklik moeilik wees om dit verstaan; en te begryp hoe dit kan gebeur, omdat godsdiens vandag self 'n bron van verdeeldheid blyk te wees. Aanhangers van die verskillende religieë huldig skynbaar die mening dat slegs hul godsdiens die korrekte en enigste weg tot saligheid is, en

mag soms selfs die aanhangers van ander gelowe haat. Maar enige geloof wat veroorsaak dat die een mens die ander haat, handel volgens Bahà`is teen die wil van God. Die Bahà`i Geskifte leer dat godsdiens die gevolg van liefde behoort te wees. `Abdu'l-Bahà stel dit soos volg: **"Religion should unite all hearts and cause wars and disputes to vanish from the face of the earth. ... Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion"** (7).

Die Bahà`i-geloof wil nuwe weë skep waarlangs die mens godsdiens kan beskou. Baha'u'llah leer dat daar net een God, een mensheid en een godsdiens is. God het voorts ook nooit die mens sonder leiding en onderskraging gelaat nie. Daar was dus baie manifestasies of profete en/of openbaarders (almal sinonieme). Hulle staan onder verskillende name aan die mens bekend en het in verskillende tye onder die mense geleef, maar was telkens deur God geïnspireer-- elkeen het sy boodskap vir sy tyd gegee. Religieuse vooroordeel bestaan vandag omdat die mens nie hierdie een deurlopende boodskap deur die verskillende manifestasies onthou nie, maar wel die klem op die openbaarder laat val. Verdeeldheid tussen die verskillende gelowe is te wyte aan die mens se onbegrip en kan nie aan God se doen en late, of Sy wil, toegeskryf word nie.

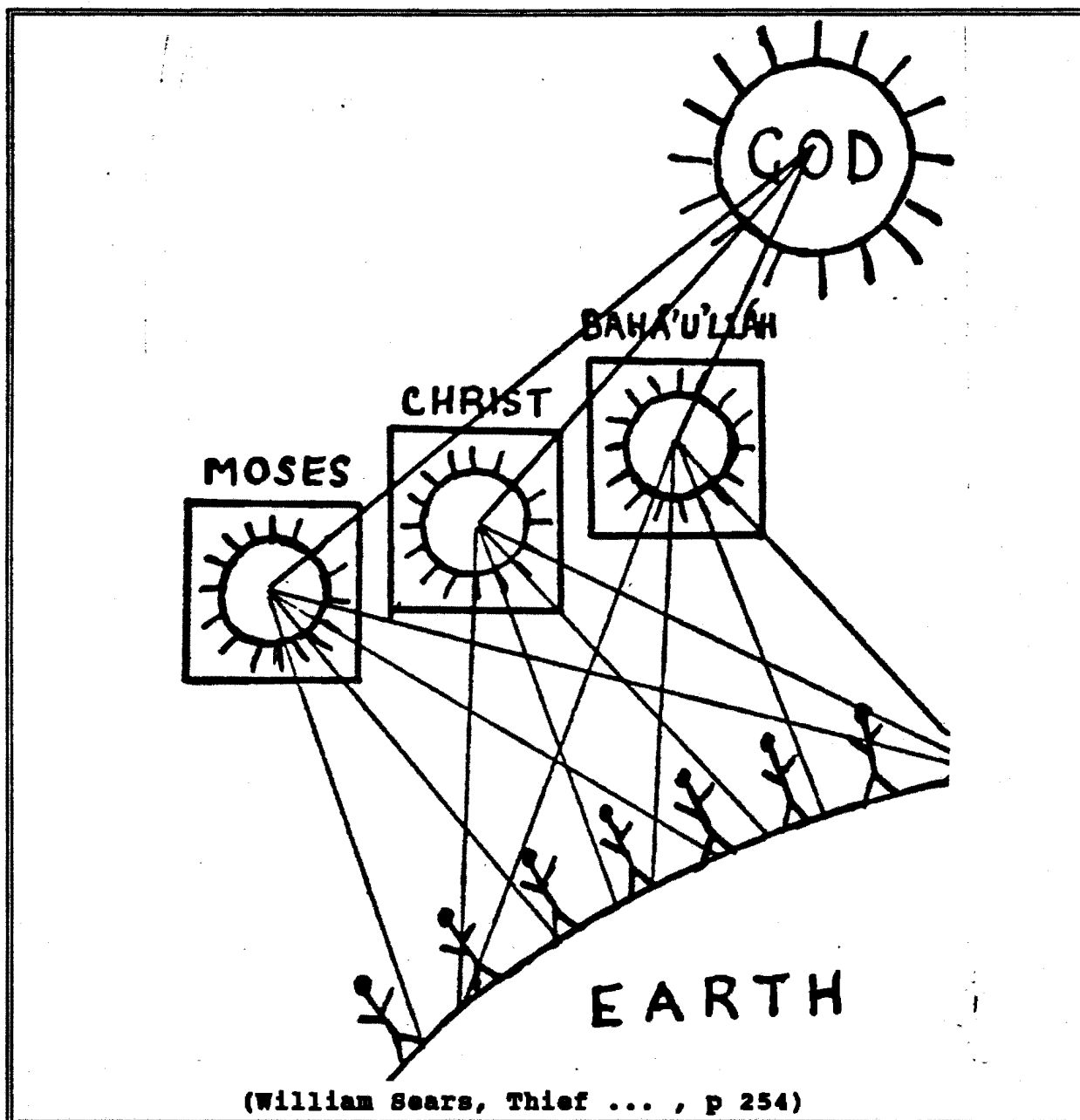
Die Profete is dus almal deel van God se plan vir die opvoeding van die mensheid. Hierdie plan staan by Bahà`is as **"progressiewe openbaring"** (8) bekend. Progressiewe openbaring dui daarop dat God Sy goddelike plan stap vir stap in die mens se geskiedenis laat ontvou. Dit omsluit ook die beginsel dat godsdiens evolusionêr is, met ander woorde, dat godsdiens ontwikkel en oor die eeue heen vooruitgang toon. Baha'u'llah sê in dié verband: **"There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same"**

secret. To prefer one in honour to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every Prophet gone before Him. If any man, therefore, should fail to comprehend this truth, and should consequently indulge in vain and unseemly language, no one whose sight is keen and whose understanding is enlightened would ever allow such idle talk to cause him to waver in his belief" (9).

5.3 Die Eenheid van God

Die geskiedenis toon, volgens die Bahā`i-opvatting, dat die mensheid deur die eeue heen in die een of ander **misterieuse hoër Krag** in die Heelal geglo het. Hierdie krag of Superwese is deur verskillende titels of name (onder andere Ahura Mazda, God, Jehova en Allah) aangeroop (10). Al hierdie terme is deur verskillende volke en mense gebruik om die Een wat die Skepper en Here van die wêreld is, mee te beskryf. Baha'u'llah het gekom om die mensheid van God te leer en om te verduidelik wat God se doel met die mens van vandag is.

Hoewel die mens geskape is met 'n begeerte om God te ken en om nader aan God te kom, kan die mens se verstand God nooit ten volle verstaan en begryp nie. Geen skepsel kan ooit sy of haar Skepper verstaan nie. Die wese van God is onverstaanbaar en bokant die menslike begrip (11). God het egter 'n wyse geskep waardeur die mensheid Hom kan leer ken, naamlik Sy manifestasies, wat sy eienskappe perfek soos 'n spieëlbeeld reflekteer (12). Skematies word dit soos volg voorgestel:



Die bestudering van die lewe en leerstellings van Moses, Christus, Baha'u'llah en die ander openbaarders van God leer die mens dat God regverdig, liefdevol, genadig en wys is. Hulle wys die mens ook daarop dat God die mens volgens Sy beeld geskape het. Die Bybelse woorde van Genesis 1 vers 27 (oor die mens as beeld

van God), word soos volg ook deur Baha'u'llah beskryf: "Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee". Dit word verder bekragtig met "...within thee have I placed the essence of My light" (13). Wanneer die mensdom die sluier van onskuld en selfsugtigheid wat die lig van God in sy of haar lewe blokkeer, verwyder, sal elke mens die eienskappe van God reflekteer en terselfdertyd meer en meer van God se aard en eienskappe te wete kom. Hy of sy sal ook sy of haar eie aard en rol as dienskneg of -maagd van God beter verstaan en begryp.

Elke manifestasie het, ooreenkomstig die Bahà`i-geloof, ook nie 'n nuwe godsdiens gebring nie. Elke godsdiens staan op twee pilaar, waarvan die groter en belangrikste pilaar die essensiële boodskap is. Dit is die boodskap waarin die openbaarder bekend maak dat daar geen ander God behalwe "U" is nie. Dit word dan met die verhouding van die mens met sy of haar skepper opgevolg en toon vir Bahà`is dat dié boodskap en gevolglik ook die religieë dus in wese een is. Die ander kleiner pilaar staan as die toevaligheidspilaar ("accidental pillar") bekend. Dit is riglyne en leerstellings wat, as gevolg van die mens se omstandighede in die betrokke era, van tyd tot tyd wissel. Byvoorbeeld, Moses leer dat die sabbat op die Saterdag is, terwyl Jesus sy volgelinge leer dat die sabbat op die Sondag geskied. Gevolglik is daar, volgens Bahà`is, geen verskil tussen die verskillende manifestasies se boodskap insake God nie en is daar, ooreenkomstig die essensiële boodskap, eintlik net Een God (14).

Hoewel dit moeilik is om al die belangrike dinge oor God te leer en te begryp, word die mensheid tog ook daarvan verseker dat God baie naby aan hulle is en elkeen van hulle liefhet. Baha'u'llah sê: "My love is in thee, know it, that thou mayest find Me near unto thee" (15).

5.4 God se doel met die mens

Bahà`is sê dat God die mens geskape het omdat Hy hom liefhet. Die mens beskik oor die vermoë om elke eienskap van God uit te beeld en dit is wat bedoel word met die woorde dat "die mens na God se beeld geskape is". Die mens is egter nie letterlik soos God nie: die Skepper van die heelal benodig nie oë om mee te kan sien en hande om mee te bou nie. Maar die mens kan wel oor goddelike geestelike kwaliteite soos liefde, geregtigheid en genade beskik. Hierdie eienskappe is onder andere die ware beeld van God.

'n Mens kan egter net God se eienskappe reflekteer as hy of sy waarlik na Hom soek, Hom liefhet en ken. Die Bahà`is beskou iemand wat nie na God soek nie so soortgelyk aan 'n dier of 'n klip, omdat so 'n individu slegs die mens se dierlike eienskappe nastreef: "Man has the power both to do good and to do evil. ...But if ... he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal" (16).

Met die middaguur gebed wat lui, "Ek getuig, o my God, dat U my geskape het om U te ken en U te aanbid" (17), herinner Ba-ha'u'llah die aanbieder aan God se doel met hom of haar.

5.5 God en Sy Profete

Net so min as wat 'n skildery die skilder (skepper) ken, net so min kan die mens vir God, sy Skepper, ken. God is die "unknowable Essence" (18). Sy bestaan sal altyd 'n misterie vir Sy skepsels wees. Daarom stuur God sy profete en/of openbaarders na die aarde, wat ook "manifestasies van God" genoem word, omdat hulle alles bekend maak wat die mens in staat is om van God te

verstaan en te begryp. Hulle is die perfekte spieëlbeeld van God se eienskappe en gawes (19). `Abdu'l-Bahà sê: **"In the Manifestation of God, the perfectly polished mirror, appear the qualities of the Divine in a form that man is capable of comprehending"** (20).

Omdat hierdie profete sulke perfekte spieëlbeelde van God se Lig is, mag sommige persone dink dat die manifestasie self God is. Sekere uitsprake van die openbaarder bring, volgens Bahà`is, die volgeling onder die indruk dat hy (die manifestasie) self God is. Teen hierdie agtergrond sê Jesus: **"Wie My sien, sien die Vader"** (21); terwyl Baha'u'llah self ook in sy skrywe aan die regeerders van Amerika en die presidente van die Republieke soos volg opmerk: **"There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful"** (22). Hierdie manifestasies is egter nie self God nie (23). `Abdu'l-Bahà verduidelik dat **"the sun does not leave his place in the heaven and descend into the mirror ..."** (24). Nee, God kom nie na die aarde as 'n mens nie. In plaas daarvan vertoon Sy profeet, as blinkgevryfde spieël, God se kwaliteite op 'n verstaanbare wyse vir die mens (25).

Bahà`is sê ook dat dit slegs 'n unieke wese, een wat bo die vlak van die gewone mens is, wat God se Lig perfek kan reflekteer. Baha'u'llah beskryf die Manifestasies soos volg: **"These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of the will of God"** (26). Hierdie onderskeid toon ook duidelik dat die Boodskappers sterk van die gewone mens verskil. Die siel van die mens het sy oorsprong by bevrugting, terwyl die manifestasie se siel baie oud is en reeds vooraf in God se wêreld bestaan ('n tipe maagdelike geboorte). Beide kom egter via die moederskoot die wêreld binne (27).

Elke openbaarder het 'n tweeledige natuur, naamlik: 'n fisiese of menslike natuur, wat hom presies soos die mens maak; en 'n geestelike of goddelike natuur, wat hom bokant die mens se vlak plaas. Baha'u'llah wys daarop dat dié geestelike natuur gebore is uit **"the substance of God Himself"** (28). Gevolglik praat s6 'n manifestasie uit twee monde-- die een is die stem van die mens en die ander een is die **"voice of God Himself"** (29). Moses sê, **"Wie is ék dat ek dit by die Farao sou waag en dat ék die Israëliete uit Egipte sou bevry?"** (30), maar met goddelike outoriteit het hy vir sy volk gesê: **"Moenie iets byvoeg by wat ek julle beveel nie en moet ook nie iets daarvan wegvat nie, maar gehoorsaam die Here julle God se gebooie wat ek vir julle gee"** (31). Die menslike stem van Jesus het opgemerk: **"Waarom vra jy My uit oor wat goed is? Daar is net Een [God] wat goed is"** (32), maar Sy goddelike stem het gesê: **"Die hemel en aarde sal vergaan, maar My woorde nooit"** (33). Wanneer die profeet dus as mens praat, openbaar hy totale respek en nederigheid; wanneer die manifestasie namens God praat, openbaar hy sy goddelike krag en inspirasie. Dit geskied omdat hy beide Goddelike en menslike wese is.

God stuur Sy openbaarders na die mens om die mens te onderrig. Hy het die mens die vermoë gegee om Sy leerstellings te verstaan, maar ook die vermoë om deur sy of haar eie pogings en ondersoek, self te vorder en te verbeter. Baha'u'llah sê: **"Success or failure, gain or loss, must ... depend upon man's own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress"** (34). Daarom kan die mens óf kies om soos 'n dier te bly, óf om sy of haar geskenk van begrip te gebruik. S6 kan 'n individu die pad ooreenkomstig sy of haar begeertes volg, of kies om op die pad wat deur God verlig is, te wandel. `Abdu'l-Bahà noem eersgenoemde die **"pathway of nature"** en laasgenoemde die **"pathway of re-**

ligion" (35). Die pad van die godsdiens is ooreenkomstig "the road of the holy Manifestations of God" (36). Wanneer iemand dus laasgenoemde pad reis, leer hy of sy hoe om die persoon waarvoor hy of sy oorspronklik geskape is, te word. S6 word die menslike gemeenskap ook omskep om die goddelike eienskappe te weerspieel en word die wêreld 'n beter plek.

Die manifestasie praat, ooreenkomstig Bahà`is, met 'n kragtige stem namens God. Hy toon die mens al die eienskappe en volmaakt-hede van God en is dus alles wat die mens ooit van God sal kan leer. Hy lei die mens op God se weg ("the pathway of religion"). Tog behoort die mens nooit toe te laat dat sy of haar liefde vir die betrokke openbaarder hom of haar vir die lig van nog 'n ander manifestasie van God verblind nie. `Abdu'l-Bahà sê: "Attachment to the lantern is not loving the light" (37). 'n Mens moet die lig [God] liefhê, vanwaar hy ookal afkomstig is. `Abdu'l-Bahà sê voorts: "We are lovers of illumination and not of lamps and candles" (38). Al die profete het die wêreld verlig met die Woord van God (39).

5.6 Eenheid van God se Manifestasies

Bahà`is beweer dat die wêreld tans met liefhebbers van die "lampe en kerse" gevul is; individue wie se religieuse opvattinge hul weerhou om die Lig van Eenheid te herken. Die Christendom is, volgens Bahà`is, onder andere s6 'n voorbeeld deurdat hulle die waarheid van ander gelowe misken. Hulle sê dat Jesus geleer het: "Ek is die weg en die waarheid en die lewe. Niemand kom na die Vader toe behalwe deur My nie" (40). Bahà`is wys daarop dat hulle self ook hierdie woorde van Jesus glo, maar in samehang met die volgende woorde van Baha'u'llah: "Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute" (41). Verder wys Baha'u'llah self ook daarop.

dat die openbaarders in wese "one soul and the same person" (42) versinnebeeld (43).

Daar is dus geen konflik tussen die woorde van Baha'u'llah en Jesus Christus nie. Baha'u'llah toon hoe hierdie twee stellings hand aan hand gaan: die Profete beklee twee posisies; hulle is almal wesentlik een en tog verskil hulle van mekaar. Die manifestasies praat met een stem (die woorde van God) en beeld terselfdertyd God se beeld (die Lig van God) uit. Wanneer Jesus dus sê: "Ek is die weg en die waarheid en die lewe. Niemand kom na die Vader toe behalwe deur My nie", praat Hy dus as die Profeet in die perspektief van die eenheid van manifestasies. In hierdie perspektief is Hy dus met al die ander Openbaarders óf Manifestasies "as one soul and the same person" verenig. Daarom beteken Christus se woorde dat die manifestasie van God die weg, die waarheid en die lewe is. Niemand ken God behalwe deur Sy Profete (Openbaarders óf Manifestasies) nie (44).

Baha'u'llah, gebruik volgens Bahà'ís, ook die volgende voorbeeld om hierdie idee met betrekking tot die eenheid van die Openbaarders verder op te helder. Hy sê dat die son van vandag dieselfde is as die een wat gister geskyn het, alhoewel vandag 'n ander dag as gister is. Elke dag van die week het 'n ander naam, maar dit is dieselfde son wat dag na dag skyn. So is dit ook met die profete-- elkeen van hulle het sy eie naam en sy eie karaktertrekke, maar bring dieselfde Lig (boodskap) van God (45).

Abdu'l-Bahà gee nog 'n voorbeeld om hierdie eenheidsposisie van die openbaarders te verduidelik. Hy sê dat die koms van 'n manifestasie soos die koms van lente in die wêreld is. Elke lente het ooreenkomstig die kalender 'n ander naam-- 1982, 1983, ensomeer. Maar die mees belangrike kenmerk van die lente verander nooit-- jaar na jaar is dit die seisoen van nuwe lewe en groei.

Die profete het insgelyks hulle eie name en kenmerke, maar die mees belangrike kenmerk van die manifestasies verander ook nooit nie! Hulle bring altyd nuwe lewe en groei na die wêreld (46).

Bahà'is sê dat, indien 'n persoon sou onthou dat alle manifestasies goddelik van aard is en deur God self geïnspireer word, die aanspraak dat die profete almal verenig is, makliker begryp sal word. Hulle goddelike krag as die samebindende faktor, strek oor duisende jare heen en styg bo alle wêreldse verskille uit. Die manifestasies het elk 'n nuwe dag en 'n nuwe lentetyd gebring. Sommige het egter so lank gelede geleef, dat min oor hulle bekend is.

Dié profete van God kom nie na die aarde om telkens 'n ander religie te bring nie. Nee, hulle kom om die lentetyd te bring, met ander woorde om die eeue-oue godsdiens van God op aarde telkens te hernuwe (47). Elke manifestasie is dus die wederkoms van al die vorige openbaarders en elkeen belowe ook altyd dat sy leerstellings deur 'n ander profeet na hom, in die toekoms, vernuwe sal word. Jesus Christus het self gesê: "Moenie dink dat Ek julle by die Vader sal aankla nie; dit is Moses, op wie julle julle hoop gevestig het, wat vir julle aankla. As julle Moses geglo het, sou julle in My geglo het, want hy het van My geskrywe. Maar as julle sy geskifte nie glo nie, hoe sal julle my woorde glo?" (48). In dieselfde hoofstuk waarin Christus gesê het dat Hy die weg en die waarheid is, belooft Hy 'n nuwe manifestasie van God: "Ek sal die Vader vra, en Hy sal julle 'n ander Voorspraak [Comforter] stuur om vir ewig by julle te wees ..." (49). Jesus het ook gesê: "Ek sal julle nie as weeskinders agterlaat nie, Ek kom weer na julle toe" (50). Byna tweeduisend jaar later roep Baha'u'llah in dieselfde goddelike stem: "If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made

manifest unto you" (51).

5.7 Verskille tussen die Manifestasies

Die son kom elke dag, sonder enige uitsondering, op. Niemand sal vandag se sonsopkoms ontken of selfs beweër dat die son gister nie opgekom het nie. Tog ontken die mens, volgens Bahà`is, elke keer die Lig van 'n nuwe manifestasie wanneer dit die eerste keer verskyn. Die volgelingen van die een profeet weier gewoonlik om te erken dat God 'n ander openbaarder na hulle gestuur het.

God se lig is baie groter en helderder as dié van die son: Hy is die skepper van die son en die heelal. Dit is, volgens Bahà`is, moeilik te begrype waarom dit vir die mens so moeilik is om die profete wat God se Lig eeu na eeu na die wêreld bring, te erken. Baha'u'llah sê dat die bron van die verwarring die menslike of tweede natuur van die betrokke manifestasies is. Die menslike natuur is die dimensie van onderskeid of verskil. Onderskeid behoort, volgens hom, aan die "world of creation and to the limitations thereof" (52); alle geskape dinge is individueel, afsonderlik en verskillend van mekaar geskape. Met betrekking tot die openbaarder beteken dit dus, aldus Baha'u'llah, dat "each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite Mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation" (53).

Die geskiedenis toon dat die onderskeie profete wel van mekaar verskil het (let wel: in die fisiese sfeer en nie in die geestelike sfeer nie). Elk het ook sy eie naam en eiesoortige verhaal gehad-- die Boeddha was byvoorbeeld 'n prins; Jesus was die seun van 'n timmerman; Mohammed was 'n kameeldrywer en die Bab was 'n handelaar. Elk van dié profete het ook in 'n ander tydvak en op

verskillende plekke op die aarde tussen die mense gelewe. Die Boeddha het ongeveer 2500 jaar gelede in Indië gewoon, terwyl Jesus Christus byna 2000 jaar gelede in Israel gebly het. Mohammed was weer sowat 1300 jaar gelede in Arabië woonagtig, terwyl die Bab sowat 150 jaar gelede in Persië gebore is.

Die omstandighede en gebeure binne die wêreld is voortdurend aan die verander. Gemeenskappe ontwikkel en groei so vinnig dat die mens daaglik met nuwe probleme gekonfronteer word. Dit het tot gevolg dat nie een van die manifestasies dieselfde leerstellings op presies dieselfde wyse deurgee nie. Baha'u'llah sê: "... **every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God. Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared**" (54). Gevolglik bepaal die geestelike behoeftes van 'n gegewe mensheid die opdrag en boodskap van die betrokke openbaarder.

Die mensheid verwag egter, ten spyte hiervan, dat daar geen verskille behoort te wees nie. Mense keer gevolglik ook hul rug op 'n nuwe profeet, omdat diésulkes nie die menslike natuur van die openbaarders verstaan en begryp nie. Baha'ullah vergelyk "**the changes brought about in every Dispensation**" met donker wolke (55). Hierdie wolke versteek die lig van God se nuwe Dag (56).

Elke manifestasie berei ook sy volgelinge voor om die veranderinge wat met 'n progressiewe openbaring gepaard gaan, te verstaan en om daarop voorbereid te wees. Hy doen dit deur sy werksaamhede aan die boodskappe en optredes van die voorafgaande manifestasies te koppel. Hy wys ook op die eenheid tussen dit wat nuut en anders is, en dit wat bekend en bemind is. Elke openbaarder verheerlik en prys die profete van die verlede. Jesus praat dikwels van Moses en sy wette, en ook Mohammed bekragtig dié wat

voor hom gekom het deur te sê: "Ons glo in Allah en in wat aan ons geopenbaar is, en wat geopenbaar is aan Abraham en Ismael, en Isak en Jakob en aan die volkstamme en in wat aan Moses en Jesus en aan die profete van hulle Here gegee is. Ons maak geen verskil tussen enige van hulle nie, en ons onderwerp ons aan Hom" (57).

Die manifestasies wys hul volgelinge gewoonlik ook op die feit dat daar nog 'n profeet na hulle toe sal kom, iemand gevul met dieselfde gees as dié gees waarmee hulle gevul is. Hierdie profesieë het ten doel om die volgelinge te lei en te onderskraag sodat dié sulkes by magte sal wees om die nuwe manifestasie te herken. Die ironie is dat die volgelinge met die koms van die nuwe openbaarder nie in staat is om hom te herken nie. Selfs diegene wat op die koms van die Beloofde Een gewag het, sulkel om die nuwe openbaarder te ken. Dit gebeur omdat die individu te dikwels sy of haar eie idees ontwikkel oor hoe só 'n manifestasie behoort te lyk en dan hierdie spesifieke gedagtegang so najaag dat hy of sy nie die openbaarder herken nie. Gevolglik is só 'n persoon blind vir die Lig [boodskap] van God se profeet.

5.8 Rangorde van Manifestasies

Die rangorde en missie van elke openbaarder van God is belangrik, omdat hierdie manifestasies volgens Bahà`is die kanale is waardeur die mens vir God leer ken en aan Sy wil blootgestel word. Hierdie openbaarders kom, volgens Bahà`is, met tussenposes van 500 tot 1000 jaar uitmekaar en word ooreenkomstig elke nuwe eeu deur 'n nuwe profeet vervang. Baha'u'llah is die profeet vir die huidige era (58) en daar sal nie voor sy era van 1000 jaar verby is, nog 'n manifestasie (openbaarder of profeet) verskyn nie. Eers daarna kan nog 'n openbaarder volg (59). Hy word dus ook as die belangrikste beskou omdat sy tydvak en boodskap vir die moderne en ontwikkelde mens geld.

Hoe verskil die manifestasies dan van die gewone mens? Dink aan God as die son: Gewone mense is soos spieëls wat die son se lig in groter of mindere mate reflekteer, afhangende van die laag stof (sondigheid, eiewaan, selfsugtigheid, verganklikheid en onkunde) daarop. Die manifestasies of openbaarders van God is die skoon en gepoleerde spieëls wat die volle strale van die son reflekteer. Wanneer mense na die manifestasies van God kyk, dan is dit asof hulle God self sien! Jesus beskryf dit self in Johannes 14 vers 9 soos volg: "... **Wie My sien, sien die Vader**" (60). God woon egter net so min self binne die liggaam van die openbaarder as wat die son se strale in die spieël is, wanneer dit die strale reflekteer. God is onbeperk en kan nooit in die menslike liggaam ingeperk en gevange gehou word nie!

Die manifestasies het ook twee nature. Hulle is soos elke mens die diensknege van God en aan die Wil van God onderworpe. Terselfdertyd is hulle ook die mondstuk van God en praat hulle met Sy krag, outoriteit en majesteit. Hierdie manifestasies is almal gelyk in rangorde en mag, hoewel Baha'u'llah as die belangrikste openbaarder tans beskou word. Hulle het op verskillende tye en plekke met hul eie unieke uiterlike in die wêreld verskyn, maar vertoon die eienskappe van dieselfde Gees. Moses, Boeddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, Mohammed, die Báb en Baha'u'llah het elkeen die Woord van God gebring. Hulle is almal een roepstem wat dieselfde Woord verkondig (61). Baha'u'llah sê: "**(they all) soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith**" (62).

Daar bestaan nog 'n ander kategorie manifestasies vir Bahà'is. Hierdie kategorie is geïnspireerde individue wat bokant die gewone mensheid se vlak uitgestyg het, weens hul liefde vir God en self ook die boodskap van God verkondig het. Laasgenoemde is

mense soos Noag, Abraham, Josef, Jeremia en Sagaria wat nie 'n ander godsdienst (soos Zoroastrisme of Boeddhisme ensomeer) na die aarde gebring het nie, maar steeds God se boodskap verkondig het. Gevolglik sluit Bahà`ls se verklaring van manifestasie die groter en kleiner profete in, hoewel laasgenoemde totaal van die openbaarders verskil (63).

5.9 Die vervulling van profesie

Profesie het ten doel om die mens voor te berei, maar ook te toets. Die mens onthou in baie gevalle ook die woorde van 'n profesie, maar weet nie wat die uitleg daarvan behels nie. Selfs as die uitleg van só 'n profesie voor hul oë sal afspeel, dan weet diésulkes gewoonlik nie eers daarvan nie. Hulle verwag dat dit ooreenkomstig hul eie vooropgesette idees sal geskied. Die Jode het dus vir Jesus slegs as 'n nederige persoon beskou. Hulle het verwag dat hulle Messias 'n aardse koning sou wees, wat hulle van die Romeinse juk kon bevry. Dus het hulle van Jesus weggedraai en gesê: "Is hy dan nie die timmerman se seun nie? Is sy ma nie Maria en sy broers Jakobus, Josef, Simon en Judas nie?" (64). Die Jode het ook gesê: "... Die Christus kom tog nie uit Galilea nie?" (65). Hulle het dus nie geglo dat Jesus Christus die profesieë vervul deur 'n geestelike koninkryk te vestig nie. `Abdu'l-Bahà merk ook op: die Christelike koninkryk "was ever-lasting, eternal in the heaven of the divine Will" (66). Baie volke en nasies het onder Jesus Christus se heerskappy gekom. Maar die skrifgeleerdes en die mense van daardie era het Hom, ten spyte van dit alles, gekruisig.

Baie mense regoor die wêreld wag vandag op die wederkoms van Christus. Hulle verwag verder ook dat Jesus Christus elke profesie wat op Hom betrekking het woord vir woord sal vervul.

Bahà`is sê dat Jesus nie op die Christene se verwagte wyse na die wêreld sal kom nie. Profesieë toets altyd die mens. As profesieë dus letterlik woord vir woord gebeur, dan sal niemand nodig hê om hul geestelike gawes en sig te gebruik sodat dié gebeure uitgelê kan word nie. Insgelyks sal dit ook nie as versterking van dié-sulkes se geloof dien nie. Baha'u'llah vra: **"Judge fairly: Were the prophecies recorded in the Gospel to be literally fulfilled; were Jesus, Son of Mary, accompanied by angels, to descend from the visible heaven upon the clouds; who would dare to disbelieve, who would dare to reject the truth ...?"** (67).

God stuur, in plaas van só 'n gedwonge geloof, Sy boodskappers in menslike vorm. Elk kom met sy eie naam, sy eie beroep en vervul die profesieë op sy eie, unieke wyse. Dit is dus nie maklik vir die mensheid om dié manifestasie te herken nie. Hy pas nie in hul denkpatroon oor die openbaarder en hy vervul gewoonlik ook nie die profesie ooreenkomstig hul sienswyse of idees nie. Hy verander wette wat hulle moontlik vir honderde of selfs duisende jare gehandhaaf het. Dus vernietig hy volgens dié-sulkes hul godsdiens, terwyl hy inderwaarheid die boodskap van God vernuwe. Hulle sê dat hy van die Bose afkomstig is, terwyl hy die Lig van die wêreld is. Slegs die wat rein van hart is, met ander woorde dié wat sy roeping en boodskap werklik glo en self beleef, het die geestelike oë om hom te sien en die geestelike ore om sy roepstem te hoor. Gewaarsku deur die profesieë oor sy koms, is dié-sulkes alleen gereed om die profeet te herken en terselfdertyd ook God se toets te slaag (68).

5.10 Ewige en tydelike wette

Baha'u'llah leer dat alle profete gestuur word om die mensheid te onderrig en **"to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind"** (69).

Ter bereiking van dié doel, gee die manifestasies twee soorte wette aan hul volgelingen. Eerstens word die ewige waarhede van God vernuwe. Tweedens gee hulle ook spesifieke wette en leerstellings ooreenkomstig die tydvak en die kulturele stand van die mensheid in daardie spesifieke era vir hul volgelingen. Aangesien hierdie tweede stel wette dus tydelik van aard is, mag hierdie wette deur latere manifestasies verander of gewysig word (70).

Die ewige waarhede word deur alle manifestasies openbaar. Die "goue reël", byvoorbeeld, is in elke godsdiens se Heilige Boek opgeneem. Die woorde mag moontlik verskil, maar die inhoud van die boodskap is dieselfde (71). Ander leerstellings mag ook moontlik op verskillende maniere verklaar word, sodat mense van daardie betrokke era dit beter verstaan. Al die profete het op hierdie wyse onder andere die vraag oor die hemel en hel op verskillende wyses aangepak (72). Sekere van die profete het sodoende die lewe na die dood beskryf in terme van begrippe waarmee hül volgelingen meer vertrouwd was. Mohammed, byvoorbeeld, praat van die hemel as 'n pragtige tuin met baie riviere en stroompies daarbinne. Die Christene praat weer van al die rykdom en prag sowel as die aardse paradys ('n pragtige tuin).

Meneer A wys in 'n onderhoud daarop dat hierdie teruggrype na die verlede veroorsaak dat die mens 'n verkeerde beeld van hemel en hel vorm. Weens die woestynvolke se invloed beskryf die Judaïsme, die Christendom en Islam hel as 'n droë, warm plek waar geen water, vrugte of bome is nie. Dit is met ander woorde 'n geografiese gebied en 'n herbergsame terrein waarin die mens moeilik oorleef. Aan die ander kant, as 'n mens weer na Europa kyk, vind 'n mens aldaar 'n plek waar baie kos, bome en water is. Dit is met ander woorde 'n plek waar die mens baie makliker kan oorleef. Al drie godsdienste vertel dus vir hul volgelingen dat die hel 'n

plek is waar dit baie warm is en waar geen voedsel, koelte van bome en water om te drink gevind sal word nie. Dit is 'n plek waar alles waarvan die mens nie hou nie aangetref word. Hierdie gedagtegang het met ander woorde eintlik net ten doel om die mens te herinner aan dit wat hulle nie van hou nie sodat hulle mismoe-dig word om die verkeerde te doen. Insgelyks vind die mensheid egter ook 'n ander belofte wat verband hou met hul goeie eienskappe en wat as beloning vir hul goeie daade verkondig word. Dié belofte vertel weer op sy beurt van al die positiewe gevolge en eienskappe wat die mens met betrekking tot sy of haar goeie daade sal ontvang. Só 'n persoon sal die hemel en die ewige lewe deel-agtig word. Daarom leer hierdie gelowe dat iemand wat verkeerde en sondige dinge doen, na woestyn-omstandighede (die hel) sal gaan, terwyl dié wat weer 'n skoon en vroom lewe lei, die ander pool, dié van oorvloed en genot, sal ervaar. Op hierdie wyses word die mens dus met behulp van metafore en gelykenisse geleer oor geestelike waarhede. Gevolglik sou die "woestyn-mens" dus in alle opregtheid sê dat hy of sy goeie dinge wil doen sodat hy of sy die aangename gevolge en oorvloed kon geniet. Die hemel sou dus net die positiewe eienskappe van die aardse omstandighede te weeg bring, terwyl die hel die negatiewe en omstandighede baie slegter as die huidige omstandighede sou wees. Dit is teen hierdie agtergrond dat Baha'u'llah, aldus meneer A, "hemel" en "hel" as geestelike toestande van die mens beskryf. "Hemel" is as die mens baie naby aan God is. "Hel" is as die mens baie ver van God af is (73).

Somtyds wysig God se profeet 'n ou goddelike wet (wat in ander religieë ook gevind word) om by die nuwe omstandighede van sy tydvak aan te pas. Gebed is 'n voorbeeld van só 'n wet. Slegs die vorm van hierdie wet het van eeu tot eeu verander. Mohammed leer sy volgelinge om vyf keer per dag te bid. Baha'u'llah leer sy

mense om ten minste een keer per dag te bid. Laasgenoemde is volgens Bahà`is slegs 'n hernuwing van die ewige wet met betrekking tot gebed. God se ewige wette verander nie. Dit is slegs die bevoording en vorme waarin dit gegiet is, wat verander (74).

Progressiewe openbaring beteken vir Bahà`is dus dat hierdie ewige wette en leerstellings in verskillende stadia aan die mens openbaar word. Namate die mens geestelik meer en meer ontwikkel, word die individu ook meer en meer by magte om verdere instruksies te ontvang. Bahà`is beskryf hierdie gedagtegang met die metafoor van die kind op skool. Die kind leer eers hoe om te tel. Dan leer die kind hoe om bymekaar te tel. Eers na baie jare en vele lesse is só 'n kind in staat om moeiliker wiskundige probleme suksesvol op te los. Die mens se geestelike ontwikkeling verloop soortgelyk, stap vir stap. Vermelde word deur Baha'u'llah soos volg beskryf: "the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed unto men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity" (75). Dit beteken dat die manifestasie slegs soveel openbaar as wat die mensheid by magte is om in daardie spesifieke tydvak te verstaan en ook te begryp. Jesus verskaf self 'n idee van die progressiewe openbaring wanneer Hy opmerk: "Ek het nog baie dinge om vir julle te sê, maar julle sal dit nie nou kan begryp nie. Wanneer Hy kom, die Gees van die waarheid, sal Hy julle in die hele waarheid lei. Wat Hy sal sê, sal nie van Homself kom nie: Hy sal net sê wat Hy hoor, en Hy sal die dinge wat gaan kom, aan julle verkondig" (76).

Die duidelikste onderskeid tussen die verskillende godsdienste kom navore in hierdie tweede tipe wette en leerstellings. Dit is die sosiale wette wat vir die spesifieke behoeftes en omstandighede van die mense ontwerp is en ook net geldig is vir daardie spesifieke tyd en eeu. Die profete bring hierdie tipe wette om

die "peace and tranquillity of the world" te verseker. Wette met betrekking tot die gesinslewe, huwelike en egskeiding, byvoorbeeld, het deur die eeue heen verander. Hierdie voorskrifte word benodig om orde aan die mens se verhoudings te gee, maar is nie ewige wette nie. Hulle word bloot gegee om die mensheid deur 'n spesifieke stadium van hul ontwikkeling te help (77).

Elke eeu en tydvak van die mens bring unieke en eiesoortige probleme na vore wat nooit van te vore aan die orde van die dag was nie. Om hierdie rede bring elke manifestasie 'n volledige stel nuwe wette om dié betrokke probleme dienboreenkomstig aan te spreek. So het Baha'u'llah byvoorbeeld verskeie wette gegee wat daarop gemik is om eenheid in die wêreld te bewerkstellig. Die mense was in die tyd van Moses, Christus en Mohammed nie gereed vir sulke wette nie. Hulle kon maar net so vinnig tussen punt A en punt B beweeg as wat hul perde hul kon neem, en ook net sover reis as wat hul skepe kon vaar. Hulle het boonop die mening gehuldig dat die aarde plat was. Kinders weet vandag meer van die mensheid se planeet as wat die slimste persone byna 500 jaar gelede geweet het. Die spesiale opdrag van God se manifestasie omvat tans die daarstelling van geestelike eenheid in die wêreld.

Verandering is 'n noodsaaklike element van progressiewe openbaring. Teen hierdie agtergrond het Christus met betrekking tot Sy veranderinge aan die omstandighede aldaar soos volg opgemerk: "Moenie dink dat Ek gekom het om die wet of die profete ongeldig te maak nie. Ek het nie gekom om hulle ongeldig te maak nie, maar om hulle hulle volle betekenis te laat kry. Dit verseker Ek julle: Die hemel en die aarde sal eerder vergaan as dat een letter of letterstrepie van die wet sal wegval voordat alles voleindig is. Wie dan ook een van die geringste van hierdie gebooe ongeldig maak en die mense so leer, sal die minste geag word in

die koninkryk van die hemel. Maar wie die wet gehoorsaam en ander so leer, sal hoog geag word in die koninkryk van die hemel" (78). Hierdie stelling geld insgelyks ook vir al die ander manifestasies van God. Elkeen kom met sy eie opdrag en boodskap en verander dan die mens se idees en wette. Hy verander in besonder ook hul harte sodat die wêreld ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah se woorde nuut gemaak word (79). Gevolglik is verandering ooreenkomstig God se plan, en verteenwoordig dit nie vernietiging of agteruitgang, soos só baie mense dink nie. As religieuse onderrig nie verander nie, hoe sal die mensheid dan geestelik kan groei? (80)

5.11 Die oseaan van kennis

Elke boodskapper van die verlede het 'n Heilige Boek na die wêreld gebring. In hierdie era, waarin die mens self oordeel tussen die feite (met ander woorde in die dag van volwassenheid) het die mens baie Boeke tot sy of haar beskikking vir goddelike leiding. Die Bahà`i-werke is saam met hierdie Boeke (deel van die Bahà`i-geloof se leerstellings) soos 'n groot oseaan van kennis. Baha'u'llah moedig dié mensheid ook aan: "Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words ... that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths" (81).

Bahà`is glo ook dat niemand vir die mens hierdie kennis kan gee nie. Die mens moet dit self soek en die skatte self ontgin. `Abdu'l-Bahà beskryf dit soos volg: "It is easy to read the Holy Scriptures, but it is only with a clean heart and a pure mind that one understand their true meaning. Let us ask God's help to enable us to understand the Holy Books. Let us pray for eyes to see and ears to hear, and for hearts that long for peace" (82).

Laasgenoemde aspek is, volgens Bahà`is, van kritieke belang vir elke mens omdat die individu se vordering totaal en al op sy of haar pogings berus: "Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition" (83).

Die kwaliteite wat die mens ooreenkomstig die Heilige Geskrifte vir sy of haar voortbestaan in die lewe hierna benodig, is noodwendig geestelik van aard omdat die volgende wêreld slegs in 'n geestelike opsig, soos God self illustreer, bestaan. Laasgenoemde word versimboliseer deur die kennis en liefde met betrekking tot God en die mens se vermoë om God se geestelike eienskappe te reflekteer. `Abdu'l-Bahà verduidelik: "If he [man] possesses the knowledge of God, becomes ignited the fire of the love of God ... becomes the cause of love among mankind and lives in the utmost state of sanctity and holiness, he shall surely attain to second birth, be baptized by the Holy Spirit and enjoy everlasting existence" (84).

5.12 Persoonlike eskatologie

Die ontwikkeling van die mensheid volgens die boodskap van God word ook weerspieël in die feit dat Bahà`is tydens die verskeie onderhoude en gesprekke wat gevoer is, beklemtoon het dat die siel van die mens onsterflik is en ook by magte is om vooruitgang te maak nà die tydelike verbintenis met die liggaam: "Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and

centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure" (85).

Hoewel die siel se ontwikkeling in die materiële wêreld tans totaal en al van die individu se eie geestelike ontwikkeling afhang, geld nuwe en ander riglyne vir die siel se ontwikkeling in die geestelike koninkryke hierna. Die eerste en belangrikste hiervan is die genade en goedertierenheid van God. Addisionele middele sluit die bemiddeling en opregte gebede van ander in sowel as goeie daade wat deur andere op aarde in die naam van die oorledene gedoen word (86): "The grace of effective intercession is one of the perfections belonging to advanced souls, as well as to the Manifestations of God. Jesus Christ had the power of interceding for the forgiveness of His enemies when on earth; and He certainly has this power now ... Followers of the prophets have also this power of praying for the forgiveness of souls. Therefore, we may not think that any souls are condemned to a stationary condition of suffering or loss arising from the absolute ignorance of God. The power of effective intercession for them always exists" (87).

Op hierdie wyse is die mens se siel by magte om oneindige ontwikkeling binne God se wêreld te maak. Die siel se vooruitgang is slegs geleë in sy eie diensbaarheid. Bahā`i-literatuur identifiseer drie vlakke van diensbaarheid: die goddelike vlak, die profetiese vlak en die menslike dienskneg-vlak. Die mens se siel bestaan altyd in hierdie laagste vlak, ongeag die vooruitgang wat dit ookal moontlik mag maak. Die menslike vlak veroorsaak dat die mens se siel (wat tydens bevrugting gevorm word) nie hoër in die rangorde van bestaan kan vorder nie, hoewel die siel se moontlikhede vir ontwikkeling binne die dienskneg-vlak oneindig is (88).

5.12.1 Toestand van die siel onmiddellik voor en na die dood

Bahà`is wys daarop dat Baha'u'llah leer dat die individu 'n ervaring van beloning of straf onmiddellik voor sy of haar dood deurmaak (89). Byvoorbeeld, diégene wat hulle geestelike ontwikkeling verwaarloos het, sal, "... when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the seperation of their souls from their bodies" (90).

Baha'u'llah beskryf op 'n ander plek dat diegene wat hul siel geestelik goed ontwikkel het, direk na hul dood 'n gevoel van vreugde sal ervaar. Hierteenoor sal die persone wat gefouteer het, slegs vrees en verwarring ervaar: "It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought. I swear by the Day Star that shineth above the horizon of divine power! They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed" (91).

Die siel wat nie ontwikkel is nie, is ten spyte van sy gebrek aan ontwikkeling nie van verlossing uitgesluit nie. Bahà`is glo ook dat die siel, in teenstelling met die mens self, nooit negatief kan ontwikkel nie. Dit beteken dat die mens se siel byvoorbeeld op 'n skaal van 0 tot 10 hier op aarde ontwikkel. Die individu wat nie sy of haar geestelike eienskappe ontwikkel nie, se siel se geestelike stand sal dus tussen 0 en 1 bly, terwyl 'n ander se siel moontlik nader en nader aan 10 kan kom. Elke mens se siel

beskik dus reeds oor die vermoë om na die wêreld hierna te gaan (92) en sal ook voortgaan om in die wêreld hierna te ontwikkel. Die siel wat egter onderontwikkeld is, sal swaarder kry en dus verder van God se teenwoordigheid wees (maw in die hel) terwyl die meer ontwikkelde siel nader aan God se teenwoordigheid sal wees (maw in die hemel).

Die siel se groei sal nou ook op verskeie geestelike wyses geskied. Laasgenoemde sluit in die vergifnis van God sowel as die gebede en bemiddeling deur ander en dié siel self: "Undeveloped souls must gain progress at first through the supplications of the spiritually rich; afterwards they can progress through their own supplications" (93).

5.12.2 Belonings en straf in die volgende wêreld

Bahà`i-geskrifte toon dat 'n siel se beloning of vergoeding in die volgende wêreld altyd geestelik van aard is. Hoewel hierdie werke deurtrek is met verwysings na beloning en straf en na hemel en hel, verskil die beskrywings van al die vorige Heilige Geskrifte. Die beloning in die volgende wêreld is vir Bahà`is die nabyheid aan God deur die verwerwing van die ewige lewe en die verkryging van goddelike perfektheid. Insgelyks beteken straf om ver van God te wees en ook om van alle geestelike seëninge en voorregte ontnem te wees (94).

Baha'u'llah beperk ooglopend nie die belonings van die volgende wêreld alleen tot die domein van sy eie volgelinge nie. Nee, wanneer hy 'n ware gelowige beskryf, gebruik hy terme soos "every pure, every refined and sanctified soul" (95).

5.12.3 Die aard van die siel se lewe in die nuwe wêreld

Die aard en omvang van die toekomstige lewe van die siel val ge-

heel en al buite die hedendaagse mens se verwysingsraamwerk. Baha'u'llah sê dat dit nie korrek sal wees as hy alles oor die eienskappe van die siel se lewe na die dood bekend maak nie (96): "The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eye of menThe world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother" (97).

Baha'u'llah verduidelik op 'n ander plek waarom die geheime met betrekking tot die lewe na die dood nie bekend gemaak kan word nie: "The mysteries of man's physical death and of his return [to the Creator] have not been divulged, and still remain unread. By the righteousness of God! Were they to be revealed, they would evoke such fear and sorrow that some would perish, while others would be so filled with gladness as to wish for death, and beseech, with unceasing longing, the one true God-- exalted be His glory-- to hasten their end (98).

If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul [the pure, refined, and sanctified soul] in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station" (99).

Nieteenstaande bogenoemde, bevat die Bahà`i-geskrifte wel sekere uitsprake insake die eienskappe en aard van die siel in die lewe hierna. Byvoorbeeld, Baha'u'llah wys daarop dat die siel eers 'n nuwe, spesiale en waardige vorm aanneem: "When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitted its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation" (100).

Abdu'l-Bahà toon ook aan dat die siel sy individualiteit en bewussyn behou en sy of haar geestelike lewe op aarde onthou. Die siel sal ook ander siele kan herken en saam met die ander diensbaar wees. Hierdie gemeenskap sal egter geestelik van aard wees: "And know thou for a certainty that in the divine worlds the spiritual beloved ones will recognize one another, and will seek union with each other, but a spiritual union. Likewise, a love that one may have entertained for everyone will not be forgotten in the world of the Kingdom, nor wilt thou forget there the life thou hadst in the material world" (101). Hy brei verder soos volg hierop uit: "Undoubtedly, the holy souls who find a pure eye and are favored with insight will, in the kingdom of lights, be acquainted with all mysteries, and will seek the bounty of witnessing the reality of every great soul Likewise will they find all the friends of God, both those of the former and recent times, present in the heavenly assemblage" (102).

Huweliksbande sal ook die fisiese dood oorleef, indien só 'n band op 'n geestelike fondament gegrond was. Dié tipe verhouding sal suiwer geestelik van aard wees en daar sal nie so iets soos geslagte bestaan nie. Direkte kommunikasie met God sal steeds tydens die lewe na die dood onmoontlik bly, maar elke siel sal nuwe geestelike eienskappe ontvang om met die "prophets of God and His chosen ones" te kan praat (103). Die mens se onopgeloste vraagstukke sal ook aldaar opgelos word: "The mysteries of which man is heedless in this earthly world, those he will discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secret of truth" (104).

5.12.4 Die siel se domein

Abdu'l-Bahà beweer dat die siel se koninkryk binne ons wêreld is

omdat die hele bestaansorde in een wêreld gesetel is: "If ye ask as to the place, know ye that the world of existence is a single world, although its stations are various and distinct The souls who are pure and unsullied, upon the dissolution of their elemental frames, hasten away to the world of God, and that world is within this world. The people of this world, however, are unaware of that world, and are even as the mineral and the vegetable that know nothing of the world of the animal and the world of man" (105).

Bahà`l-geskrifte wys ook op die bestaan van 'n hiërargie tussen die verskillende siele in die lewe hierna. Die doelwitte bereik en meriete behaal deur elke individu se siel op aarde, bepaal die siel se posisie binne daardie rangorde. 'n Siel met 'n lae vlak van ontwikkeling sal nie ten volle in die lewe hierna kan funksioneer nie en sal ook nie met die ander siele kan meeding nie (106): "They [the souls] that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another's capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them. Each shall receive his share from thy Lord" (107).

`Abdu'l-Bahà gebruik 'n ander metafoor om die kwaliteit van lewe aldaar te beskryf: "For example, the eye and the nail are living; but the life of the nail in relation to the life of the eye is nonexistent. This stone and this man both exist; but the stone in relation to the existence of man is nonexistentIn the same way, the souls who are veiled from God, although they exist in this world and in the world after death, are, in comparison with the holy existence of the children of the Kingdom of God, nonexistent and seperated from God" (108).

5.12.5 Verwerwing van God se teenwoordigheid

Aangesien God transendent en onbeskryflik vir die menslike verstand is, beteken dit of dat God Self vanaf Sy perfekte en verheerlikde posisie na Sy onvolmaakte skepsels se vlak moet daal, óf dat die skepsels na Sy volmaakte vlak sal moet opvaar. Beide sal goddelike eenheid negeer. God kan nie Sy vlak verlaag om met die verganklike mens een te word en nog steeds Sy almagtigheid behou en handhaaf nie.

God is volgens Bahà`is alomteenwoordig. Die toeskrywing van tydelike óf fisiese menslike eienskappe soos "nabyheid aan" en "ver van Hom af" aan God is nie toepaslik nie. Gevolglik behoort die verskeie Geskrifte se beskrywings van die verkryging van die nabyheid van God in die hiernamaals geïnterpreteer te word as die verkryging van die teenwoordigheid van God se verteenwoordiger. Laasgenoemde is die manifestasie of profeet, wat sal voortgaan om as die mens se gids in die lewe hierna op te tree (109): "The one true God is in Himself exalted beyond and above proximity and remoteness. His reality transcendeth such limitations. His relationship to His creatures knoweth no degrees. That some are near and others are far is to be ascribed to the manifestations themselves" (110).

5.12.6 Die siel se vermoëns

Bahà`is sê dat Baha'u'llah die mens leer dat die siel in die lewe hierna nie deur die fisiese beperkinge van die liggaam ingeperk sal wees nie (111): "The human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end" (112).

Baha'u'llah beskryf die meer ontwikkelde siele se rol in die mensheid se aardse vooruitgang soos volg: "Know thou, of truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest (113).

The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its people" (114).

`Abdu'l-Bahā beskryf hoe die siel ook in die hiernamaals sy nuwe vermoëns en magte sal gebruik om vorige onopgeloste raaisels te verklaar: "Once he [the soul] hath departed this life, he will behold in that world whatsoever was hidden from him here: but there he will look upon and comprehend all things with his inner eye. There will he gaze on his fellows and his peers, and those in the rank above him, and those below" (115).

"The Kingdom is the world of vision where all the concealed realities will become disclosed The mysteries of which man is heedless in this world, those he will discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secret of the truth" (116).

5.12.7 Ervaring van die hiernamaals reeds op aarde

Interessantheidshalwe kan vermeld word dat Bahā'is glo dat sekere

individue wel op aarde die Koninkryk van God kan ervaar. `Abdu'l-Bahà stel dit soos volg: "Those souls that, in this day, enter the divine kingdom and attain everlasting life, although materially dwelling on earth, yet in reality soar in the realm of heaven. Their bodies may linger on earth but their spirits travel in the immensity of space. For as thoughts widen and become illuminated, they acquire the power of flight and transport man to the Kingdom of God" (117).

5.12.8 Bahà`i-benadering oor die dood

Dood versimboliseer vir Bahà`is die begin van 'n nuwe fase in die geestelike opvoeding van die siel. Baha'u'llah noem die dood teen hierdie agtergrond "die boodskapper van blydschap" (118): "O Son of the Supreme! I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendor. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?" (119).

`Abdu'l-Bahà het ook op 'n vraag oor die dood so gereageer: "How does one look forward to the goal of any journey? With hope and with expectation. It is even so with the end of this earthly journey. In the next world, man will find himself freed from many of the disabilities under which he now suffers" (120).

5.13. Algemene Bahà`i Eskatologie

Die Bahà`ise algemene eskatologie is opmerklik soortgelyk aan die Christendom se Johannes-evangelie. Moontlik is die mees opvallende verskilpunt tussen dié twee slegs die wyse waarop die mensheid tot bekering kom. Beide Baha'u'llah en die outeur van die Vierde Evangelie voorspel geestelike interpretasies van dramatiese ge-

beure tydens die laaste dae. Byvoorbeeld, Jesus Christus was volgens dié outeur van die Vierde Evangelie die oordeel oor die mensheid. Baha'u'llah bekragtig nie alleen laasgenoemde nie, maar meld dat hy (Baha'u'llah) die oordeel vir die mensheid van vandag is. Diegene wat sy openbaring aanvaar, verwerf redding en dié wat hom wetende verwerp, is onder die verlorenes. Baha'u'llah beklemtoon ook die feit dat, elke keer wanneer daar 'n nuwe manifestasie verskyn, daardie openbaarder die oordeel oor die mense van daardie spesifieke tydvak is. Die opstandingsbeskouing ('n fisiese opstanding waarin al die dooies uit hul grafte sal kom om oor hul dade geoordeel te word) word nie letterlik in die Bahà`i-werke opgeneem nie (121).

Baha'u'llah verduidelik dat dié beelde en woorde wat in die verlede, sowel as tans, in die Heilige Boeke vir die verduideliking van die hoofgebeure in die laaste dae gebruik word, nie letterlik is nie en dus figuurlik verstaan moet word. Gebeure soos die blaas van die trompet met die aankondiging van die Oordeelsdag, die opstanding van die dooies, die weeg van die mens se sondes en die brug wat die siel oorsteek, het 'n geestelike konnotasie. Om sulke gebeure letterlik op te neem en te verwag dat dit sal plaasvind onder die apokaliptiese of ramspoedige omstandighede in die toekoms, is nie haalbaar nie (122).

Bahà`is beskou die gebeure, onder leiding van Baha'u'llah se Werke, as metafore wat deur die vorige manifestasies gebruik is om die gebeure met betrekking tot die koms van die volgende Openbaarder te verklaar. Profete het dus woorde en begrippe gebruik wat vir hul gehoor betekenis gehad het en wat vir hulle tydvak verstaanbaar was (123).

5.13.1 Bahà`i-interpretasie van die apokaliptiese gebeure

'n Opmerklike kenmerk van die algemene eskatologie is, in die raamwerk van die Bahà`is, dat die meeste religieë 'n dag aankondig wat in die toekomst sal aanbreek waarin die wêreld letterlik vernietig sal word en dat die mense wat op die aarde gewoon het, weer lewendig sal word en dan finaal oor hul aardse dade geoordeel sal word. Elke mens sal dan sy of haar straf dien-ooreenkomstig ontvang. Maar vir Bahà`is, soos reeds aangetoon, het die aankoms van die nuwe manifestasie reeds die oordeel oor die mense van daardie tydvak se dade voltrek. Diegene wat van hom (die nuwe Openbaarder) geweet het, het gekies om hom te volg en sy leerstellings te aanvaar en het die hemel van sy goedheid verwerf. Dié wat hom egter verwerp het, het in sonde volhard en is onderworpe aan God se toorn. Die trompetgeskal, waarvan in die Bybel en die Qur'an melding gemaak word, simboliseer die roepstem van God se nuwe openbaarder wat die mensheid van sluimerende onkunde laat ontwaak. "Opstanding" is dus die tyd wanneer die geestelike dooies God se nuwe manifestasie aanvaar. Dié sulkes word dan van die graf van ongeloof en onkunde opgewek (124).

Teen hierdie agtergrond simboliseer terme soos "geboorte" en "dood", volgens die Bahà`i-geloof, dus geestelike geboorte of dood. Matteus 8 vers 22 versinnebeeld vermeld dat Jesus vir 'n jongman wat sy aanvaarding van Jesus se boodskap wou uitstel, oor die begrafnis van sy vader sê: "**Volg My, en laat die dooies hulle eie dooies begrawe**" (125). Dit wil sê, laat die wat geestelik dood is (hulle wie Hom wetende verwerp het), die wat fisiese dood is, begrawe. Bahà`is glo glad nie in liggaamlike opstanding nie. Baha'u'llah se Geskifte stel dit onomwonde dat niks van die materiële fisiese wêreld (wat op aarde ontbind en nie meer bestaan nie), insluitende die menslike liggaam, weer tot

sy vorige formaat herstel sal word nie (126). Die woord "op-standing" het dus slegs geestelike betekenis en waarde: "By the terms 'life' and 'death' spoken of in the scriptures, is intended the life of faith and the death of unbelief. The generality of the people, owing to their failure to grasp the meaning of these words, rejected and despised the person of the Manifestation, deprived themselves of the light of His divine guidance, and refused to follow the example of that immortal Beauty" (127).

"Even as Jesus said: 'Ye must be born again' [Johannes 3 vers 7]. Again He saith: 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' [Johannes 3 vers 5-6]. The purport of these words is that whosoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that have attained unto 'life' and 'resurrection' and have entered into the 'paradise' of the love of God. And whosoever is not of them, is condemned to 'death' and 'deprivation', to the 'fire' of unbelief, and to the 'wrath' of God" (128).

Dié toedrag van sake word gebalanseer deurdat elke manifestasie in sy tydvak 'n nuwe boek van God bring. Die inhoud is die sekerste wyse vir die mens se redding en verlossing in daardie era. Sielē word geoordeel ooreenkomstig hul aanvaarding of verwerping van die inhoud van dié Boek (129). Baha'u'llah verduidelik dit soos volg: "Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amonst you, for the Book itself is the unerring balance established amongst men. In this most perfect balance whatsoever the people and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of

its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it" (130).

Die voorstelling van die brug in Zoroastrisme en Islamitiese eskatologie as die pad wat oor die hel hang en na die hemel lei, simboliseer die boodskap wat God deur Sy profeet na die aarde stuur. Wie hierdie boodskap aanvaar, sal God se hemel van goedheid binne gaan. Dié sulkes wat dit egter verwerp, sal in die hel van God se toorn val (131).

Bahà`is streef doelbewus daarna om God se Koninkryk op aarde te vestig. Die nuwe beginsels van Baha'u'llah word gepropageer as die oplossing vir die probleme van vandag en sal ook vir die daarstelling van 'n nuwe wêreldorde gebruik word. Dié nuwe wêreldorde sal ooreenkomstig hierdie beginsels, volgens Bahà`is, in drie opeenvolgende fases geskied. Die eerste fase word met die hele mensheid se sosiale verval en wydverspreide lyding geassosieer. Dié lyding is die gevolg van die mensheid se verwerping van God se boodskap vir hierdie era: **"We have a fixed 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" (132).**

In die tweede fase sal die mensheid dit bereik wat die Bahà`i Geskrifte die "Lesser Peace" noem. Hierdie fase sal die ondertekening van 'n ooreenkoms tussen die verskillende wêreldvolke omvat (dit word in hoofstuk 6 volledig bespreek). Gedurende dié fase sal baie van die verskillende sosiale ongelykhede egter voortduur. Hierna sal die derde fase geleidelik aanbreek en tot een wêreldstaat (soos uiteengesit in hoofstuk 7) aanleiding gee.

Die belangrikste bydrae van die Bahà`i-eskatologie is die werping van die letterlike betekenis van die hiernamaals. Bahà`i Geskrifte gee simboliese verklarings met betrekking tot hemel en hel; die Bahà`ise hemel en hel is nie fisiese plekke nie, maar 'n geestelike staat in verhouding met God se openbaarder. Hierdie klemverskuiwing oor dié aspekte beteken dat die Bahà`is se siening oor die doel van hierdie lewe en die lewe hierna totaal en al verskil van dié van ander religieë. Byvoorbeeld, die doel van die lewe is vir die meeste Christene die verlossing deur die genade van Jesus Christus sodat elke individu deur dié geloofsprong die ewige lewe deelagtig sal wees by sy of haar afsterwe. Bahà`is sien hierteenoor die lewe as 'n ewige uitdaging vir geestelike groei-- 'n proses wat op aarde begin en vir ewig duur: "The Bahà`i concept envisions salvation as motion itself, the profound joy of being in toward godliness. Human satisfaction or fulfillment does not, therefore, await some future point of achievement, any more than gaining knowledge awaits a finished point of understanding before learning brings rewards. The process of learning is itself enjoyable and always relative In short, the human soul in motion has achieved its fundamental objective. Its long-term goal is to sustain progress From such a perspective, life in heaven as it is often portrayed by the teachings of other religions-- a physical place of comfort and ease-- would seem to be an experience quickly doomed to utter boredom. A truly heavenly condition would more likely involve an endless progression of fulfillment and enlightenment" (133).

5.14 Eindnote

- (1) Sears, Thief in the Night ..., p 251.
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid, pp 251-252.
- (4) Baha'u'llah in Gleanings from the Writings ..., p 200.
- (5) Effendi, Gleanings from ..., p 255.
- (6) Band 4, 160-180.
- (7) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Paris Talks, Addresses Given ..., p169.
- (8) Band 12, 060. Meneer D beskryf dit soos volg: "Dit is toe dat God met Adam gepraat het. Hy het Sy instruksies vir hom gegee. Die volgende boodskap was toe God Sy opdragte deur Noag gestuur het. Die mense het nie na hom geluister nie. Toe het God besluit om nog 'n keer deur 'n ander persoon die boodskap te stuur. Hy het toe die nuwe boodskap vir 'n tweede generasie mensheid via Abraham gestuur. Dit is waar die vraag oor Israel ook vandaan kom. Hulle was die verkose mense omdat Abraham die verkose een was. So kry ons die verkose volk van God, omdat hulle Sy boodskap wat deur Abraham verkondig was, geglo het! En dan sien ons hoe Israel hulle posisie misbruik. God stuur dan weer vir Moses as 'n nuwe openbaarder. Hy stel homself bekend en die volk bekeer hulle. Daar was ook in hierdie tyd 'n profeet in die omgewing van Persië. Sy naam was Zoroaster en hy het ook God

se boodskap vir die mense verkondig. In Indië was daar ook 'n manifestasie met die naam van Krishna. Hy het ook aldaar God se boodskap aan die mens verkondig. In die verre ooste was dit Buddha wat God se boodskap verkondig het. Toe stuur God uit hierdie uitverkore volk vir Jesus Christus om sy boodskap aan die wêreld te gaan verkondig. Hierna het Muhammad gekom en God se boodskap aan die Arabiere verkondig. So het hulle ook alreeds verkondig dat daar nog 'n boodskapper sou kom. Hierdie boodskapper is Baha'u'llah. So het God die Bahà`i boodskap gestuur wat nou die hele aarde moet verander. Dit is progressiewe openbaring" (Band 12, 060-088).

- (9) Hierdie gedagtegang word in die Gleanings from ..., pp. 78-79, soos volg gestel: "Know thou assuredly that the essence of all Prophtes of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God the Creator, saith: `There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They have all but one purpose; their secret is the same secret'". Sien ook Fathea'zam, The New Garden ..., pp6-7.
- (10) Vermelde is onder andere tydens die Roodepoortse byeenkoms op 11 Oktober 1994 in die Scouthall in Andrewstraat bespreek.
- (11) Hamid Roohani, God is Groter as elke Openbaarder van 'n Godsdienst, Roodepoort Bahà`is se Openbare byeenkoms, Florida Biblioteek, 30 Augustus 1995.
- (12) Jeff Albert, The Three Onenesses of the Bahà`i Faith, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 21 Julie 1995 asook Hamid Roohani, God is Groter

- (13) Effendi, The Hidden Words of ..., p 6.
- (14) Hamid Massoudi, Unity in Religion, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 8 September 1995 om 20:00.
- (15) Effendi, The Hidden Words ..., p 6.
- (16) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Paris Talks, ..., p169.
- (17) Baha'u'llah in Baha'u'llah, The Bâb, and `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i Gebede, 'n Keur van die Gebede deur Baha'u'llah, The Bâb, and `Abdu'l-Bahà geopenbaar, Eerste Uitgawe, Die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid-en Wes-Afrika, Johannesburg, ISBN 0 908420 21 8, 1980, p 109.
- (18) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the ..., p 46.
- (19) Hamid Roohani, God is Groter... .
- (20) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Paris Talks, ..., p 26.
- (21) Johannes 14 vers 9 in die Bybel, Nuwe Afrikaanse ..., p 126.
- (22) Baha'u'llah, The Kitâb-i-Aqdas, ..., p 53.
- (23) Hamid Roohani, God is Groter
- (24) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Paris Talks, ..., p 26.
- (25) Hamid Roohani, God is Gorter

- (26) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal deur Shoghi Effendi in The Kitàb-i-Iqàn, The Book of Certitude, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1950, Tweede Edisie, p 67.
- (27) Hamid Roohani, God is Gorter
- (28) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from , ..., p 66.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Exodus 3 vers 11, die Bybel, Nuwe ... , Ou Testament, p 53.
- (31) Deutronomium 4 vers 2, die Bybel, Nuwe ..., Ou Testament, p 163.
- (32) Matteus 19 vers 1, die Bybel, Nuwe ..., Nuwe Testament, pp 27 en 28.
- (33) Matteus 24 vers 35, Ibid, p 35.
- (34) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from ..., pp 81-83.
- (35) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Foundations of World Unity, Compiled from Addresses and Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1945, pp 69 en 71.
- (36) Ibid, p 71.
- (37) Ibid, p 15.

- (38) Ibid, p 16.
- (39) Hamid Roohani, God is Gorter
- (40) Johannes 14 vers 6, die Bybel, ..., Nuwe Testament, p 126. Martin Constant wys tydens 'n Bahà`i openbare byeenkoms by die Florida Biblioteek van die Roodepoort Bahà`is, waar hy oor die Bahà`i-geloof en die Bybel op 13 Januarie 1995 gepraat het, op die volgende:

WHICH WAY?
<p>Krishna:</p> <p><u>I am the way and thy master who watches in silence; thy friend and thy shelter and thy abode of peace. I am the beginning and middle and end of all things: their seed of eternity, their treasure supreme (Bhaga- vad-Gita 9:18).</u></p>
<p>Moses:</p> <p><u>And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married ... And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses, hath He not spoken by us? And the Lord heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were on the face of the earth) And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron and unto Miriam, "Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation." And the three came out. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle and called Aaron and Miriam and both came forth. And He said: "Hear now My words, if there be a prophet among you I will make Myself known unto him in a vision and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. And the similitude of the Lord shall he behold. Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses (Numbers 12:1-15).</u></p>
<p>Buddha:</p> <p><u>This is the path, there is no other that leads to purifying of the mind. Go on this path! Just so, brethren, so long as a Tathagata (the Perfect One) arises not, and Arahāt (Liberated One), a Buddha Supreme, there is no shining forth of great light of great radiance, but gross darkness, the darkness of bewilderment prevails and there is no pro-claiming, no teaching no showing forth (of the Way) ... 1. The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha. Edited with Commentary by E.A. Burt, Mento Books, p 65; 2. Some Sayings of the Buddha, Oxford University Press, 1973, p 23.</u></p>

(Verv)

Jesus:
<u>I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me (John 14:6).</u>
Muhammad:
<u>This is My straight path; so follow it. Follow not diverse ways lest they lead you away from His way. That is what He hath enjoined upon you that you may safeguard yourselves (Qur'an 6:153).</u>
Baha'u'llah:
<u>The Lord is come in His great glory! Well is it with the man who hasteneth unto Him. Verily, he is numbered among them whose names will be eternally recorded and who will be mentioned by the Concurrence on High ... Follow the way of the Lord and walk not in the footsteps of them that are sunk in heedlessness (Tablets of Baha'u'llah p 13). No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation (Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p 183).</u>

- (41) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from ..., p 78.
- (42) Ibid, p 50.
- (43) Jeff Albert, Baha'u'llah and Christ, Johannesburg Fireside, Houghton, 29 Julie 1994 sowel as Martin Constant, die Bahà`i-geloof en die Bybel, Roodepoort Bahà`is se openbare byeenkoms, Florida Biblioteek, 13 Januarie 1995.
- (44) Hamid Roohani, God is Groter Sien ook nota 37 in dié verband.
- (45) Hamid Roohani, God is

- (46) Jeff Albert, The Nature of God, Johannesburgse Fireside, Houghton, 31 Maart 1995. Die voorbeeld met betrekking tot lente is ook deur Hamid Massoudi tydens sy aanbieding oor die Unity of Religion op 8 September 1995 in Houghton gebruik.
- (47) Martin Constant, die Bahà`i-geloof en ...
- (48) Johannes 5 vers 45-47, die Bybel, ..., Nuwe Testament, p 113.
- (49) Johannes 14 vers 16, Ibid, p 126.
- (50) Johannes 14 vers 18, Ibid, p 126.
- (51) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from ..., p 101.
- (52) Baha'u'llah, Die Kitàb-i-Iqàn, ..., p 176.
- (53) Ibid.
- (54) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 81.
- (55) Ibid, p 26.
- (56) Susan, Virtues and Values, Randburg Bahà`i Fireside, 24 November 1994.
- (57) Die Heilige Qur'an, Hoofstuk 3, Afdeling 9, paragraaf 83, ..., p 43.
- (58) Kyk Sherry Izadinia se onderhoud met die titel: "Fast growing religion", in die Bedfordview and Edenvale News, April 19, 1995, p 7.

- (59) Band 14, vanaf 386 tot 396.
- (60) The Light of Baha'u'llah, An Introduction to ..., p 32.
- (61) Hamid Roohani, God is Groter
- (62) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, The World Order ..., p 115.
- (63) Hamid Massoudi, Unity of
- (64) Matteus 13 vers 55, Ibid, p 21.
- (65) Johannes 7 vers 41, Ibid, p 117.
- (66) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal deur Howard MacNutt, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Talks Delivered by `Abdu'l-Bahà during His Visit to the United States of America and Canada in 1912, Tweede Edisie, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1982, p 200.
- (67) Baha'u'llah, Die Kitàb-i-Igàn, ..., pp 80 en 81.
- (68) Jeff Albert, Man in Search of Reality, Fireside wat op 20 Oktober 1994 by die Witwatersrand Universiteit gehou was.
- (69) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 80.
- (70) Fireside insake Ewige en Tydelike wette wat by Acornlaan 10, Houghton, op 23 Junie 1995 gehou was, het betrekking.

(71) Vermelde word moontlik dié beste soos volg geïllustreer:

Hinduism:
'Do not to others what ye do not wish done to yourself; and wish for others too what ye desire and long for, for yourself ...';
Judaism:
'What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary; go and learn it';
Christianity:
'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ... Do to others what you would like them to do to you';
Islam:
'Seek for mankind that which you are desirous for yourself ... Whatever you abhor for yourself, abhor it also for others, and what- ever you desire for yourself, desire also for others'; and
Bahà`i Faith:
'Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself'
(HTD Rost, <i>The Golden Rule, a Universal Ethic</i> , Oxford, 1986, pp 26, 69, 73, 78, 103 en 153, soos aangehaal in die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is in Suid-Afrika, <i>Overcoming Racial Prejudice, South Africa's Most Challenging Issue</i> , 1994, ISBN 1 874801 39 8, p 14).

(72) Band 2, 270-286.

(73) Band 2, 287-328.

(74) Fireside insake Ewige en Tydelike wette

(75) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 87.

(76) Johannes 16 verse 12 en 13, die Bybel, ..., Nuwe Testament, p 128.

- (77) Fireside insake Ewige en Tydelike
- (78) Matteus 5 vers 17, 18 en 19, die Bybel, ..., Nuwe Testament, p 9.
- (79) Baha'u'llah, Die Kitâb-i-Iqân, ..., p 34.
- (80) Fireside insake Ewige
- (81) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in The Light of Baha'u'llah, ..., p 128.
- (82) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Paris Talks ..., pp 56 en 57.
- (83) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 149.
- (84) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal deur Howard MacNutt, The Promulgation of Universal..., p 226.
- (85) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., pp 155 en 156.
- (86) Hierdie aspek was onomwonde bekragtig insake my vraag oor die "Voorouer verering". Al die respondente het dit dienooreenkomstig verduidelik en ook daarop gewys dat sekere van die afgestorwenes ook vir die mense op aarde kan bemiddel en bid vir geestelike ontwikkeling van hul lewens hier op aarde. Meneer E sê dat hulle ook glo dat hul voorouers ook deur dieselfde proses van geestelike ontwikkeling op aarde vir dié lewe hierna gegaan het. Hoewel sy ouers nie vir Baha'u'llah geken het nie, is hulle ook in die hemel. Maar laat ek (meneer E) dit maar sê: "Hulle is nie so naby aan God nie, want daar is daardie verlore skakel!" Daarom bid ons ook steeds vir

hul geestelike ontwikkeling. Hierdie kontak veroorsaak weer dat hulle vir ons hier op aarde bid. Ek het ervaring daarvan toe ek 'n kombi wou koop. My moeder het lank gelede gesterf en een aand het sy haar gesig aan my laat verskyn en gesê: "My seun ... moenie!" Onmiddelik het ek die besluit geneem en nie die kombi gekoop nie. Jy sien, as ek dit geïgnoreer het sou ek baie probleme ondervind het. Die feit dat ek so gereeld vir hulle gebid het, het veroorsaak dat ek goeie kontak met hulle gehou het en dat die afstand tussen ons nie so uitermate groot is nie. Op hierdie wyse help hulle ons, die oomblik dat ons probleme ondervind (Band 8, 520-552).

Meneer D sê dat Bahà`is nie voorouer verering beoefen nie. Bahà`is het 'n hierargie en God is die hoogste gesag van alles. Die mens moet op aarde ontwikkel en dat die siel onsterflik is. Dus bid ons vir die ontwikkeling van die siel van 'n betrokke persoon om nader aan God te kom. Ons kan ook diegene onthou deur sekere dade of aksies namens hulle op aarde te doen. Al die dade is vir hul siel se ontwikkeling. Ons aanbid hulle nie!! Soortgelyk kan die siele ooreenkomstig die Heilige Geskrifte vir ons ontwikkeling op aarde ook bid (Bandopname 12, 144-156).

- (87) JE Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the New Era, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1980, pp 193 en 194.
- (88) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Some Answered Questions ..., pp 230-232.
- (89) Allan Moore, Life After Death, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 8 Augustus 1995.

- (90) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., pp 170 en 171.
- (91) Ibid, p 171.
- (92) Allan Moore, Life After Death,
- (93) Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the New ..., p 194.
- (94) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Some Answered Questions ..., pp 224-225.
- (95) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 154.
- (96) Glynnnes Mckenzie, Life After Death, Fireside in Randburg op 1 Junie 1994.
- (97) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., pp 156-157. Hierdie aanhaling was ook tydens die Randburg Fireside op 1 Junie 1994 sowel as die Houghton Fireside op 8 Augustus 1995 aangehaal.
- (98) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 354. Aanhaling was ook deur Dr. Robert Sarracino aangehaal toe hy oor The Nature of the Human Soul op 20 Julie 1994 by die Randburg Fireside gepraat het.
- (99) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 156. Aanhaling was ook deur Dr. Robert Sarracino aangehaal toe hy oor The Nature of
- (100) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 156. Aanhaling was ook deur Glynnnes Mckenzie aangehaal toe sy oor Life After Death tydens die Fireside in Randburg op 1 Junie 1994 gepraat het.

- (101) Esslemont, Baha'u'llah and the ..., p 190.
- (102) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Faith, Selections from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and `Abdu'l-Bahà, ..., p 367.
- (103) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 156.
- (104) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Faith, ..., p 367.
- (105) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahà, ..., pp 193 en 195.
- (106) Aanhaling was ook deur Nick gebruik toe hy oor Life After Death tydens die Openbare byeenkoms van die Roodepoort Bahà`is by die Florida Biblioteek op 26 Julie 1995 gepraat het.
- (107) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 170.
- (108) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Some Answered Questions, ..., p 243.
- (109) Nick, Life after Death,
- (110) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., pp 185-186.
- (111) Dr. Mary Rawhani, Soul of the Human Being, Johannesburg Fireside, Houghton, 5 Augustus 1994 om 20:00.
- (112) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., pp 161-162.
- (113) Ibid, p 161. Aangehaal deur Lowell Johnson, Bahà`i Art, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 11 Augustus 1995 om 20:00.

- (114) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 157.
- (115) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Selections from the Writings ..., p 171.
- (116) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Faith, ..., p 367.
- (117) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Selections from ..., p 202.
- (118) Dr. Mary Rawhani, Soul of
- (119) Baha'u'llah, The Hidden Words of ..., p 25. Aangehaal deur Nick, Life after
- (120) `Abdu'l-Bahà, `Abdu'l-Bahà in London, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London, 1982, p 96. Aanhaling was ook deur Dr. Robert Saaracino aangehaal toe hy oor The Nature of the
- (121) Hamid Massoudi, Unity of Religion,
- (122) Ibid.
- (123) Nick, Life after
- (124) Dr. Robert Sarracino, The Nature of ... , asook Dr. Mary Rawhani, Soul of the Human ... en ook Nick, Life after ..., sowel as die gesprekke met individuele Bahà`is na die besprekings.
- (125) Matteus 8 vers 22, die Bybel, ..., Nuwe Testament, p 13.

- (126) Voorbeeld wat Martin Constant tydens sy aanbieding oor die Oneness of Religion gebruik het by die Roodepoort Bahà'is se Openbare byeenkoms, Florida Biblioteek, 30 Mei 1995.
- (127) Baha'u'llah, The Book of Certitude, Bahà'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1983, p 114.
- (128) Baha'u'llah, The Book of Certitude, ...,p 118.
- (129) Hamid Massoudi, Unity of
- (130) Baha'u'llah, The Kitâb-i-Aqdas, ..., p 56.
- (131) Allan Moore, Life After Death, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 8 Augustus 1995.
- (132) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 214. .
- (133) John S Hatcher, The Purpose of Physical Reality, The Kingdom of Names, Bahà'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1987, p 56.

BASIESE BEGINSELS VAN DIE BAHÀ'Ì-GELOOF.

- * die eenheid van die mensheid se wêreld
- * die eenheid van godsdiens
- * harmonie tussen godsdiens en wetenskap
- * onafhanklike ondersoek na die waarheid
- * gelykwaardigheid tussen man en vrou
- * die wegdoen van alle vorme van vooroordeel
- * universele vrede
- * universele onderrig
- * 'n universele tweede taal
- * geestelike oplossing vir die ekonomiese probleme
- * 'n internasionale tribinaal

HOOFSTUK 6

GESKIEDENIS EN ANTROPOLOGIE

6.1 God se doel met die mens

Bahà`is sê dat die mens se bestaan slegs sinvol is as dié betrokke persoon kennis oor God verwerf. Eers dan kan só 'n persoon ook sy of haar ware geluk en doel uit die liefde van God put. Die mens se vreugde is die blye tyding van God. Bahà`is glo ook dat die individu se grootheid van sy of haar diensbaarheid aan God afhang. Die hoogste ontwikkeling van die mens is, volgens Bahà`is, die betrokke persoon se toegang tot die goddelike koninkryk. Daarom is die uitslag van hierdie aardse menslike bestaan ook die kern en wese van die ewige lewe hierna (1).

Tydens die mens se fisiese lewe moet hy of sy die geestelike lewe prakties uitdra en saam met liggaamlike geriewe en blydschap die goddelike voorregte en insigte geniet en betekenis daaraan gee. Die mens is dan, ooreenkomstig `Abdu'l-Bahà, die titel van "mens" waardig en dra dan die beeld van God waardig ooreenkomstig sy of haar oorspronklike geskape doel uit (2). Die rede hiervoor is, volgens Bahà`is, dat die mens die beeld van die Barmhartige uitdra, 'n beeld wat slegs uit eienskappe van die hemelse koninkryk bestaan.

As daar geen vrugte van die koninkryk in die mens se doen en late sigbaar is nie, vertoon so 'n mens ooreenkomstig Bahà`is nie die beeld en die gelykenis van God nie. Die oomblik dat die vrugte wel voorkom en sigbaar word, is so 'n persoon die ontvanger van spesiale en eiesoortige geskenke wat die liefde en vuur van God in die wêreld aan die brand steek. As daardie individu se sedes op aarde die geestelike karakter van die hemel vertoon, of as die

betrokke persoon sy of haar aardse strewes op hemelse eienskappe rig, dan bereik so 'n persoon volgens `Abdu'l-Bahà die beeld en gelykenis van God; andersins is hy of sy die beeld van die Satan. `Abdu'l-Bahà konkludeer: "Daarom het Sy Heiligheid Christus gesê: `Aan hulle vrugte sal julle hulle ken.'" (3)

6.2. Die menslike natuur

Bahà`is glo dat God die aarde met verskillende koninkryke daarop geskape het. Julio Savi beskryf dié koninkryke soos volg: "(i) The mineral kingdom has the capacity to manifest the spirit as `power of attraction' and this is `the only expression of love the stone can manifest'. (ii) The vegetable kingdom has the capacity to manifest the spirit as `power of growth' or in other words as `power of absorption from the earth'; in fact vegetables can absorb from the earth and the atmosphere what they need for preservation, reproduction and regulation-- the three typical activities of living systems. This power, in `Abdu'l-Bahà's words, `results from the combination of elements and the mingling of substances by the decree of the Supreme God, and from the influence, the effect, the connection, of other existences. When these substances and elements are separated from each other, the power of growth also ceaseth to exist': this power is therefore viewed in the Bahà`i texts not as a mystical entity, but an natural power and it is compared by `Abdu'l-Bahà with the `electric force'. (iii) The animal kingdom has the capacity to manifest the spirit as `power of sense perception', a power that confers on the animals `emotions and sensibilities', `intelligence', `voluntary movements' and `memory'. Also this power is viewed as a natural power, bound to vanish when the elements whose composition was conducive to its appearance in the physical plane are separated from each other, even as `when the oil is finished and

the wick consumed' the light fades away. (iv) The human kingdom has the capacity to manifest the spirit as 'intellect' or 'conscious intelligence', 'conscious reflection', 'intellectual investigation'. Referring to human spirit, 'Abdu'l-Bahà says that, unlike the mineral, vegetable and animal spirits which belongs to the world of creation and therefore have a beginning and an end, human spirit belongs to another degree. In fact, 'the body of man is ... the most perfect existence'. He likens it to a mirror and the human spirit to the sun; when the mirror is broken, the sun nevertheless remains; likewise the human spirit, which is of the world of the Kingdom, has no end (4).

Bahà'is glo verder dat God die mens met 'n liggaam, siel en gees geskape het en dat dit die mens se liggaam is wat soms veroorsaak dat die mens tot die vlak van die dierlike koninkryk verlaag word. Beide mense en diere se liggame bestaan uit atome of elemente wat deur aantrekkingswette saamgebundel word. Soos diere, het die mens dus die vermoë om tussen warm en koud te onderskei en te weet wanneer hulle honger of dors is, ensomeer. Die mens word egter van diere onderskei deurdat elke individu oor 'n eie menslike intelligensie en eie onsterflike siel beskik. Hierdie verstandelike vermoë van die mens is die tussenganger tussen liggaam en gees (5).

Mense kan dus, volgens Bahà'is, slegs tot hul volle potensiaal ontwikkel as hulle erns maak met hul innerlike (eie gees) en gevoelig word vir hul eie siel. As hulle dus nie hul harte vir die boodskap van die gees open nie maar eerder hul siele op die materiële of dierlike sy van die lewe rig, het sulke mense geval en reeds laer as die diere van die diereryk gedaal. In so 'n geval is daardie betrokke mens, aldus Bahà'is, 'n verleentheid vir die menslike ras omdat hy of sy nooit sy of haar geestelike kwali-

teite vir God se inspirasie open en tot Sy eer gebruik nie. Volgens Bahà`is het so 'n mens weggekwyn, verswak en uiteindelik in onvermoë verval omdat sy of haar siel slegs die materiële eienskappe van hierdie wêreld gehoorsaam en toepas. Die lewe bring gevolglik vir só 'n persoon net hartseer en ongeluk. Dit is, volgens Bahà`is, een van die redes waarom die wêreld ook net meer en meer onregverdig en kru word. Die "dierlike" tree ook alhoemmer op die voorgrond, en dit sal voortduur totdat die wanbalans finaal gevestig is. Sulke mense beplan slegte dinge, maak seer en vernietig omdat hulle, volgens Bahà`is, totaal van God en God se plan vir die wêreld verwyderd is.

Bahà`is demonstreer hierdie menslike wanbalans deur duidelik daarop te wys dat die wêreld tans om die dierlike aspekte van die mens sentreer. Mense sentreer hul lewe vandag, aldus William Sears ('n Bahà`i Hand of the Cause), slegs "on that which perishes" (6). 'n Vinnige blik na die huidige stand van die mens se gemeenskap wêreldwyd bewys hierdie stelling volgens hom onomwonde:

- (1) Daar word jaarliks miljoene rande meer op alkohol as op onderwys gespandeer.
- (2) Die mens spandeer jaarliks miljoene rande meer op skoonheidsmiddels as op onderwys.
- (3) Miljoene rande meer word jaarliks op vermaaklikhede soos die bioskoop, skouburg en konserte uitgegee as onderwys.
- (4) Daar word jaarliks miljoene rande meer gespandeer op nuwe motors, wat in loodse staan en op verspreiding wag, as aan onderwys.
- (5) Mense het 'n byna oneindige verskeidenheid van alkoholiese en gasdranke in hul huise, terwyl daar baie gesinne is wat nie genoeg melk vir hul kinders het om te drink nie.

(6) Selfmoord het ontwikkel tot iets wat tans nie meer daaglik of uurlik geskied nie, maar byna elke minuut iewers in die wêreld plaasvind (7).

Die hedendaagse mens het dus 'n plesiersoeker, en nie 'n waarheidsoeker nie, geword. Die ironie is dat die mens beide moet wees-- eers wanneer hierdie twee eienskappe van die mens gebalanseer word, kan die mensdom, volgens William Sears, volwasse word en die lewe na waarde geniet. Dit toon ook dat die mensheid 'n profytmaker is en nie vir die welsyn van ander omgee nie. Die mens moet, volgens hom en verskeie ander Bahà`is, beide wees. Die moderne mens het egter sy rug op God gekeer en gevolglik ook op sy medemens. Al hierdie gebeure en verwikkelinge binne die huidige wêreld veroorsaak dat die moderne mens, volgens Williams Sears, daaglik sterf weens 'n oordosis van die verdowingsmiddel wat as materialisme bekend staan. Laasgenoemde veroorsaak ook dat die mens nooit genoeg materiële dinge kan kry nie (8).

Wanneer die geestelike sy van die mens egter versterk en ontwikkel is, word die materiële sy van die mens met God se inspirasie en leiding in toom gehou. Só 'n mens ontwikkel, volgens Bahà`is, tot sy of haar volle potensiaal sodat hy of sy die menslike eienskappe en waardes ooreenkomstig die goddelike leiding vormgee (9). Die vas wat Bahà`is jaarlik vanaf 2 tot 21 Maart hou, toon onder andere hoe die mens hierdie dierlike drange ooreenkomstig hul geloof en geestelike leiding kan beheer en bestuur (10). Op hierdie wyse kom God se eienskappe, volgens Bahà`is, ook binne die mens se doen en late na vore (ooreenkomstig sy oorspronklike geskape doel) sodat die individu reeds op aarde sy of haar gees ontwikkel vir die lewe hierna. Terselfdertyd word die aarde, volgens Bahà`is, op hierdie wyse ook só ontwikkel dat God se eienskappe meer en meer in die mens se handel en wandel weerspieël word,

wat ook die mens se lewensomstandighede verbeter (11).

Mevrou T gebruik in 'n onderhoud 'n welbekende Bahā`i-metafoor om hierdie aspek te illustreer: "Die wêreld waarin die mens lewe en geestelik op aarde moet ontwikkel, kan met die lewe en ontwikkeling van die baba in die moederskoot vergelyk word. Dié baba spandeer egter ongeveer nege maande in die moederskoot, waartydens sekere voorbereidings vir sy of haar binnekoms vir hierdie wêreld getref word. Op hierdie wyse ontwikkel die baba onder andere oë, neus, ore, hande en voete, terwyl die kind nog nie weet waarvoor hy of sy dit gaan gebruik nie. Maar die oomblik dat die kind gebore word, dan beseft die baba byvoorbeeld waarom oë en ore nodig was; sy oë is om mee te sien en sy neus om mee asem te haal. Soortgelyk is dit ook met die mens se deugsaamheid. Ons moet hier dié hemelse eienskappe kweek en leer toepas. Tog weet ons nie hoe die lewe hierna sal lyk nie. Dit is vir ons net soos vir die baba in die moederskoot. Ten spyte hiervan, moet ons die eienskappe ontwikkel wat nodig sal wees vir daardie wêreld sodat ons, net soos die baba, dit by geboorte in die nuwe wêreld kan gebruik. Indien ons dit nie doen nie, sal ons wees soos 'n kind wat gestremd deur hierdie lewe moet gaan" (12). Die belangrike verskil is egter dat die baba se ontwikkeling nie vrywillig is nie-- die geestelike ontwikkeling hier op aarde hang egter totaal en al van die persoon self af: "Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition" (13).

6.3 Die mensheid se tweeledige doel

Volgens Bahà`is is die mensheid se eerste doel in die tydvak waarin hy of sy woon om God se manifestasie vir daardie spesifieke era te soek en te vind. Vandag se openbaarder is Baha'u'llah (vertaald beteken dit die "Glorie van God") en elke mens moet Hom leer ken en Hom liefhê. Die mensheid se tweede doelstelling is, volgens Bahà`is, om die spesifieke openbaarder vir daardie spesifieke tydvak se wette en bevele asook Sy leerstellinge te gehoorsaam en uit te voer (14).

Beide doelwitte is, volgens Bahà`is, ewe belangrik en die een kan glad nie sonder die ander een geskied nie. 'n Individu kan mos nie vir Baha'u'llah (óf vir Christus óf vir Krishna óf vir Boed-dha as simplistiese voorbeeld) werklikwaar lief wees sonder om Sy wette te gehoorsaam nie. Hoe kan iemand voorgee om die ander persoon lief te hê en dan bloot voortgaan om teen daardie persoon se wense op te tree? Sulke optrede sal mos die betrokke persoon ongelukkig maak en teleurstel. Voorts kan 'n mens tog ook nie vir Baha'u'llah of enige van die ander manifestasies van God se wette en beginsels werklikwaar gehoorsaam, sonder om eerstens lief te wees vir daardie openbaarder van God nie. Hoe kan iemand 'n ander persoon heelhartig en met blydschap gehoorsaam as daardie individu nie die ander persoon respekteer en ten volle vertrou nie? (15)

6.4 Eenheid van die mensheid

Baha'u'llah leer, volgens Bahà`is, dat elke mens 'n kind van die een God is en dat elke mens wat oor die vermoë beskik om tussen goed en kwaad te onderskei, deur dieselfde Vader geskape is en terselfdertyd ook vir Hom kosbaar is (16). As ons dus glo dat dit die Hemelse Vader is, dan moet ons ook aanvaar dat elkeen van ons

'n broer of suster van die een menslike familie op aarde is. Gevolglik is die eenheid van die mensheid 'n waarheid wat te alle koste en onder alle omstandighede deur 'n individu se doen en late gereflekteer behoort te word (17).

Voordat Baha'u'llah hierdie beginsel, volgens Bahà`is, na die wêreld gebring het, was daar baie oorsake wat die mensheid genoop het om te dink dat hulle anders as ander mense is. Sommige mense het onder andere gedink dat hulle beter is as ander omdat hul velle ligter of witter as die ander volke van die wêreld was. Baha'u'llah sê dat die mens nie op grond van hul kleur anders is nie, maar slegs kan verskil omdat die mens verskillende grade van opvoeding ontvang (18).

Die verskillende volkere van die wêreld is, volgens Bahà`is, soos die verskillende blomme wat 'n mens in jou huis se tuin vind. As al die blomme in daardie tuin van dieselfde kleur was, sou die tuin nie baie aanskoulik gewees het nie. Net so sê Baha'u'llah dat God soos 'n skaapwagter is, wat vir al sy skape omgee. Daarom is die wit skape nie beter as die bruin of swart skape nie, want God het elkeen van ons lief; ongeag die kleur van jou vel of waar jy ook in die wêreld woonagtig is. Hoekom moet ons mekaar dan as vreemdelinge beskou? (19).

Baha'u'llah het onder sy volgelingen so 'n liefde vir mekaar gekweek dat hulle mekaar as een familie beskou, al is hulle van verskillende wêrelddele afkomstig: **"O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch"** (20).

Mens kan ook sê dat dié wyse van samewerking voorgestel word deur

die Bahà`i-beeld dat elke mens deel van die boom van die lewe vorm en deur dieselfde bron gevoed word (21). Baha'u'llah verduidelik ook hoe nou die hedendaagse mens moet saamwerk: **"Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body"** (22).

Die eenheid en eensgesindheid van die mensheid is die Bahà`i-geloof se fokuspunt en die plek waar alle leerstellings hul ontstaan en ontwikkeling ontvang. Die toepassing van hierdie beginsel is beslis meer as net die ontwikkeling van 'n geestelike broederskap. Hierdie praktiese strewe na eenheid word onder andere gesteun deur die feit dat dié geloof nie die mensheid tot 'n landsgodsdiens inperk nie (soos die meeste ander gelowe met hul religie doen deurdat dit na 'n spesifieke land uitgebrei word en dan as onafhanklike kerklike instansie van daardie land in die wêreld laat funksioneer), maar 'n wêreldgodsdiens bied deurdat dit oral in die wêreld onder die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid ooreenkomstig dieselfde riglyne en bestuurstelsels beoefen word. Dit is 'n beginsel wat die mens se denke wysig en daarna streef om die eenheid en eensgesindheid van die mensheid op so 'n wyse uit te leef, dat dít die hele wêreld volgens Bahà`is sal verander. Mense van alle rasse en volke sal op hierdie wyse, aldus Bahà`is, uiteindelik deel van 'n wêreldstelsel uitmaak sodat oorlog as 'n probleemoplossingsmetode deur konsultasie in 'n wêreldraad vervang sal word. Honger en die uiterste armoede sal verdwyn omdat mense nie by magte sal wees om lede van hul eie familie te laat gebrek ly nie (23). Vroue sal 'n gelyke rol in die belange van die wêreld vervul en sal in die woorde van `Abdu`l-Bahà **"neck on neck with men"** (24) wees. Hierdie gebeure word moontlik ook die beste geïllustreer deur Sherry se weergawe tydens die Egoli-"fireside" in Houghton, op Vrydag 28 Julie 1995, waartydens sy die gelykheid van man en vrou met die beeld van twee vere vergelyk het. Beide vere is in 'n ontspanne staat ewe

groot. Die een veer was egter vir 'n geruime tyd onder konstante spanning, en het gevolglik, die oomblik toe die spanning verwyder is, so uitgesit dat dit nou twee keer sy werklike grote is. Die veer sal weer sy normale grote bereik en dan net so groot wees as die ander een. Hierdie groter weergawe weerspieël tans die onderskeie bewegings van vroueregte en hul eise wat baie keer vreesaanjaend vir mans voorkom. Dit kan ook met die huidige regstellende aksie-optrede in Suid Afrika vergelyk word en illustreer die wanbalans wat huidig in dié verband hoogty vier. Eers wanneer die veer na sy oorspronklike posisie terugkeer, sal daar balans wees en kan die ware situasie (soos deur Baha'u'llah beskryf) ervaar en beleef word (25).

6.5 Mens- en wêreldbeskouing

Bahà`is vertel dat Baha'u'llah en `Abdu'l-Bahà (wat Sy woorde geïnterpreteer het) leer dat daar voor die Adamiese era baie religieuse siklusse was wat geen spore van bestaan nagelaat het nie (kyk skematiese voorstelling op pagina 281) (26). Hulle sê ook dat die Bahà`i-geloof glo dat God se skepping antiek is en dat die skepping geen begin gehad het nie. Meneer A meld dienooreenkomstig in 'n onderhoud dat die skepping een van God se grootste kenmerke en eienskappe is en dat 'n mens nie vir God sonder 'n skepping kan voorstel nie. Dit is onmoontlik-- die skepping is die spil waarom alles, vir biljoene en biljoene jare, in die mens se verbeelding draai (27).

Die mens bestaan ook al vir baie en baie jare. Sekere mense vanuit vorige religieuse agtergronde glo egter onder andere dat die hele wêreld slegs 6000 jaar oud is en dat alles by Adam, die eerste mens en profeet, begin het. Die Bahà`i-geloof en Baha'u'llah leer egter dat die hele wêreld baie jare gelede deur God geskape

is. Meneer A en Phil Christensen meld dat die "Big Bang Theory" hierdie siening van Baha'u'llah vandag bekragtig (28). Dit mag moontlik ook korrek wees dat 'n ontploffing van kompakte energie op watter wyse ookal, wel vir die oorsprong van die Heelal verantwoordelik kan wees. Hierdie aspek bekragtig weer meneer D se opmerking dat die Bahà`i-geloof die eerste godsdiens is wat in die eeu van die wetenskap ontstaan het en dus die wetenskap het wat saam met die geloof dink (29). `Abdu'l-Bahà wys ook daarop dat godsdiens en wetenskap hand aan hand loop, anders sal die mensheid nooit ooreenkomstig God se plan ontwikkel nie: "It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism" (30).

Meneer A gaan voort deur daarop te wys dat Baha'u'llah sê dat hierdie gebeure lank gelede in die oneindigheid plaasgevind het en dat niemand kan sê presies wanneer dit gebeur het nie. Maar dit het egter wel gebeur! Baha'u'llah sê dat, nadat die aarde op hierdie unieke wyse geskape is, daar 'n fetus of embryo was waaruit die mens ontwikkel het. Dit was die omstandighede toe God die wêreld oorspronklik in gebruik geneem het (31).

Op hierdie wyse is die mens gebore. Die gebeure was ook antiek omdat God die hele skepping gemaak het en toe die mens as die kroon van Sy skepping geskape het. Solank as wat God die skepper van die mens is, solank is die mens antiek. Vandag bekragtig wetenskaplike teorieë en ontdekkings dat die mens 16 miljoen jaar gelede geskape was, terwyl die Heelal tussen 14 en 20 biljoen jaar gelede ontstaan het. Dié ouderdom wat aan die mens toegeskryf word, word bepaal ooreenkomstig die jongste oorblyfsels wat on-

langs in Suid-Afrika en Oos-Afrika gevind is en wat nuwe lig op die saak gewerp het. Dit stem ook ooreen met wetenskaplikes wat lank gelede reeds vroeg in hul navorsing beweer het dat die eerste mense op die Afrika-bodem gemaak is en dat die mens oorspronklik donker van velkleur was. Die kontinente was toe nog vas aan mekaar en die mense het van dié deel wat tans as Afrika bekend staan, versprei. Hierna het die kontinente verdeel en dit was toe dat die mens se gesigsvorm begin verander het en sy velkleur weens klimaatsverandering ligter of donkerder geword het (32).

Dus glo die Bahà`is dat die mens baie oud, of antiek is en dat die mens een van God se oudste skeppings in die wêreld is. God het terselfdertyd nooit Sy skepping sonder enige leiding gelaat het nie. Reeds aan die begin van Sy skepping (wat geen begin het nie), het God Sy manifestasies (openbaarders, boodskappers, profete ensomeer) asook openbaringsboodskappe (boodskap na boodskap) gestuur om die mens na blydschap, verlossing en redding te lei (33). Meneer A gaan in die onderhoud voort deur te sê dat niks van al die vorige siklusse insake hierdie openbarings behoue gebly het nie. Die siklus wat ons vandag wel onthou, is die historiese gebeure van die Bybel, die Qur'an en die Bahà`i Geskrifte. Hierdie gebeure staan bekend as die Adamiese siklus. Hy sê ook dat hulle (Bahà`is) glo dat elke siklus 'n begin en einde het; en dat daar dan aan die einde van so 'n voltooide siklus 'n universele siklus volg. Dit beteken dan dat die huidige siklus by Adam begin en by die Qur'an eindig en dit is die rede waarom die Qur'an onder andere sê dat Mohammed die seël van al die profete is. Gevolglik verteenwoordig die Bahà`i-geloof die begin van die universele siklus. Die Adamiese era was veronderstel om 6000 jaar te duur omdat 'n siklus, volgens religieuse leermeesters, gewoonlik 'n tydperk van ongeveer 6000 jaar beslaan. Hierteenoor sal die

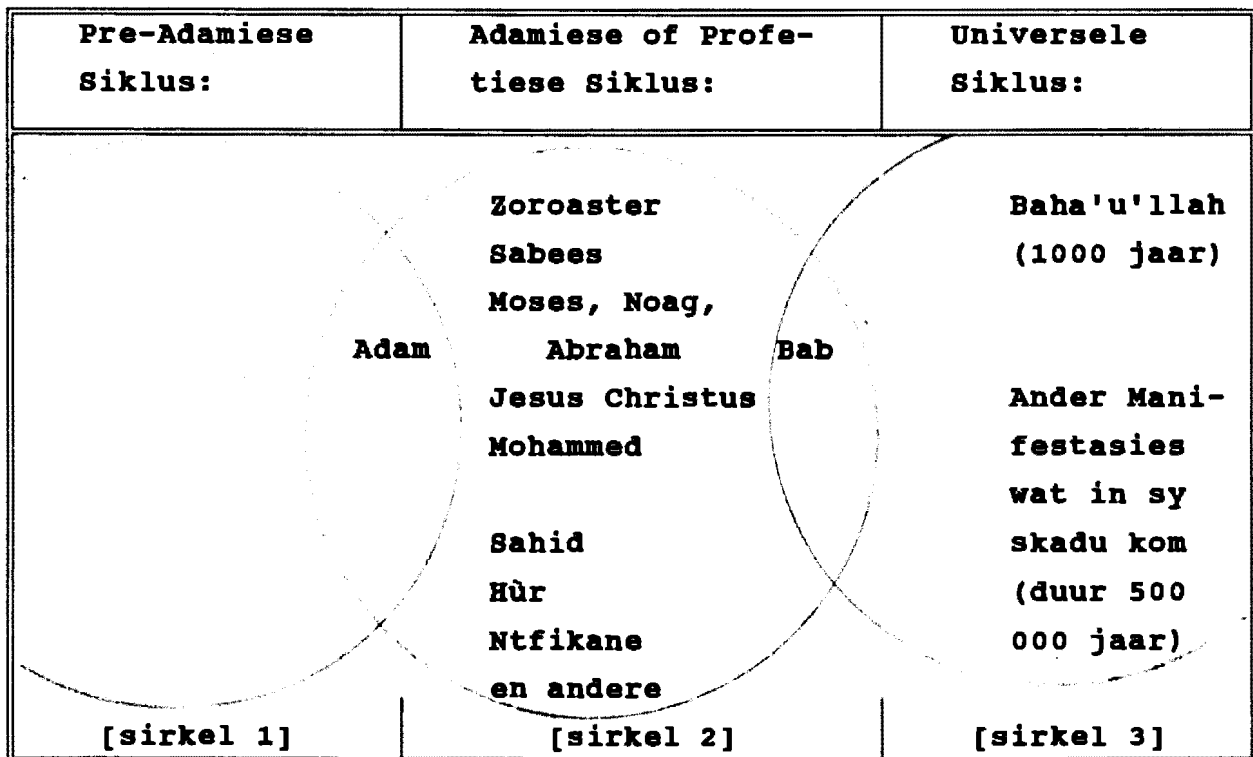
Bahà`i-siklus na verwagting ongeveer 500 000 jaar duur en daarom is dit dan die universele siklus. 'n Mens moet ook onthou dat Baha'u'llah gesê het dat hierdie die universele siklus is, maar dat daar nog so 'n siklus in die toekoms sal volg. Die vraag of so 'n universele siklus kleiner of groter as hierdie huidige siklus sal wees, kan egter nie beantwoord word nie omdat Baha'u'llah niks daaroor gemeld het nie (34).

Meneer A gaan voort en beskryf die gebeure verder deur daarop te wys dat Bahà`is vir Baha'u'llah as die Opperwese beskou omdat hy die mens in die universele era inlei. Hy beklemtoon dan ook die feit dat daar geen verskil tussen Baha'u'llah, Mohammed, Jesus Christus, Moses of enige profeet van ouds is nie. Volgens hom (mnr A) het Baha'u'llah self gesê dat die gees van al die manifestasies dieselfde is, maar dat hierdie openbaarders se fisieke gelaatstrekke hulle egter verskillende persone maak wat op verskillende tydstippe aan verskillende generasies van die mensdom in die wêreld verskyn het. Elk het God se boodskap aan 'n ander generasie van die mensheid oorgedra. Hierdie profete was inderdaad een in gees omdat 'n mens onder andere ook in die Bybel lees dat Jesus Christus vir Abraham, Isak en Jakob sy broers noem. Vermelde is chronologies onmoontlik deurdat hulle letterlik duisende jare uit mekaar geleef het. Dus is hulle in die gees een, maar nie in die fisieke nie. Insgelyks verwys Mohammed in die Qur'an na sy broer Moses en na sy broer Jesus. Selfs hy is ook byna 2500 tot 5000 jaar verwyderd van Moses en byna 622 jaar van Jesus Christus; en hy noem hulle broers. Dit beteken dat hulle in gees broers is, maar in die vlees aparte mense. Baha'u'llah het ook sodoende self gesê: "Ek is geensins verskillend in gees van Jesus Christus, van Mohammed, van Boeddha, van Krishna, van enige ander manifestasie nie, maar in persoon is ons elkeen verskillend van mekaar" (35). Hierdie soortgelyke siening begin ook tans in

Suid-Afrika na vore kom in die benadering tot godsdienstige oordenkings op televisie. Baie Christen-kykers meld onder andere tydens informele gesprekke dat hulle nie kan glo dat die boodskappe van Islam so na aan die inhoud van die Bybelse weergawe klink nie en dat dit amper voel asof die Imam maar net sowel uit die Bybel kon gelees het. Dié Joodse boodskap is egter begryplik omdat baie daarvan net so in die Bybel vervat is.

6.6 Eenheid van godsdien

Die Bahà`ì-wêreldbeeld kan dus soos volg voorgestel word:



Die onderskeie sirkels (sirkels 1 en 3 is slegs halfvoltooid omdat die volle inhoud nog nie bekend is nie!) beeld die ver-

skillende siklusse soos reeds vermeld uit. Die eerste sirkel is leeg omdat daar geen historiese gegewens behoue gebly het wat vir die mensheid kan aantoon hoe die betrokke siklus verloop het nie. Ontdekkings en wetenskaplike feite toon wel (soos reeds vermeld) dat daar reeds so 'n siklus of selfs siklusse was. Gevolglik kan die siklus dus as die Pre-Adamiese Era bekend staan. Die tweede sirkel heet die Adamiese of Profetiese siklus. Die historiese gegewens toon dat hierdie era by Adam begin en tot en met Mohammed strek. Beide die Bab en Adam word egter in die snydingsdele van die onderskeie sirkels voorgestel omdat hulle direk na die vorige siklus en/of selfs aangrensend tot die vorige siklus bestaan. Dit word so voorgestel omdat baie van die vorige siklusse se godsdienste naas die nuwe siklus en nuwe boodskap van beide Adam (soos die primale godsdienste) en die Bab (as simplistiese voorbeeld Judaïsme, die Christendom en Islam) bly voortbestaan het. Hulle kan dus met reg ook as die wegbereiders van die nuwe siklusse beskou word.

Tydens hierdie Adamiese siklus het daar ook sekere spesifieke gebeure plaasgevind. God het tydens dié tydvak boodskappers na die mense gestuur. Shoghi Effendi meld nege profete wat belangrike godsdienste in die Adamiese en in die Universele (sirkel 3) siklusse gevestig het, naamlik **Zoroaster; Krishna; Christus; Mohammed; Boeddha; die Profeet van die Sabees ("Sabeen"),** wie se naam nie behoue gebly het nie; die Bab en Baha'u'llah (36).

Getuienis toon dat daar ook nog melding gemaak word van Abraham as boodskapper van God. Abraham het egter nie 'n nuwe godsdiens gevestig nie, maar was deel van die Joodse godsdiens wat toe alreeds deur Moses na die mensheid gebring was. Die Bybel leer ons ook van Noag as God se openbaarder. `Abdu'l-Bahà bekragtig al bogenoemde in die volgende woorde: "... the Law of God is

devided into two parts. One is the fundamental basis which comprises all spiritual things-- that is to say, it refers to the spiritual virtues and divine qualities; this does not change nor alter: it is the Holy of Holies, which is the essence of the Law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and which lasts and is established in all the prophetic cycles" (37).

Die Kitàb-i-Iqàn en die Qur'an meld voorts vir Salih en Hùd as twee antieke Arabiese manifestasies. Die Qur'an sê ook dat daar baie meer openbaarders of profete van God was. Gevolglik blyk dit dat God die mensheid gedurende hierdie Adamiese era met verskeie boodskappe en manifestasies gelei en onderskraag het. So het elke gemeenskap of kultuur hul eie openbaarder van God gehad. Ongelukkig het baie gemeenskappe se gedokumenteerde bewyse nie behoue gebly nie, terwyl ander profete se boodskappe dalk nog nie deur die Westerse skolastici bestudeer is nie. Hierdie word onder meer die beste geïllustreer met meneer D se verwysing na die Xhosa-manifestasie **Ntfikane**. Ntfikane het tydens 'n dansbyeenkoms by sy paleis, in die negentiende eeu, 'n visie ontvang. Hy het al sy volgelingen byeengeroep en hulle van God se boodskap vertel. Hy het sy volgelingen opdrag gegee om met alle mense saam te werk omdat God slegs na die mense luister wat verenig is. Hierdie gebeure is dus 'n heenwyse, volgens mnr D, na die Bahà'ì-geloof wat in die negentiende eeu ontstaan het (38).

Phil Christensen haal soortgelyke voorbeelde met betrekking tot die Amerikaanse inheemse stamme aan. "Degonaweda" is onder andere so 'n openbaarder. Ooreenkomstig het "Wovoka" ('n Paiute Indiaan) na bewering in 1889 (toe Baha'u'llah nog op die aarde was) 'n visioen gehad waarin hy soos volg opgemerk het: "Do not tell the white people about this. Jesus is now upon

earth. He appears like a cloud. The dead are all alive again. I do not know when they will be here. When the time comes there will be no more sickness and everyone will be young again. When the earth shakes at the coming of the new world, do not be afraid. It will not hurt you" (39). Gevolglik is daar ten minste 15 openbaarders van God wat Sy boodskap in die wêreld tydens die Adamiese siklus (soos voorgestel in sirkel 2) verkondig het. Al hierdie manifestasies is ook deel van God se verbond met die mens: "The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit" (40).

Die Adamiese era staan ook as die Profetiese siklus bekend omdat die westerse sowel as die oosterse godsdienste die koms van 'n Beloofde Een profeteer en verkondig. Die Joodse godsdiens profeteer die koms van die Messias, terwyl die Christendom Jesus Christus se wederkoms verkondig. In Islam is dit weer die belofte van die "Qa'im" (die tiende Imam), terwyl die Hindoes op die wederkoms van die "Kalki Avatar" (goddelike wese of manifestasie) wag. In Boeddhisme word daar op die koms van die "Metteyya Bhoedda" (vyfde Bhoedda) gewag. Zoroaster het ook verkondig dat daar nà hom 'n groot Leermeester ("Shâh Bahrâm Varjâvand") sou kom, wat wêreldeenheid onder Een God sou bring. Al vermeld teon dat die belofte van die Beloofde Een dus in byna al die godsdienste gevind word en dat hierdie tydvak dus met reg "die Profetiese siklus" kan heet.

Bahà'is sê dat die groot tragedie van die Profetiese Era daarin geleë is dat die mensheid die manifestasie onthou, maar die boodskap vergeet (41). Daarom sê Bahà'is dat dit die boodskap is wat

van tyd tot tyd deur God herhaal word. Gevolglik het God net een godsdiens en is alle religieë goddelik geïnspireer. Dit is ook teen hierdie agtergrond nie nodig vir Bahà`is om hul godsdiens te verander nie, want dit is God se boodskap wat elke keer herhaal word deur middel van 'n nuwe manifestasie in 'n moderne taal ooreenkomstig die sosiale omstandighede van daardie spesifieke tydvak (42).

Die Profetiese siklus word, aldus Bahà`is, afgesluit deurdat Baha'u'llah die vervulling van al die vorige godsdienste se profesieë is. Hy is met ander woorde (as voorbeeld) **Jesus Christus** (43) en die "**Metteyya Bhoeddha**" (44) se wederkoms, terwyl Hy ook die koms is van die Hindoes se "**Kalki Avatar**", wat ooreenkomstig Hindoe-leerstellings aan die einde van die "**Kali Yuga**" (Donker of Yster Era) verwag word (45). Dit word onder andere soos volg beskryf: "**This prophecy of Gautama Buddha (46) clearly predicts that the teaching of Metteyya Buddha will apply to a much larger part of the world than his own teaching-- in other words that it will be a worldwide teaching. Indeed, Baha'u'llah's teaching is precisely that, for Bahà`is believe that Baha'u'llah does not just fulfil the Buddhist prophecies. They claim that he is also for the Jews the expected Messiah, for Christians and Muslims the awaited return of Christ, for the Zoroastrians (Parsees) the Saoshyant, for Hindus the Kalki Avatar, as well as being for Buddhists the Metteyya Buddha. The prophecy of the Lord Buddha that the teaching of Metteyya Buddha will be much more extensive than his own is already being fulfilled through the Bahà`i Faith, already a worldwide religion with communities in every part of the planet consisting of all the races and nations of humanity**" (47).

Opsommend kan Bahà`is se siening oor Jesus Christus se wederkoms

soos volg beskryf word: "Die Bybel leer dat Christus se koms afhang van die vervulling van sekere tekens, byvoorbeeld: 'die son sal verduister word, en die maan sal sy glans nie gee nie, en die sterre sal van die hemel val ... en dan sal die teken van die Seun van die mens in die hemel verskyn, en dan sal die stamme van die aarde rou betoon en die Seun van God op die wolke van die hemel sien kom met groot krag en heerlikheid' [Openbaring 6 verse 12 en 13; Matteus 24 vers 29 ensomeer]. By Christus se eerste koms het Hy ook ooreenkomstig die Evangelie van die hemel gekom. Christus sê Self: 'En niemand het opgevaar na die hemel nie, behalwe Hy wat uit die hemel neergedaal het, naamlik die Seun van die mens'. Dit is dus vir almal 'n uitgemaakte saak dat Jesus wel van die hemel afkomstig is, hoewel Hy skynbaar uit die skoot van Maria kom. By die eerste, so ook by Sy tweede koms, sal Hy dus van die hemel kom, maar ook via die moederskoot. Die voorwaardes vir die eerste koms is presies dieselfde, ook vir Sy tweede koms. Die boek van Jesaja kondig aan dat die Messias die Ooste en die Weste sal oorwin, dat alle nasies van die wêreld onder Sy skaduwee sal kom, dat Sy Koninkryk bevestig sal word, en Hy van 'n onbekende plek sal kom, dat die sondaars geoordeel sal word, en dat die geregtigheid in so 'n mate sal heers dat die wolf en die lam, die luiperd en die bokkie, die suigeling en die adder almal by een fontein sal bymekaar kom en saam woon [Jesaja 11 vers 6-9]. Daarom het die Jode vir Jesus Christus verwerp en God behoeft dit! Die Messias masikh [dws monster-- in Arabies is daar 'n woordspeling met Masih, die Messias; en masikh, die monster] genoem, Hom beskou as die verderwer van die koninkryk van God, Hom as die breker van die Sabbat en die Wet geag, en Hom ter dood veroordeel. Nietemin het elkeen van hierdie voorwaardes 'n betekenis gehad, wat die Jode nie verstaan of begryp het nie. Daarom was hulle van Christus se waarheid weerhou.

Die tweede koms van Christus sal ook só geskied: `die tekens en voorwaardes waarvan gepraat is, het almal betekenis, en moet nie letterlik opgevat word nie. Onder meer is gesê dat die sterre op die aarde sal val. Die sterre is eindeloos en ontelbaar, en moderne wiskundiges het wetenskaplik vasgestel en bewys dat die son ongeveer een en 'n half miljoen keer groter as die aarde is; en dat elk van die sterre duisend maal groter as die son is. Dit is dus asof 'n duisendmiljoen Himalajaberge op 'n mosterdsaadjie val. Gevolglik is hierdie gebeure dus heeltemal onmoontlik. Wat nog eienaardiger is, is dat Christus self sê: `Miskien sal Ek kom wanneer julle nog slaap, want die koms van die Seun van die mens is soos 'n dié van 'n dief in die nag'. Die dief sal miskien binne die huis wees, en die eienaar sal dit nie weet nie.

Dit is klaar en duidelik dat hierdie tekens dus simbolies is, en nie letterlik nie" (48).

Die vervulling van die Profetiese siklus word ook deur Bahà`is beskryf in die feit dat hulle vir Baha'u'llah beskou as Shâh Bahrâm Varjâvand (die groot Leermeester) wat volgens Zoroaster sou kom om die hele Iran en later die hele wêreld te verower. Gevolglik beskou Bahà`is hierdie gebeure met betrekking tot Shâh Bahrâm Varjâvand en die onderskeie religieë se beloftes as die groot Dag (wat ook in die Christen-profesieë gevind word) waarin Baha'u'llah se verskyning die versinnebeelding van die Opperwese Manifestasie is (49). Dit dra ook daartoe by dat hierdie era dus uniek in die mens se geskiedenis sowel as die wêreldgebeure is. Daarom verwys Bahà`is na hierdie tydvak as die universele siklus (sirkel 3 van skematiese voorstelling): "The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regar-

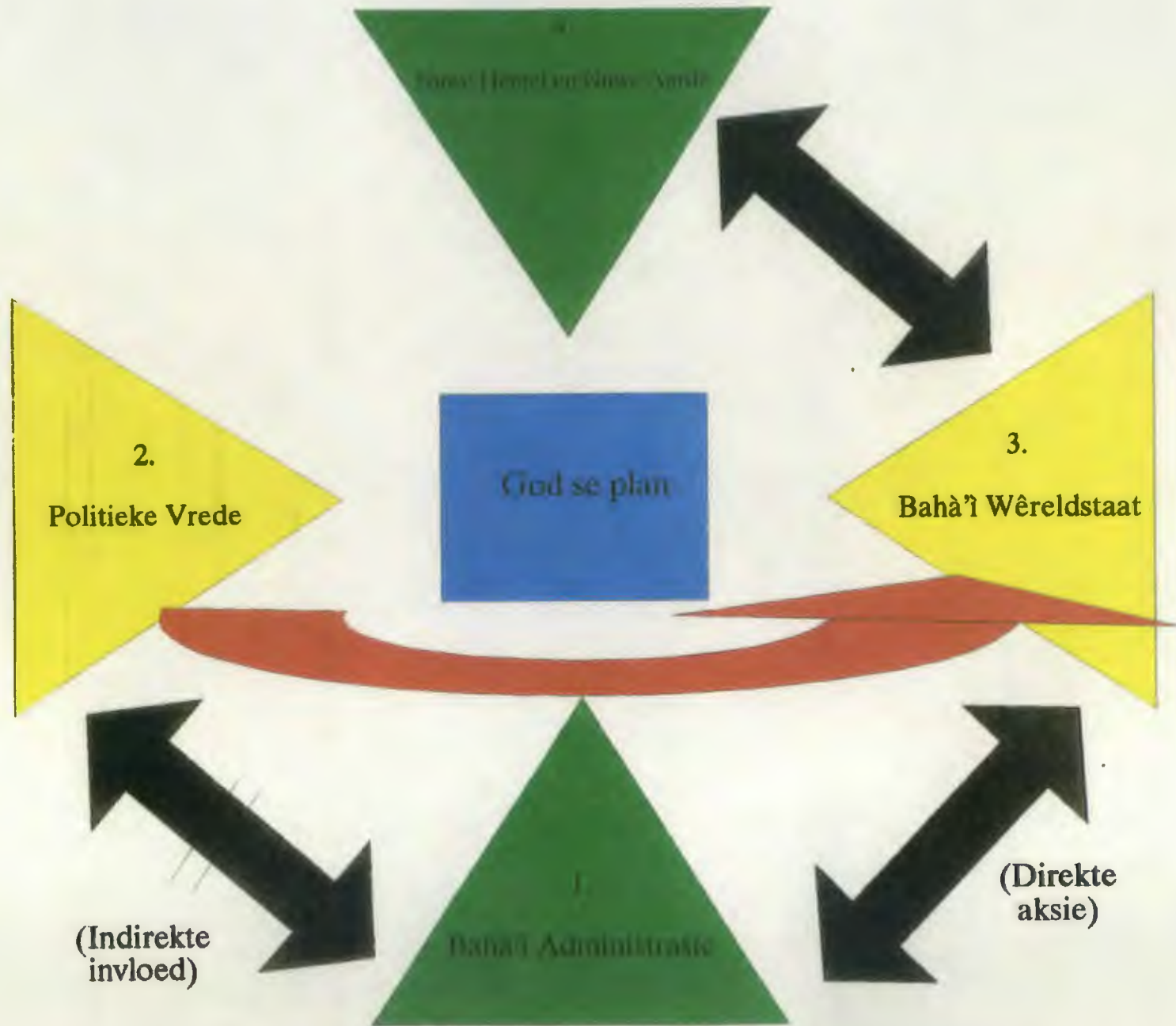
ded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spirirual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. The emrgence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture-- all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahà`i Era-- should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop" (50).

Hierdie gebeure is so groot dat God, volgens mev J in 'n onderhoud, beslis nie nog 'n Openbaarder sal stuur nie, tensy 1000 jaar na Baha'u'llah se verskyning verbygegaan het (51). Baha'u'llah het self dié waarskuwing in die Kitàb-i-Aqdas soos volg gegee: "Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter Should a man appear, ere the lapse of a full thousand years-- each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur'an, and of nineteen months and nineteen days each, according to the Bayan-- and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!" (52). Die universele era is verder so uniek dat Baha'u'llah se invloed vir 'n verdere 500 000 jaar oor die wêreld sal geld en terselfdertyd veroorsaak dat die Bahà`i-siklus (as enigste wêreldgodsdiens) die langste siklus in die mens se geskiedenis sal wees:

"Centuries, nay, countless ages, must pass away ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future, 'in the shadows of clouds', know, verily, that in so far as their relation to the Source of their inspiration is concerned, they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty [Baha'u'llah]. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each and every one of them 'doeth whatsoever He willeth'" (53).

6.7 God se Koninkryk op aarde

Bahà'is sê dat die hele wêreld tans "in a state of pregnancy" (54) is. Die identiteit van die verwagte nuweling wat gebore sal word, omvat die beloofde wêreldvrede (die inhoud van die meeste religieë), een wêreldstaat met 'n gesamentlike federale wêreld regering en 'n wêreldburgerskap waarmee die mensheid tot sy volle potensiaal sal ontwikkel. Hierdie gemenebes kon alreeds gevorm gewees het indien die regeerders en konings destyds op die briewe van Baha'u'llah gereageer het en self help vorm het aan God se aardse koninkryk (55). Hul negatiewe reaksies het tot gevolg gehad dat baie van die regeerders tot wie hy sy vertoë gerig het, reeds onttroon is en dat die mens dié proses nou self moet aanpak om daarby uit te kom. Shoghi Effendi beskryf hierdie toedrag van sake soos volg: "It is becoming evident that the world is not yet through with its labour, the New Age not yet fully born, real Peace not yet right around the corner" en ook "we know humanity can and must be welded into some form of political unity-- such as a World Federal State-- through suffering as it seems only intense suffering is capable of rousing men to the spiritual efforts required" (56). Hierdie inspannings en die proses om die mens tot sy volle potensiaal te kan ontwikkel, word skematies soos volg voorgestel:



Die skematiese voorstelling toon dat alles rondom God se plan vir die hele mensheid sentreer. Dit word die middelpunt van alles en word in die diagram met behulp van die blou vierkant voorgestel, omdat hierdie plan in werklikheid tweeledig van aard is. Enersyds gebruik God die wêreldse lyn, of te wel politieke lyn, onafhanklik (gemerk as nommer 2 in die geel driehoek van die diagram) om die proses aan die gang te sit, en andersyds die goddelike lyn (gemerk as nommer 3 in die ander geel driehoek) om dié proses sy finale bestel te gee. Die Bahà`i-Administrasie (gemerk nommer 1 in die groen driehoek van die diagram) vervul ook 'n prominente rol in die verband. Die pyl met die twee strepe daardeur simboliseer die indirekte rol wat Bahà`is in dié verband vertolk. Dit behels die daarstelling en deelname aan projekte wêreldwyd, die oorhandiging van dokumente en/of versoekskrifte aan die politieke leiers van die dag orals in die wêreld (soos weerspieël in die oorhandiging van die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid se dokument getiteld "The Promise of World Peace" in Oktober 1985 asook die huidige (1995) verspreiding van die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van Suid-Afrika se Rasse-eenheidsbrief, gemerk bylae C); die oorhandiging van Bahà`i-insette oor belangrike sake aan die Regerings van die dag (as simplistiese voorbeeld, insette vir die nuwe Grondwet van Suid-Afrika sowel as die Beginsels vir Onderwys in Suid-Afrika, onderskeidelik gemerk as bylaes D en E) asook insette aan die Verenigde Nasies (onder andere Bahà`is se inset oor wêreldburgerskap, gemerk bylae F). Dit sluit ook in hul inset oor 'n nuwe tiengebooie vir Suid Afrika, op versoek van die "World Committee for Reconciliation and Peace" (gemerk bylae G).

Die ander pyl, sonder enige streep daardeur, simboliseer die goddelike lyn wat nou reeds begin vorm kry en uitgebrei sal word om, as die toekomstige instellings, vir die wêreldvrede en God se aardse koninkryk diens te verrig.

6.7.1 Politieke vrede

Bahà'is verwys na politieke vrede ('n eie term om die eenheid tussen state en volke van die wêreld te simboliseer) as die "Lesser Peace" (57) en glo dat hierdie mindere vrede voor die einde van die twintigste eeu verwesenlik kan word (58). Vermelde word onder andere ook gedemonstreer in hul pogings om die bouery aan die Wêreldsentrumgeboue teen die jaar 2000 (met die aanbreek van die een-en-twintigste eeu) voltooi te kry (59).

Die politieke vrede (60) sal begin vorm kry deurdat alle wêreldleiers tot die besef sal kom dat hulle die wêreldse probleme slegs gesamentlik kan oplos. Hierdie gemeenskaplike visie sal dan daartoe lei dat die leiers en verskillende volke 'n byeenkomsreel, waar al die leiers saam vergader. Hier sal oor wêreldvrede onderhandel word en daar sal ook ten opsigte van die implementering daarvan sekere ooreenkomste gemaak word. Hierdie ooreenkomste sal, getrou aan Baha'u'llah se woorde, die beginsel van "collective security" (61) omvat, waarin enige regeerder of nasie wat die verbintenis tot vrede verwerp, deur die ander partye tot samewerking omgehaal sal word. Voorts sal daar ook tot 'n algemene ontwapening oorgegaan word, waarin die nasies van die wêreld "... will have willingly ceded every claim of war ... and all rights to maintaining internal armaments, except for the purpose of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions" (62). `Abdu'l-Bahà beskryf dit (reeds in 1875) verder soos volg: "In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the prepara-

tions for war and military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others" (63).

Sodoende sal daar dus, volgens Bahà'is, 'n sogenaamde "world Super-state" (64) gestig word en kan daar moontlik aan die primêre eienskappe en beginsels "as far as we can visualize it" (65) moontlik byvoorbeeld soos volg dalk vormgegee word:

'n Wêreldparlement:	"... whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments" (66);
óf	
'n Wêreldwetgewer:	"... 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" (67);

'n Internasionale Uitvoerende Mag:	"... to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth" (68);
óf	
'n Wêreld-uitvoerende Mag:	"... 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" (69);

Hoogste Regsbank:	"... whose judgement will have binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration" (70);
6f	
Wêreldgeregshof:	"... 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" (71);

Wêreldgemeenskap:	"... in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law-- the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives-- shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship" (72);
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Internasionale Mag:	"... will assist world executive in carrying out the decisions of the world legislative" (73).
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Abdu'l-Bahà beskryf hoe hierdie wêreldgeregshof, in samewerking met die Bahà'í Administrasie, onder andere soos volg vorm behoort te kry: "... the national assemblies of each country and nation-- that is to say parliaments-- should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of

humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation" (74).

Bahà'is se rol tydens hierdie gebeure word deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid soos volg beskryf: "This does not mean, however, that the Bahà'is are standing aside and waiting for the Lesser Peace to come before they do something about the peace of mankind. Indeed, by promoting the principles of the Faith, which are indispensable to the maintenance of peace, and by fashioning the instruments of the Bahà'i Administrative Order, which we are told by the beloved Guardian is the pattern for the future society, the Bahà'is are constantly engaged in laying the groundwork for a permanent peace, the Most Great Peace being the ultimate goal" (75).

Die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid het by nog 'n ander geleentheid Bahà'is se invloed op die politieke vrede as volg verwoord: "Undoubtedly, as these developments are taking place, the counsel which the institutions of the Faith can give to governments, the pattern of world administration offered by the Bahà'i community and the great humanitarian projects which will be launched under the aegis of the Universal House of Justice, will exercise a great influence on the course of progress" (76).

Namate hierdie proses van Bahà`i-beïnvloeding al meer en meer ontwikkel en die nuwe wêreldgemeenskap begin vorm kry, sal 'n stadium aanbreek wat Shoghi Effendi "the stage of establishment" (77) noem. Dit sal die tydvak wees wanneer "the Faith of Baha'u'llah will be recognized by the civil authorities as the state religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the year following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahà`i state" (78).

Mevrou J sê in 'n onderhoud dat 'n mens alreeds vandag sien hoe hierdie politieke vrede in die wêreld begin vorm aanneem. Dit word onder andere deur die internasionale ingryping in die Midde-Ooste geïllustreer deurdat die lande onder die Verenigde Nasies se vaandel byeengekom het en saam teen Saddam Hussein van Irak opgetree het. Die lande se uitgangspunt was dat hulle geen oorlog wil hê nie en daarom genoodsaak is om op hierdie wyse teen Irak op te tree (79). Die huidige optrede teen die Serwiërs en aanvalle op Bosnië (29 tot 31 Augustus 1995 as voorbeeld) op aandrang van Amerika (80) en in samewerking met die ander lande is nog so 'n voorbeeld. Die optrede word wyd in die media vertolk as die eerste stappe om die oorlog te beëindig en om geleentheid te skep vir vredessamesprekinge tussen die betrokke partye. John Hatcher bekragtig vermelde gebeure en beskryf die beginpunt van dié politieke vrede, deur self ook soos volg op te merk: "In fact, we might rightly conclude that the initial stages of the Lesser Peace have been under way for some time. Certainly in the formation of the League of Nations (81) and the United Nations we can witness foundational attempts to establish a world body capable of resolving international disputes and administering justice on a global scale" (82).

6.7.2 'n Bahà`i-wêreldstaat

Volgens die Bahà`ise historiese visie sal die mensheid aanhou ontwikkel totdat elke mens oor die vermoë beskik om die fisiese wêreld ooreenkomstig die eienskappe van God se geestelike wêreld te laat manifesteer. Mevrouw J beskryf in 'n onderhoud die "Most Great Peace" enersyds as die vestiging van 'n ware Bahà`i-staat op aarde en andersyds as die oomblik dat die mense in die wêreld se harte so verander het, dat hulle die wêreld eerder self geestelik as polities wil verander (83). Dit sal geskied deurdat elke aspek van daardie menslike gemeenskap die essensie van die eenheid van die skepping uitbeeld en weerspieël: "The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah, 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" (84).

Shoghi Effendi gaan voort deur daarop te wys dat al die eienskappe van die Bahà`i-geloof ook hier as ware beginsels vir elke mens se lewe beoefen en uitgeleef sal word: "In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop" (85). Voorts sal hierdie nuwe sisteem ook al die "ideals of the East and the West" (86) omvat. Dié samelewing sal ook gekenmerk word deur die permanente afwesigheid van enige vooroordele, enige vyandskap, wat so eie is aan die mens se huidige geskiedenis, sowel as religieuse onverdraagsaamheid: "National rivalries, hatred, 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" (87).

Hierdie boodskap was ook alreeds vroeër deur 'Abdu'l-Bahà gemeld: "Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself" (88).

Hierdie staat sal voorts ook gekenmerk word deur uitskakeling van oorlog, sowel as die vernuwing van 'n wêreldwye ekonomiese sisteem (vergelyk bylae H): "Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, 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, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race" (89).

Hierdie vooruitgang sal slegs deur 'n intellektuele, sistematiese, gekoördineerde en wêreldwye bestuurstelsel onder leiding van 'n wêreld-federalestelsel verwesentlik word: "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" (90). Baha'u'llah gee ook self verdere klarigheid oor sekere van die metodes en sisteme wat tot vermelde resultate aanleiding sal gee, naamlik: "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 centre 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" (91).

Hierdie beginsels, wat reeds tans deur elke Bahà`i in die wêreld verkondig word, sal dan finaal gestalte kry sodat die Bahà`i-wêreldstaat gevorm word. Bahà`is noem hierdie staat "the Most Great Peace". Daarom konkludeer Shoghi Effendi ook dat die ontstaan van die "Most Great Peace" die eksplisiete vervulling is van die Nuwe Hemel en Aarde (gemerk as punt 4 in die groen driehoek van diagram) soos beskryf word in Openbaring 21 verse 1 tot 4, aangaande God se woning op aarde: "Toe het ek 'n nuwe hemel en aarde gesien. Die eerste hemel en die eerste aarde het verdwyn, en die see het nie meer bestaan nie. En ek het die heilige stad, die nuwe Jerusalem, van God af uit die hemel uit sien afkom. Die stad was gereed soos 'n bruid wat vir haar man versier is. Toe het ek 'n harde stem van die troon af hoor sê: `Kyk, die woonplek van God is nou by die mense. Hy sal by hulle bly; hulle

sal sy volke wees, en God self sal by hulle wees as hulle God. Hy sal al die trane van hulle oë afdroog. Die dood sal daar nie meer wees nie. Ook leed, smart en pyn sal daar nie meer wees nie. Die dinge van vroeër het verbygegaan" (92).

Shoghi Effendi sluit af deur laastens daarop te wys dat hierdie gebeure en ontwikkeling waarheen die mensheid dus beweeg, nie deur mag of misbruik verkry sal word nie; maar slegs deur die voortbewegende "unifying forces of life" (93).

6.8 Eindnote

- (1) `Abdu`l-Bahà, The Three Degrees of Reality in The Reality of Man, Exerpts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and `Abdu`l-Baha, Bahà`i Publications, Australia, 1990, ISBN 909991 39 1, pp 14-19.
- (2) `Abdu`l-Bahà, Die Patroon van die Bahà`i Lewe, 'n Versameling uit die Bahà`i Skrif met sommige passasies uit die geskifte van die Beskermer van die Bahà`i-geloof, Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid- en Wes-Afrika, 1981, ISBN 0 908420 27 7, p 23.
- (3) Ibid, p 24.

(4) Savi, The Eternal Quest . . . , pp 63 en 64.

(5) Julio Savi bekryf dit soos volg: "Abdu'l-Bahà mentions-- using a Plotinian expression-- the 'circle of existence'. From the elemental atom to the 'original matter' to man, the first half of the circle ('bringing forth') is completed, characterized by the different stages of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. In man, the second half of the 'circle of existence' begins: the essence of man-- which may also be called the soul or spirit of man-- is, so to speak, the new elemental atom. In fact, the soul will in its turn undergo a further evolutionary process: its growth towards and in the metaphysical world of the Kingdom ('progress'). Such a process cannot have an end, therefore the soul-- whose growth has no end-- is immortal.

Therefore, on the one hand, man is a part of the material or physical plane of existence, and thus summarizes in himself 'the mysteries of the greater world'; on the other, he is by virtue of his soul a part of the spiritual or metaphysical plane of existence.

Abdu'l-Bahà explains that "... in the microcosm, or the little man, there are deposited three realities ... an outward or physical reality ... a second or higher reality which is the intellectual reality ... a third reality ... that is the spiritual reality. So in man there is a threefold reality: a first reality, an expression of the world of creation, related to the senses, common both to men and animals, subject to nature; a second reality, an expression of the world of the

Kingdom, which is conscious and spiritual; and lastly an intermediate reality, typical of man, halfway between the other two. This threefold human reality or nature may be viewed also as a threefold (animal, human and spiritual) potentiality bestowed upon man" (Savi, The Eternal ..., pp 85 en 86).

- (6) Sears, Thief in ..., p 258.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.
- (9) `Abdu`l-Bahà, The Three Degrees of ..., pp 14-19.
- (10) Hamid Roohani, The Purpose of the Fast, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 24 Februarie 1995.
- (11) `Abdu`l-Bahà, The Three ..., pp 14-19.
- (12) Band 9, 560-570 en Allan Moore, Spiritual Life, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 4 Augustus 1995.
- (13) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from ..., p 149.
- (14) Baha'u'llah, The Light of ..., p 35.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Jeff Albert, The Three Onenesses of the Bahà`i Faith, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 21 Julie 1995.

- (17) Hamid Massoudi, Unity in Religion, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 8 September 1995.
- (18) Suha Rawhani, Unity in Diversity, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 18 Augustus 1995.
- (19) Baha'u'llah, The Light ..., pp 43-44.
- (20) Baha'u'llah, Gleanings ..., p 218.
- (21) Baha'u'llah, The Light ..., p 44.
- (22) Kitàb-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, ..., p 17.
- (23) Bijan, The New World Order, Johannesburg Fireside, Houghton, 9 Desember 1994.
- (24) `Abdu`l-Bahà, Paris Talks ..., p 148.
- (25) Sherry Izadinia, Equality between Man and Woman, Egoli Fireside, Houghton, 28 Julie 1995.
- (26) `Abdu`l-Bahà beskryf dit onder andere soos volg: "... for the whole universe, whether for the heavens or for the men, there are cycles of great events, of important facts and occurrences. When a cycle is ended, a new cycle begins; and the old one, on account of the great events which take place, is completely forgotten, and not a trace or record of it will remain. As you see, we have no records of twenty thousand years ago, although we have before proved by argument that life on this planet is very ancient. It is not one hundred thousand,

or two hundred thousand, or one million or two million years old; it is very ancient, and the ancient records and traces are entirely obliterated" (`Abdu`l-Bahà, Some Answered Questions ..., p 161).

- (27) Band 2, 136-139.
- (28) Phil Christensen, Divine Intervention in the Destiny of Man, The Covenant, Bahà`ì International Summer School, Zimbabwe, Desember 1995, p 4 en Band 2, 147-150.
- (29) Band 1, 137-140.
- (30) `Abdu`l-Bahà, Paris Talks ..., p 143.
- (31) Band 2, 154-158.
- (32) Phil Christensen, Divine Intervention in, ..., p 4 en Band 2, 150-170.
- (33) Band 2, 159-183.
- (34) Bande 2, 184-198 en 14, 378-384. `Abdu'l-Bahà beskryf hierdie siklusse en openbaringsboodskappe soos volg: "Each of the Divine Manifestations has likewise a cycle, and during the cycle His laws and commandments prevail and are performed. When His cycle is completed by the appearance of a new Manifestation, a new cycle begins. In this way cycles begin, end and are renewed untill a universal cycle is completed in the world, when important events and great occurrences will take place which entirely efface every trace and every record of

the past; then a new universal cycle begins in the world, for this universe has no beginning. We have before stated proofs and evidences concerning this subject; there is no need of repetition. Briefly, we say a universal cycle in the world of existence signifies a long duration of time, and innumerable and incalculable periods and epochs. In such a cycle the Manifestations appear with splendour in the realm of the visible until a great and supreme Manifestation makes the world the centre of His radiance. His appearance causes the world to attain to maturity, and the extension of His cycle is very great. Afterward, other Manifestations will arise under His shadow, who according to the needs of the time will renew certain commandments relating to material questions and affairs, while remaining under His shadow. We are in the cycle which began with Adam, and its supreme Manifestation is Baha'u'llah" (Some Answered ..., p 161).

- (35) Band 2, 188-223.
- (36) Shoghi Effendi soos aangehaal deur Christensen, Divine Intervention ..., p 5.
- (37) `Abdu'l-Bahà, Some Answered ..., p 47.
- (38) Band 12, 090-098.
- (39) Phil Christensen, Divine Intervention ..., pp 5 en 6.
- (40) Die Bab soos aangehaal in Habib Taherzadeh, Selections of the Writings of the Bab, Bahà'í World Centre, Haifa, Hersiene Uitgawe, 1982, p 87.

- (41) Baha'u'llah stel dit volgens William Sears self soos volg: "The great tragedy of religion is that mankind remembers the Messenger and forget the Message" (Sears, Thief in ..., p 220).
- (42) Hushmand Fathea'zam vat hierdie gebeure mooi saam: "When we are Bahá'is, we believe in all the religions of the past as divine in origin. We do not change our religion to become Bahá'is because we believe that God has only one religion which comes from time to time. By accepting the religion of all ages we have made our believe in God more perfect. We have not in fact changed it. A seed grows into roots, then puts forth a stem and leaves, flowers and fruit. The tree is the same tree all the time. It does not change. It only grows. The sun is the same sun though it dawns from different horizons. The people of the world through blind imitations and ignorance worship the dawning place from which their ancestors saw the Sun of God's Manifestation. If the same Sun rises from a different dawning-point, they ignore it and become bewildered. But when we look at the Sun we recognize it as the same Sun that has shone before from other horizons" (Fathea'zam, The New Garden, ..., p 6.
- (43) Vir 'n volledige bespreking insake Christus se wederkoms, raadpleeg: William Sears, Thief in the Night of The Case of the Missing Millennium, Agtiende Uitgawe, George Ronald, Oxford, 1992.
- (44) Vir 'n volledige bespreking met betrekking tot die "Mattreyya Bhoedda", raadpleeg: Moojan Moomen, Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith, George Ronald, Oxford, 1995.

(45)

Al die Hindoe Geskrifte is dit eens dat wanneer morele verval, menslike agteruitgang en die verdwyning van die kaste stelsel in die huidige eeu aan die orde van die dag is en die mensheid tot hierdie laagtes gedaal het, dan sal God weer 'n nuwe manifestasie na die aarde toe stuur. Dan sal Hy Homself weer as die Kalki Avatar openbaar. Hierdie gebeure word soos volg beskryf: "When Vedic religion and the dharma of the law books have merely ceased and the Kali Yuga is almost exhausted, then a part of the creator of the entire universe ... the blessed Lord Vasudeva [Vishnu], will become incarnated here in the universe in the form of Kalki" (H H Wilson, 1864-1877, Vishnu Purana, Trubner, London, 4:21 en ook Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare, 1976-1978, The Bagaveta-Purana, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series, Volume XII, 2:16).

Swami Vivekananda beskryf die huidige agteruitgang soos volg: "But greater than the present deep dismal night ... no pall of darkness had ever before developed in this holy land of ours. And compared with the depth of this fall, all previous falls appear like little hoof-marks" (Swami Vivekananda, 1956, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, Volume 6, p 187). Die uitspraak oor die afbreek van die kaste sisteem lui soos volg: "The observance of caste, order and institutes will not prevail in the Kali Yuga; nor will that of the ceremonials and rituals enjoined by the Sama, Rig and Yujur Vedas. Marriages, in this age, will not conform to the ritual; nor will the rules that connect the guru and his disciple be in force. The laws that regulate the conduct of husband and wife will be

disregarded; and oblations to the gods with fire will no longer be offered In the Kali Yuga, those who practice fasting, austerity and liberality will do so in whatever way they please [and not according to the Law]. And men will call this righteousness ... Men of all degrees, filled with conceit, will consider themselves to be equal with Brahmins In the Kali Yuga, men, corrupted by unbelievers, will refrain from adoring Vishnu, the lord of sacrifice, the creator and lord of all. They will say: "Of what authority are the Vedas? What are gods, or Brahmins? What need is there for purification with water?" (H H Wilson, 1864-1877, Visnu Purana, ..., 6:1).

- (46) Buddha se profesie lui soos volg: "At that period, brethren, there will arise in the world an Exalted One named Metteyya, Arahant, Fully Awakened, abounding in wisdom and goodness, happy, with knowledge of the worlds, unsurpassed as a guide to mortals willing to be led, a teacher for gods and men, an Exalted One, a Buddha, even as I am now. He, by himself, will thoroughly know and see, as it were face to face, this universe, with its worlds of spirits, its Brahmas and its Maras, and its world of recluses and brahmins, of princes and peoples, even as I now, by myself, thoroughly know and see them" (Digha Nikaya (3: 75-76), Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta soos vertaal deur TW en CAF Rhys Davids in Dialogues of the Buddha, Volume 3, Humphrey Milford, 1899-1921, pp 73-74); en ook: "The truth [the Norm, the Dhamma], lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, will he (Metteyya Buddha) proclaim, both in the spirit and

the letter; the higher life will make known, in all its fullness and in all its purity, even as I do now. He will be accompanied by congregation of some thousands of brethren, even as I am now accompanied by a congregation of some hundreds of brethren" (Digha Nikaya (3:76), Cakkavatti-Sihanada Sutta soos vertaal deur TW en CAF Rhys Davids in Dialogues of the Buddha, Volume 3, Humphrey Milford, 1899-1921, p 74).

- (47) Moojan Momen, Buddhism and the Bahà`i Faith, An Introduction to the Bahà`i Faith for Theravada Buddhists, George Ronald, Oxford, 1995, p 48.
- (48) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal in C Ellis, Christus se Belofte Vervul, die Nasionale Geestelike Raad van die Bahà`is van Suid- en Wes-Afrika, 1980, p 16.
- (49) Christensen, Divine Intervention ..., pp 7 en 8.
- (50) Effendi, The World Order of ..., p 163.
- (51) Band 14, 388-394.
- (52) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, The World Order ..., p 132.
- (53) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal deur Effendi, The World..., p 167.
- (54) Baha'u'llah soos aangehaal in Effendi, The World ..., p 169.

(55)

Vergelyk hoofstuk 3 sowel as Baha'u'llah, *The Kitàb-i-Aqdas*, ..., pp 48-54. Ek haal slegs enkele van sy opmerkings in dié verband soos volg aan: "Ye are but vassals, O kings of the earth! He Who is the King of Kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Take heed lest pride deter you from recognizing the Source of Revelation, lest the things of this world shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is the Creator of heaven. Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him, and ordained you to be, for all time, the emblems of His sovereignty.

By the righteousness of God! It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men. Upon them the eyes of Bahà are fastened. To this testifieth the Kingdom of Names, could ye but comprehend it. Whoso followeth his Lord will renounce the world and all that is therein; how much greater, then, must be the detachment of Him Who holdeth so august a station! Forsake your palaces, and haste ye to gain admittance into His Kingdom. This, indeed, will profit you both in this world and in the next. To this testifieth the Lord of the realm on high, did ye but know it" (The Kitàb-i-Aqdas, paragraaf 82 en 83, pp 49-50).

Baha'u'llah het in paragraaf 93 ook soos volg opgemerk: "Erelong will the state of affairs within thee be changed, and the reins of power fall into the hands of the people. Verily, thy Lord is the All-Knowing. His

authority embraceth all things. Rest thou assured in the gracious favour of thy Lord. The eye of His loving-kindness shall everlasting be directed towards thee. The day is approaching when thy agitation will have been transmuted into peace and quiet calm. Thus hath it been decreed in the wondrous Book" (The Kitâb-i-Aqdas, p 54).

- (56) Shoghi Effendi soos aangehaal deur Hatcher, The Arc of ..., p 251.
- (57) Band 14, 364-378. Mevrouw J sê dat die "Lesser Peace" begin wanneer die wêreldse mense besluit dat hulle nou genoeg hartseer en oorlog ervaar het. Hulle besluit dan dat daar voortaan net vrede sal heers; asook John S Hatcher se opmerking: "Commenting on 'Abdu'l-Bahâ's allusion to the advent of the Lesser Peace as occurring before the twentieth century, the Universal House of Justice says the that 'Abdu'l-Bahâ anticipated that the Lesser Peace could be established before the end of the twentieth century' (Hatcher, The Arc ..., p 275).
- (58) Ibid.
- (59) Vergelyk hoofstuk 4 asook foto op pagina 188.
- (60) Baha'u'llah beskryf die proses self soos volg: "The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace

amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Graet Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny" (Aangehaal vanuit die Lawh-i-Maqsûd, wat tussen 1873 en 1892 deur Baha'u'llah self geskryf was, in Habib Taherzadeh, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Revealed After the Kitâb-i-Aqdas, Bahâ'î Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1988, p 165).

- (61) Effendi, World Order ..., p 191.
- (62) Ibid, p 40.
- (63) `Abdu'l-Bahâ, The Secret of Divine Civilization, soos aangehaal in Hatcher, The Arc of ..., p 254.
- (64) Effendi, World ..., p 40.
- (65) Ibid, p 203.
- (66) Ibid, pp 40-41.

- (67) Ibid, p 203.
- (68) Ibid, p 40.
- (69) Ibid, p 203.
- (70) Ibid, p 41.
- (71) Ibid, p 203.
- (72) Ibid, p 41.
- (73) Ibid, p 203.
- (74) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal in Marzieh Gail, Selections from the Wri- tings of `Abdu'l-Bahà, Bahà`i World Centre, Haifa, 1978, p 306.
- (75) Helen Hornby, Lights of Guidance, A Bahà`i Reference File, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Tweede Edisie, New Delhi, Indië, 1988, No. 1430, pp 436 en 437.
- (76) Helen Hornby, Lights of Guidance, A Bahà`i Reference File, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Tweede Edisie, New Delhi, Indië, 1988, No. 1428, p 436.
- (77) Hatcher, The Arc . . ., p 270.
- (78) Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Bahà`i World, 1950-1957, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1958, p 155. Dit dien vermeld te word dat John Hatcher ook daarop wys dat daar nie weer ver-

deeldheid soos met die geval van die Christendom sal manifesteer nie. Sy woorde is soos volg: "Furthermore, where Constantine found to his dismay that the religion he adopted as a source of unity was itself divided, the Bahá'í Faith has an administrative order sufficiently well-guarded against such schism that the assumption of the Faith as a state religion would not invite a similar division" (Hatcher, The Arc ..., p 270).

(79) Band 14, 370-376.

(80) Shoghi Effendi het alreeds lank tevore opgemerk dat die Amerikaanse volk uitgesonder is om in dié verband "... a prepondering role ... in the hoisting of the standard of the Lesser Peace, in the unification of mankind, and in the establishment of a world federal government on this planet" te vertolk (Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, United States of America, 1970, p 126). Hy beskryf dié rol 'n bietjie verder ook soos volg: "These same fiery tribulations will not only firmly weld the American nation to its sister nations in both hemispheres, but will through their cleansing effect, purge it thoroughly of the accumulated dross which ingrained racial prejudice, rampant materialism, widespread ungodliness and moral laxity have combined, in the course of successive generations, to produce, and which have prevented her thus far from assuming the role of world spiritual leadership forecast by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's unerring pen-- a role which she is bound to fulfil through travail and sorrow" (Ibid, pp 126 en 127).

- (81) Dit dien vermeld te word dat die dogter van Woodrow Wilson, stigter van die "League of Nations" moontlik 'n Bahà`i was (Hatcher, The Arc ..., p 257). Shoghi Effendi beskryf die gebeure rondom Wilson egter soos volg: "To her [America's] President, the immortal Woodrow Wilson, must be ascribed the unique honour, among the statesmen of any nation, whether of the East or the West, of having voiced sentiments so akin to the principles animating the Cause of Baha'u'llah, and of having more than any other world leader, contributed to the creation of the League of Nations-- achievements which the pen of the Centre of God's Covenant acclaimed as signaling the dawn of the Most Great Peace, whose sun, according to that same pen, must needs arise as the direct consequence of the enforcement of the laws of the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah" (Effendi, Citadel of ..., p 36).
- (82) Hatcher, The Arc ..., p 251.
- (83) Band 14, 368-372.
- (84) Effendi, World Order ..., p 203.
- (85) Ibid, pp 203-204.
- (86) Ibid, p 204.
- (87) Ibid.
- (88) `Abdu'l-Bahà soos aangehaal in Effendi, World ..., p 205.

- (89) Ibid, ..., p 204.
- (90) Ibid.
- (91) Ibid, p 203.
- (92) Die Bybel, Nuwe Afrikaanse Vertaling, Bybelgenootskap van Suid Afrika, Kaapstad, 1985, Nuwe Testament, p 301 en Effendi, World ..., pp 205-206.
- (93) Effendi, World ..., p 204.

God: Manlik, vroulik of geslagloos????

Bahà'is sê dat Baha'u'llah, soos al God se vorige manifestasies, die manlike grammatikale vorm vir God gebruik. Dit is egter nie van veel betekenis nie — enige afwyking van die manlike vorm sou bloot, volgens Bahà'is, teen die grein van die Arabiese taalvorme (die taal waarin Baha'u'llah hoofsaaklik geskryf het) ingedruis het. Baha'u'llah het dit wel eksplisiet gestel dat God totaal en al bo enige vergelyking met die menslike geslagsvorme verhef is. Vervolgens is die hele debat, oor of daar na God as "Hy, Sy of Dit" verwys moet word, nie vir die Bahà'ì-geloof relevant nie!

(The Bahà'is, A Profile ..., p 34)

HOOFSTUK 7 GEVOLGTREKKINGS

Die Bahà`i-geloof is 'n nuwe en unieke, onafhanklike wêreld religie in en vir die huidige asook die toekomstige situasie van die ontwikkelende wêreld-samelewing en bied Baha'u'llah se boodskap as die konvergensie vir die moderne wêreldverskynsel aan. Dit is ook 'n religie wat vir die eerste keer in die mens se geskiedenis nie net vir een spesifieke kultuur bedoel is nie, maar poog om al die wêreld se mense in 'n wêreldkultuur met die slagspreuk eenheid in die verskeidenheid ("unity in diversity") te verenig. Laasgenoemde word onder andere in die meer as 2112 verskillende nasionaliteite in 233 lande van die wêreld weerspieël, ooreenkomstig Bahà`is. Terselfdertyd word dié geloof vanuit Haifa, Israel deur die Universele Huis van Geregtigheid ooreenkomstig die vaste Bahà`i-administratiewe beginsels bestuur om eenheid en geregtigheid orals in die wêreld te verseker en om Baha'u'llah se boodskap eensgesind aan die moderne mens uit te dra. Hierdie boodskap word sedert 1953 s6 in Suid-Afrika verkondig. Die eerste Suid-Afrikaanse demokratiese verkiesing (27 April 1994) het die Bahà`is se werksaamhede vergemaklik en die hoop vir die vestiging van 'n eie wêreldkultuur in die formaat van die Suid-Afrikaanse nasiebou (as die wêreldverskeidenheid in die klein) laat opvlam.

Die nuwe wêreldkultuur sal alleen, volgens Bahà`is, waarlik vorm kry wanneer al die mense in dié wêreld besef dat al God se openbaarders net Een God verkondig het. Die verskillende volke, nasies en kulture aanbid egter ooreenkomstig hül geloof elk 'n eie en enigste ware God. Die rede hiervoor is dat sulke mense slegs die manifestasies onthou en nie die boodskap wat God se openbaarder verkondig het nie. Dit is ook die rede waarom die betrokke religie se gelowiges nie besef dat God se boodskap telkens in die

woordeskat, denkvorme en kulturele raamwerk van elke spesifieke era verwoord word en in wese dieselfde is nie (byvoorbeeld, jy mag nie moord pleeg nie!). Menslike beperkinge en gebrek aan insig is die oorsaak dat God se boodskap van een na baie boodskappe uitkring. Dit het weer veroorsaak dat die verskillende volke en religieuse bewegings elk hul eie beelde en Godsbegrip formuleer en hulle eie eienskappe daaraan toeskryf. In wese is dit, volgens Bahà'is, net menslike uitinge en verkondig al die religieë dus net Een God (Skepper).

Hierdie problematiek sal slegs opgelos word wanneer die moderne mens beseft dat God vandag self ook 'n nuwe openbaarder na die aarde gestuur het. Dié manifestasie is Baha'u'llah en hy is die sosiale sleutel waarmee Bahà'is die moderne mens se verskeidenheid tot 'n eenheid (ooreenkomstig dié Een God se boodskap) wil lei. Baha'u'llah is dié manifestasie wat hierdie boodskap in die moderne woordeskat en in lyn met moderne denke na die moderne wêreld bring en wat al die vorige religieuse profesieë in die wêreld vervul. Hy is byvoorbeeld, volgens Bahà'is, onder andere die wederkoms van Jesus Christus en die Matteya Boeddha, die Hindoe Kalki Avatar en Zoroastrisme se Shàh-Bahràm Varjävand. Op hierdie wyse sluit die wêreld se profetiese era met Mohammed as laaste openbaarder van die Adamiese era en lei die Bab en Baha'u'llah die huidige wêreld se nuwe universele era in. Laasgenoemde geskied met 'n allegoriese uitleg (van al die Heilige Geskrifte) en die vestiging van die mens se geestelike eienskappe in die moderne mens se geskiedenis. Aan hierdie nuwe tydvak moet daar egter nou deur die mens self inhoud en vorm gegee word. Bahà'is verwys na dié tydvak as die beginpunt van die ware geestelike era in die mens se geskiedenis.

Bahà'is leer verder dat hierdie verskillende menslike uitinge en

denkkrigtings bydraend tot die vorming van verskillende religieë, rasse en kulture in die wêreld is. Dit het veroorsaak dat die basiese religieuse universele "Goue Reël" (liefde teenoor jou naaste) geïgnoreer was. Die mense respekteer mekaar dus nie meer nie en "broederlike liefde" teenoor mekaar word glad nie uitgeleef nie. Dit veroorsaak ook dat die mense mekaar volgens aardse beginsels, in plaas van dié Godgegewe geestelike eienskappe en kenmerke oordeel. Vooroordeel veroorsaak dat die moderne mens op hierdie wyse die klem op die verskeidenheid, eerder as op die eenheid, plaas.

Hierdie verskeidenheid kan, volgens Bahà`is, opgelos word met die mens se geestelike eienskappe en geestelike beoordeling (dié bril waarmee die mens alles op aarde ooreenkomstig die hemelse eienskappe beoordeel), deurdat elke individu vir Baha'u'llah as sy of haar persoonlike Saligmaker aanneem en Sy boodskap elke dag uitleef. Só 'n persoon sal dan self besef dat God elke mens na Sy beeld geskape het en dat hy of sy daarna moet streef om God se eienskappe en kenmerke in al sy of haar doen en late te laat manifesteer. Die essensie van hierdie boodskap harmoniseer nie alleen vir Bahà`is die inherente menslike perspektief nie, maar veroorsaak 'n dinamiese optrede waarmee die mens self ook in staat gestel word om praktiese maatreëls vir die oorbrugging van hierdie antieke menslike erflating (wantroue en vooroordeel) in te stel. Hierdie aspirasie word ook tans (volgens Bahà`is) in Suid-Afrika benodig sodat die Suid-Afrikaners hul ontwikkeling "vanaf die verskeidenheid na 'n eenheid" kan verwesenlik.

Só 'n Suid-Afrikaanse eenheid simboliseer vir Bahà`is op indirekte wyse die werklikheid van 'n Bahà`i-wêreldstaat ("the Most Great Peace"). Die Suid-Afrikaanse gebeure bring Bahà`is dus

nader aan hul eie doelwit en dien terselfdertyd as hul voorbereiding vir die lewe in die hiernamaals, asook vir die vestiging van een wêreldstaat. Dit bekragtig die mensheid se daaglikse gebeure en ontmoetings met verskillende religieë en kulture. Laasgenoemde geskied omdat die huidige wêreld oor goeie kommunikasie en vervoernetwerke beskik en dui in besonder vir Bahà`is daarop dat Bahà'u'llah se boodskap op elke mens in die moderne wêreld betrekking het en dus dienooreenkomstig uitgeleef behoort te word.

Moderne mense ervaar tans (as gevolg van hierdie wêreldverwikkelinge) sekere eiesoortige probleme met gepaardgaande eie unieke uitdagings. Hulle weet onder andere nie hoe om die huidige wêreld-gemeenskap (wat daaglik alhoemeer begin vorm kry) se problematiek tot bevrediging van al die betrokke partye te hanteer en vorm te gee nie. Nasionalisme is besig om stadig maar seker irrelevant te word en uit te sterf. Hoe keer die moderne mens byvoorbeeld suur-reën, vigs of geldwassery met landsgrense? Die internasionale wêreld is met ander woorde op hierdie wyse besig om te klein te word. Landsgrense kan nie meer die problematiek van die wêreld keer nie! Hierdie gebeure noop die mens, ooreenkomstig Bahà`is, om daaglik in die rigting van 'n eiesoortige eenvormige wêreld-gemeenskap te beweeg, met respek en begrip vir religieuse en kulturele verskeidenheid, en om die praktiese riglyne in dié verband daadwerklik vorm te gee.

Op hierdie wyse sal die moderne mens se verskeidenheid wêreldwyd tot 'n eenheid gelei word, waar die verskillende volke en nasies volgens Bahà`is tot dié besef van die waarde van konsultasie sal kom. Hulle sal dan self na die daarstelling van 'n wêreldregering, 'n universele onderwysprogram en 'n universele wêreldtaal (naas 'n eie moedertaal) streef sodat daar beter begrip en kommunikasie tussen die verskillende volke, nasies en kulture kan

wees. Hierdie implementering sal die oorbeklemtoning van die verskeidenheid laat disintegreer. Vooroordele sal hiermee ook alhoewel verdwyn en die gelykheid tussen man en vrou sal 'n werklikheid wees. Een nasie sal ook nie meer teen 'n ander oorlog maak nie en die mens sal ook al meer en meer die visie van die wêreld as een planeet uitbeeld. Wanneer al dié genoemde eienskappe deel van die wêreldstaat is, sal die mensheid ook die een boodskap van God as hul wêreldreligie beoefen. Hierdie religie sal, volgens Bahà`is, die Bahà`i-geloof wees en so word die Bahà`i wêreldstaat as die hartklop van die mens se universele era gevorm. Hierdie proses kan egter volgens Bahà`is wêreldwyd verhaas word indien elke individu Baha'u'llah se boodskap self ondersoek, aanvaar en uitleef. Dit sal veroorsaak dat dié beginsels vir die toekomstige nuwe wêreld vroeër gevestig word. So ontstaan die nuwe wêreldorde en word God waarlik en ooreenkomstig sy verordeninge gedien. Elke individu sal ook sy of haar ware doelwit as mens verwesenlik en die hele wêreld sal as een planeet funksioneer, ooreenkomstig God se geestelike riglyne op alle vlakke van die lewe.

Die Bahà`i-geloof is tans besig om hierdie beginsel, "vanaf die verskeidenheid tot 'n eenheid", regoor die wêreld in elke kultuur en nasie te vestig. Bahà`is streef met hierdie strategie en slag-spreuk doelbewus daarna om alle religieë in een wêreldgodsdienst te omskep. Dit geskied onder andere deur hul aanvaarding van al die vorige religieë se Heilige Geskrifte, manifestasies en boodskappe ooreenkomstig Baha'u'llah se weergawe van God se boodskap vir vandag. Daarom sê Bahà`is dat hulle die antwoorde op al die vrae en verwikkelinge binne die huidige wêreld het. Baha'u'llah se boodskap insake God vorm vir Bahà`is die fondament van só 'n wêreld-gemeenskap met sy of haar eiesoortige uitdagings vir die hedendaagse mens.

Hierdie boodskap word verder beïnvloed deurdat Bahà`is die wetenskap ag as die mens se gereedskap vir 'n beter lewe op aarde sowel as vir hul voorbereiding op die lewe hierna, terwyl religie as die mens se handleiding beskou word: as voorskrifte oor die wyse waarop hierdie gereedskap tot die mens se voordeel gebruik moet word. Die Bahà`i-metafoor sal byvoorbeeld wees dat 'n byl of 'n mes 'n goeie hulpmiddel vir die mens is, indien dit korrek en ooreenkomstig die bedoelde gebruik aangewend word. Maar as 'n moordenaar dit in die hande kry, dan word daardie bruikbare instrument 'n dodelike wapen.

Die hedendaagse probleem is, volgens Bahà`is, juis daarin geleë dat die moderne mens deur die wetenskap van wapens voorsien word omdat die mens nie deur die religie geleer is om dié gereedskap (wetenskap) tot voordeel van die mens se lewe in die wêreld te gebruik nie. Aan die ander kant verval religie weer in bygeloof, omdat die mens wetenskap opsysit en die beredenering van verskeie ander lewensaspekte stopgesit het. Dit is nétso sleg vir die mens se ontwikkeling. Die eenheid tussen wetenskap (die mens se gereedskap vir die lewe) en religie (die mens se handleiding vir die doeltreffende gebruik van die gereedskap) sal veroorsaak dat die mens bygeloof, tradisie en ondeurdagte dogmas opsysit. Dit kortwiek terselfdertyd die mens se verdeeldheid en so word die groot eenheidskrag in die nuwe wêreld vormgegee. Hierdie gebeure sal volgens Bahà`is tot gevolg hê dat die mensheid in die liefde van God verenig word. Terselfdertyd word die nuwe hemel en nuwe aarde (as vervulling van die profesieë) op hierdie wyse ook finaal op die aarde gevestig. Slegs dan sal elke mens op hierdie aarde tot sy of haar volle potensiaal ontwikkel sodat so 'n mens die geestelike wese soos deur God bedoel, kan wees.

Die praktiese toepassing van dié Bahà`i-boodskap dien op aarde as

die werklike voorbereiding vir die mens se geestelike ontwikkeling sowel as die voorbereiding van die mens se siel op die lewe hierna. Dit bepaal ook, volgens Bahà`is, die gehalte van die lewe en die vlak waarop die siel in die hiernamaals sal funksioneer. Daarom streef Bahà`is daarna om al bogenoemde eienskappe en aspekte, so prakties as moontlik, op die aarde toe te pas sodat sy of haar siel tot sy of haar volle potensiaal op aarde ontwikkel word en sodoende 'n nuwe lewe op 'n hoër vlak in die hiernamaals deelagtig word.

Hierdie boodskap het in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks 'n belowende toekoms omdat dit self ook bydra tot die verskaffing van die boustene vir 'n toekomstige eenheidskultuur in die Suid-Afrikaanse verskeidenheid kulture, volke en nasies. Tog sal Bahà`is self eers hul eie oorgangsfase, vanaf die pioniers-tydvak tot en met die huidige tyd van nuwe volgelingen en die verinheemsing van die Bahà`i-boodskap, korrek moet bestuur. Die tyd van die pioniers is finaal verby en nou volg die tydvak waarin Bahà`is die Bahà`i-boodskap self ook eie aan die nuwe volgelingen se kultuur en leefwêreld moet maak. Dit impliseer dat die plaaslike leierskap en volgelingen self hand aan die ploeg moet slaan om dié geloof onder hul tydgenote te verkondig, anders sterf hierdie geloof, net soos in die laat dertigerjare, weer in Suid-Afrika uit.

Bahà`is is ook nie baie ritualisties nie. Hoewel daar by troues en dies meer ruimte vir die rituele aspekte gelaat word, sal daar beslis meer vir die Afrikane en vir die inheemsing van die Bahà`i-geloof ten opsigte van die rituele aspek gedoen moet word. Die drama- en musiek-komponente by die Internasionale Bahà`i-somerskool in Zimbabwe was moontlik net die eerste tree in die regte rigting in dié verband. Dit sal ook meer uitgebou moet word.

Die Bahà`i-geloof is laastens 'n religie vir 'n individu wat alreeds 'n hoër intellektuele peil in die lewe bereik het, omdat een van die uitstaande kenmerke ooreenkomstig Bahà`i-beginsels en riglyne die onafhanklike eie ondersoek na die waarheid is. Dit behels verder dat die persoon self 'n studie insake Baha'u'llah se boodskap moet doen en hierna self moet oordeel of hy of sy dit aanvaar. Hiernaas is só 'n persoon ook aan die Bahà`i-administratiewe orde onderworpe vir opsig en tug, met verdere regulasies, wette en bepalings asook die proses van konsultasie. Al hierdie kenmerke impliseer inherent dat die betrokke individu self in staat sal moet wees om sy of haar standpunt duidelik en selfstandig te stel, en 'n eie studie te doen sodat hy of sy, sy of haar eie geestelike groei en ontwikkeling self in stand hou. Die betrokke individu sal voorts ook die boodskap van Baha'u'llah eensgesind en prakties in al sy of haar doen en late ooreenkomstig die inhoud van die Bahà`i-geskrifte en verordeninge heeltemal onafhanklik moet uitdra. Dit impliseer selfstandigheid en 'n hoë opvoedkundige peil. Daarom sal sekere doelgerigte alternatiewe noodgedwonge gevind moet word, insake groot groepe mense in Afrika wat nie kan lees en/of skryf nie óf wat nie noodwendig as self-standige onafhanklike individue hoef te funksioneer nie. Hierdie oplossings sal ook bepaal wat die Bahà`is se werklike toekoms in Suid-Afrika en ander ontwikkelende lande sal wees.

BYLAE A

J.J.C SCHULZ
22 Golf Club Terrace
FLORIDA
ROODEPOORT
1710

21 Januarie 1995

**TO EVERY BAHÁ'Í IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

**DISTRUBUTION AND COMPLETION OF A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR
DOCTORAL STUDY OF HANNES SCHULZ ON THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN SOUTH
AFRICA**

1. *Would you please distribute this questionnaire (approved by the National Spiritual Assembly) to every Bahá'í in your area and ask them to do the following :*
 - * *To answer all the applicable questions in English,*
 - * *If allotted space is not enough, please mark question and continue at back of page, and*
 - * *To return the completed questionnaires to the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa.*

2. *Would you please complete this process and return the completed questionnaires to the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa not later than the 31 March 1995.*

3. *If there are any enquiries, please phone :*
 - * *Hannes Schulz
(011) 672-2883 at home after 17:00; or
(011) 407-0202 at work during office hours*

4. *Your co-operation is appreciated and I would like to express my warmest thanks to everyone for supporting me in this study.*


.....
J.J.C. SCHULZ

QUESTIONNAIRE :

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN SOUTH AFRICAN INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

PLEASE TICK OR WRITE RESPONSE IN ENGLISH

1. Bahá'í Community
2. Sex : MALE FEMALE
3. Age : 15-25 26-40 41-60 61 or over
4. Marital Status : Single Married Separated or Divorced
 Widowed
5. If not born in South Africa, length of time in South Africa.
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6. Occupation or course of study?
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7. Where did you study? (Please mention country).
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8. Occupation or course of study in South Africa?
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9. Are you happy with your life in South Africa? Would you care to elaborate?

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10. Family living with you - Please specify numbers.

Parents Wife/Husband Children Other relatives

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11. Does your husband/wife have a job outside the home or are they trying to obtain work?

Yes No

12. Are they happy with their work?

Yes No

13. What is your home language?

.....

14. How well do you speak English?

Fluently Hardly a little

15. How well do you speak any of the 11 official languages (Please specify the language).

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16. Do you speak or converse with any of your family or friends in any other language than your home language?

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17. Do you have any well established friendships with people from other countries of origin than your own?

Yes No

Would you care to elaborate?

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18. Do you have friendships with people who are not Bahá'is?

Yes No

Would you care to elaborate?

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19. When you run into difficulties, who do you turn to?

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Would you care to elaborate?

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20. What are the most important differences you see between the Bahá'í Communities in your country of birth and in South Africa?

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21. What strengths do you see in the South African Bahá'í Community?

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22. What are in your view the most important threats to the Bahá'í Community in South Africa?

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23. Would you (if single), be happy to marry :

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a non Bahá'í | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| a Bahá'í from another country of birth | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

24. Would you be happy for your child to marry :

a non Bahá'í Yes No
a Bahá'í from another country of birth Yes No

Would you care to elaborate?

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25. Do you feel that the woman should automatically take the responsibility for domestic matters (shopping/cooking/washing cleaning etc)?

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Would you care to elaborate?

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26. Why did you choose to migrate to South Africa?

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27. Do you feel accepted here by the Bahá'í Community?

Yes No

Would you care to elaborate?

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28. Resettlement is often a very disturbing experience. What are the biggest problems and areas where you need assistance?

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29. If the political situation was favourable would you return to Iran? (Only applicable to the Persian Bahá'is)

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If yes, please explain.

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30. Please comment on anything of importance, not raised in the above mentioned questions.

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J.J.C SCHULZ
22 Golf Club Terrace
FLORIDA
ROODEPOORT
1710

21 Januarie 1995


BAHá'i NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF SOUTH AFRICA
10 ACORN LANE
HOUGHTON

Dear Chairperson

DISTRIBUTION OF A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DOCTORAL STUDY OF HANNES SCHULZ ON THE BAHá'i FAITH IN SOUTH AFRICA.

1. *I am writing this letter to ask first of all permission and approval for the distribution of a questionnaire (see annexure A) to every Bahá'í in South Africa.*
2. *The questionnaire (based on the Australian questionnaire [See Association for Bahá'í Studies, Australia pp 36-37]) would help me to determine the geographical distribution of Bahá'ís, the classification of respondent's age, sex and country of birth, and the socio-cultural dynamics of Bahá'ís in South Africa. You are also welcome to use the results for your own purposes.*
3. *In order to make a success of this study, I need your co-operation. I am therefore asking if you would help me with the distribution of the questionnaires. Would you, if I supply the necessary copies (800 or 1000 for example) distribute it to all the different Bahá'ís via the newsletter? I will then collect the completed questionnaire at the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa in Johannesburg.*
4. *Could this whole process be completed by the end of March 1995?*
5. *Attached, please find a letter to every Bahá'í in South Africa, describing the what and the how of the completion for this form (see Annexure B).*
6. *I would like to express my warmest thanks and appreciation to the National Spiritual Assembly for supporting this study.*

Sincerely,


.....
J.J.C SCHULZ

BYLAE B

Die Bahā`i-literatuur kan in twee hoofgroeperinge verdeel word, naamlik die heilige of primêre geskrifte en die sekondêre geskrifte. Die primêre geskrifte beslaan die werke van die sentrale figure in dié geloof (wat in hoofstuk 2 behandel word), terwyl die sekondêre werke boeke behels wat sekere temas slegs beskryf en aan die sentrale figure, die "Guardian" of die Huis van Geregtigheid opgedra word. In die navorsingsproses is die primêre sowel as die sekondêre werke wat in Engels of sekere ander tale vertaal is, bestudeer en gebruik in 'n poging om die geloof beter te verstaan en by die fenomeen van die geloof uit te kom. Die primêre werke van die Bahā`i-bibliografie is die volgende:

Baha'u'llah se belangrikste werke:

Alvāh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds	Lawh-i-Husayn
Asl-i-Kullu'l-Khayr	Lawh-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'b (Epistle of the Son of the Wolf)
Az-Bāgh-i-Ilāhī	Lawh-i-Ittihād
Bāz-Av-u-Bidih-Jāmī	Lawh-i-Jamāl
Bishārāt (Glad Tidings)	Lawh-i-Karīm
Chihār-Vādī (Four Valleys)	Lawh-i-Karmil
Haft-Vādī (Seven Valleys)	Lawh-i-Kullu't-Ta`ām
Halih-Halih-Yā-Bishārāt	Lawh-i-Malikih (Tablet to Queen Victoria)
Hur-i-`Ujāb	Lawh-i-Malik-i-Rus (Tablet to the Czar of Russia)
Hurufāt-i-`Allīn	Lawh-i-Mallāhu'l-Quds (Tablet of the Holy Mariner)
Ishrāqāt (Splendours)	Lawh-i-Mānikjī-Sāhib
Kalimāt-i-Firdawsīyyih (Words of Paradise)	

Kalimât-i-Maknunih (Hidden Words)	Lawh-i-Magsud
Kitâb-i-Aqdas (Most Holy Book)	Lawh-i-Maryam
Kitâb-i-Badî`	Lawh-i-Mawlud
Kitâb-i-Iqân (Book of Certitude)	Lawh-i-Mubâhilih
Lawh-i-`Abdu'l-`Aziz-Va-Vukalâ	Lawh-i-Nâpulyun (First Tablet to Napoleon III)
Lawh-i-`Abdu'l-Vahhâb	Lawh-i-Nâpulyun II (Second Tablet to Napoleon III)
Lawh-i-`Abdu'r-Razzâq	Lawh-i-Nâsir
Lawh-i-Ahbâb	Lawh-i-Nuqtih
Lawh-i-Ahmad (Tablet of Ahmad)	Lawh-i-Pap (Tablet to the Pope)
Lawh-i-Amvâj	Lawh-i-Pisar-`Amm
Lawh-i-Anta'l-Kâfî	Lawh-i-Qinâ`
Lawh-i-Aqdas	Lawh-i-Quds
Lawh-i-Ashraf	Lawh-i-Rafî`
Lawh-i-`Ashiq-va-Ma`shuq	
Lawh-i-Ayiy-i-Nur	Lawh-i-Ra'ís (Tablet to Ra'ís)
Lawh-i-Bahâ	Lawh-i-Raqshâ
Lawh-i-Baqâ	Lawh-i-Rasul
Lawh-i-Basítatu'l-Haqíqih	
Lawh-i-Bismilih	Lawh-i-Ruh
Lawh-i-Bulbulu'l-Firâq	Lawh-i-Ru'yâ
Lawh-i-Burhân	Lawh-i-Sahâb
Lawh-i-Dunyâ (Tablet to the World)	
Lawh-i-Fitnih	Lawh-i-Salmân I
Lawh-i- <u>G</u> hulâmu'l- <u>K</u> huld	Lawh-i-Salmân II
Lawh-i-Habîb	Lawh-i-Sâmsun
Lawh-i-Haft-Pursish	Lawh-i-Sayyâh
Lawh-i-Hajj	Lawh-i- <u>S</u> haykh-Fâní
Lawh-i-Hawdaj	Lawh-i-Sultân

Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom)	Lawh-i-Tawhíd
Lawh-i-Hirtík	Lawh-i-Tibb
Lawh-i-Huriyyih	Lawh-i-Tuqà
Lawh-i-Yusuf	Suriy-i-Hajj II
Lawh-i-Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín	Suriy-i-Haykal
Lawh-i-Ziyàrih	Suriy-i-Hifz
Madínatu'r-Ridà	Suriy-i-Hijr
Madínatu't-Tawhíd	Suriy-i-`Ibàd
Mathnaví	Suriy-i-Ism
Munājāthay-i-Síyām	Suriy-i-Ismuna'l-Mursíl
Qad-Ihtaraqua'l-Mukhlisun	Suriy-i-Javàd
Qasídy-i-Varaqà'íyyih	Suriy-i-Khitàb
Rashh-i-`Amà	Suriy-i-Ma`àní
Ridvānu'l-`Adl	Suriy-i-Man`
Ridvānu'l-Iqrār	Suriy-i-Muluk
Sahífiy-i-Shattíyyih	Suriy-i-Nidà
Salāt-i-Mayyit (Prayer for the Dead)	
Sàqí-Az-Ghayb-i-Baqà	Suriy-i-Nush
<u>Shikkar-Shikan-Shavand</u>	Suriy-i-Qadír
Subhāna-Rabbíya'l-A`là	Suriy-i-Qahír
Subhānaka-Yà-Hu	Suriy-i-Qalam
Suratu'llāh	Suriy-i-Qamís
Suriy-i-Ahzàn	Suriy-i-Sabr
Suriy-i-Amín	Suriy-i-Sultàn
Suriy-i-Amr	Suriy-i-Vafà
Suriy-i-A`ràb	Suriy-i-Ziyàrih
Suriy-i-Ashāb	Suriy-i-Zabur
Suriy-i-Asmā	Suriy-i-Zuhur
Suriy-i-Bayān	Tafsír-i-Hu
Suriy-i-Damm	Tafsír-i-Hurufāt-i-
	Muqatta`ih
Suriy-i-Dhabíh	Tafsír-i-Suriy-i-Va' <u>sh-</u>
	<u>Shams</u>

Suriy-i-Dhibh	Tajalliyât (Effulgences)
Suriy-i-Dhikr	Tarâzât (Ornaments)
Suriy-i-Fadl	Ziyârat-Nâmih (The Tablet of Visitation)
Suriy-i-Fath	Ziyârat-Nâmiy-i-Awliyâ
Suriy-i-Fu'âd	Ziyârat-Nâmiy-i-Bâbu'l-Bâb va Quddus
Suriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch)	
Suriy-i-Hajj I	Ziyârat-Nâmiy-i-Bayt
	Ziyârat-Nâmiy-i-Maryam
	Ziyârat-Nâmiy-i-Siyyidu'sh-Shuhadâ

(Opmerking: Baha'u'llah se vertaalde werke deur Shoghi Effendi in Engels, word later met die opskrif, Vertalings, hieronder aangetoon.)

Die bekendste werke van die Bâb:

The Arabic Bayân	<u>Khasâ'il-i-Sab`ih</u>
Commentary on the Surih of Kawthar	Kitâb-i-Asmâ'
Commentary on the Surih of Va'l-`Asr	Kitâb-i-Panj-Sha'n
Dalâ'il-i-Sab`ih	Kitâbu'r-Ruh
Epistles to Muhammad <u>Shâh</u> and Hâjî Mîrzâ Aqâsî	Lawh-i-Hurufât
Qayyumu'l-Asmâ	The Persian Bayân
Risâliy-i-`Adliyyih	Sahîfy-i-Ja`fariyyih
Risâliy-i-Dhahabiyyih	Sahîfy-i-Makhzunih
Risâliy-i-Fiqhiyyih	Sahîfy-i-Radaviyyih
Risâliy-i-Furu`-i-`Adliyyih	Suriy-i-Tawhîd
	Tafsîr-i-Nubuvvat-i- <u>Kh</u> âssih

Sahífatu'l-Haramayn

Zíyàrat-i-Shah-`Abdu'l
-`Azím

`Abdu'l-Bahà se belangrikste werke:

(In Arabies en Persies)

`Ad`iyyih va Munàjät	Lawh-i-Muhabbat
Alväh-i-Tablíghí-i-Imríkà	Lawh-i-Tanzíh va Taqdís
Alväh-i-Vasàya	Lawh-i-Tarbíyat
<u>Khitàbät</u> dar Urupà va Imríkà	Madaníyyih
Lawh-i-Aflàkíyyih	Makàtib-i-`Abdu'l-Bahà
Lawh-i-`Ahd va Mithàq (Imríkà)	Maqàliy-i-Sayyàh
Lawh-i-`Ammih	Mufàvadät
Lawh-i-Ayät	<u>Sharh-i-Fass-i-Nigín-i-Ism-</u> i-A`zam
Lawh-i-Du-Nidày-i-Falah va Najàh	<u>Sharh-i-Shuhadày-i-Yazd</u> va Isfahàn
Lawh-i-Dr. Forel	Síyàsíyyih
Lawh-i-Haft <u>Sham`</u>	<u>Tadhkiratu'l-Vafà</u>
Lawh-i-Hizàr Baytí	Tafsír-i-Bismi'llàhi'r- Rahmàni'r-Rahím
Lawh-i- <u>Khuràsàn</u>	Tafsír-i-Kuntu Kanzas <u>Makhfíyyan</u>
Lawh-i-Làhíh	Zíyàrat Nàmih
Lawh-i-Mahfil-i- <u>Shawr</u>	

(In Engels)

The Secret of Divine Civilization, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette Illinois, 1957. (Oorspronklik gepubliseer deur Cope & Fenwick, Londen, 1910, met die titel **The Mysterious Forces of Civilization;**

Some Answered Questions, Bahà`i Publishing Society, Chicago, 1918 en ander Bahà`i Publishing Trusts. (Die eerste keer gedruk deur Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, Londen, 1908;

Tablet to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, the Hague, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, New York, 1930;

Tablet to Dr. Forel, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, New York, 1930;

Foundations of World Unity, a Selction of Letters and Public Addresses, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1945;

Paris Talks, A Compilation of His Adresses in Paris, G Bell and Son Ltd, London, 1923. Ook uitgegee deur die Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London, 1961 asook in die Vereenigde State van Amerika met die titel **Wisdom of `Abdu'l-Bahà**, Brentano's, New York, 1924;

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, vols. I, II, a Compilation of His Addresses in Canada and the United States in 1912, Bahà`i Publishing Society, Chicago, 1922 en 1925;

Tablets of the Divine Plan, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette Illinois, 1959;

A Traveller's Narrative, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, New York, 1930. In Engels vertaal deur Edward Granville Browne met die titel **A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate The Episode of the Báb**, Cambridge University Press, 1891;

Will and Testament, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, New York, 1925, 1935. Ook uitgegee deur die Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette Illinois, 1944, 1968 en ander Bahà`i Publishing Trusts;

Memorials of the Faithful, vertaal vanuit die oorspronklike Presies deur Marzieh Gail, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1971;

Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahà, saamgestel uit Sy korrespondensie met individuele gelowiges, groepe en Bahà`i Rade van die Ooste en Weste, World Centre Publications, 1978; en

Tablets of `Abdu'l-Bahà, vols. I,II, III, saamgestel uit Sy briewe aan individuele gelowiges in Amerika, Bahà`i Publishing Society, 1909, 1915, 1916.

Samestellings van die werke deur Baha'u'llah, die Báb en `Abdu'l-Bahà:

The Bahà`i Revelation, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London, 1955;

Bahà`i World Faith, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1943, 1956;

The Covenant of Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, London, 1950, revised 1963;

The Divine Art of Living, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1944, revised 1960;

Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1939, 1952, en ander Bahà`i Publishing Trusts;

Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1938, 1954 en ander Bahà`i Publishing Trusts;

The Reality of Man, Bahà`i Publishing Committee, Wilmette, Illinois, 1931, revised 1962;

Selections of the Writings of the Báb, World Centre Publications, 1976; en

Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, World Centre Publications, 1978.

(Opmerking: 'n Groot aantal Gebedsboeke is insake gebede van Baha'u'llah, die Báb en `Abdu'l-Bahà deur Bahà`i Publishing Trusts en Nasionale Geestelike Rade in die wêreld gepubliseer. Die boeke word egter nie hier vermeld nie.)

Shoghi Effendi se bekendste werke:

The World Order of Baha'u'llah, February 1929;
The World Order of Baha'u'llah, Further Considerations, March 1930;
The Goal of a New World Order, November 1931;
The Golden Age of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, March 1932;
America and the Most Great Peace, April 1933;
The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, February 1934; en
The Unfoldment of the World Civilization, March 1936.

(Opmerking: Vermelde sewe werke is ook in een volume gepubliseer. Die besonderhede is soos volg: **The World Order of Baha'u'llah, Bahà`i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1938, revised edition 1955; second print 1965.**)

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BYLAE C

**THE PROMISE
OF
WORLD PEACE**



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OF
WORLD PEACE**

A Statement by
The Universal House
of Justice

The National Spiritual Assembly
of the Bahá'ís of South Africa
Johannesburg

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To the Peoples of the World:

The Great Peace towards which people of good will throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet—in the words of one great thinker, “the planetization of mankind”.

Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behaviour, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth. At this critical juncture when the intractable problems confronting nations have been fused into one common concern for the whole world, failure to stem the tide of conflict and disorder would be unconscionably irresponsible.

Among the favourable signs are the steadily growing strength of the steps towards world order taken initially near the beginning of this century in the creation of the League of Nations, succeeded by the more broadly based United Nations Organization; the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the completion of the process of nation building, and the involvement of these fledgling nations with older ones in matters of mutual concern; the consequent vast increase in co-operation among hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples

and groups in international undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an unprecedented number of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

The scientific and technological advances occurring in this unusually blessed century portend a great surge forward in the social evolution of the planet, and indicate the means by which the practical problems of humanity may be solved. They provide, indeed, the very means for the administration of the complex life of a united world. Yet barriers persist. Doubts, misconceptions, prejudices, suspicions and narrow self-interest beset nations and peoples in their relations one to another.

It is out of a deep sense of spiritual and moral duty that we are impelled at this opportune moment to invite your attention to the penetrating insights first communicated to the rulers of mankind more than a century ago by Bahá'u'lláh, Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, of which we are the Trustees.

"The winds of despair", Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective." This prophetic judgement has been amply confirmed by the common experience of humanity. Flaws in the prevailing order are conspicuous in the inability of sovereign states organized as United Nations to exorcize the spectre of war, the threatened collapse of the international economic order, the spread of anarchy and terrorism, and the intense suffering which these and other afflictions are causing to increasing millions. Indeed, so much have aggression and conflict come to characterize our social, economic and religious systems, that many have succumbed to the view that such behaviour is intrinsic to human nature and therefore ineradicable.

With the entrenchment of this view, a paralyzing contradiction has developed in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives. On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.

As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction, which hinders its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit. Satisfaction on this point will enable all people to set in motion constructive social forces which, because they are consistent with human nature, will encourage harmony and co-operation instead of war and conflict.

To choose such a course is not to deny humanity's past but to understand it. The Bahá'í Faith regards the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs as a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet. The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.

A candid acknowledgement that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing the unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming

of age is not a reason for despair but a prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world. That such an enterprise is possible, that the necessary constructive forces do exist, that unifying social structures can be erected, is the theme we urge you to examine.

Whatever suffering and turmoil the years immediately ahead may hold, however dark the immediate circumstances, the Bahá'í community believes that humanity can confront this supreme trial with confidence in its ultimate outcome. Far from signaling the end of civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled will serve to release the "potentialities inherent in the station of man" and reveal "the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality".

I

The endowments which distinguish the human race from all other forms of life are summed up in what is known as the human spirit; the mind is its essential quality. These endowments have enabled humanity to build civilizations and to prosper materially. But such accomplishments alone have never satisfied the human spirit, whose mysterious nature inclines it towards transcendence, a reaching towards an invisible realm, towards the ultimate reality, that unknowable essence of essences called God. The religions brought to mankind by a succession of spiritual luminaries have been the primary link between humanity and that ultimate reality, and have galvanized and refined mankind's capacity to achieve spiritual success together with social progress.

No serious attempt to set human affairs aright, to achieve world peace, can ignore religion. Man's perception and practice of it are largely the stuff of history. An eminent historian described religion as a "faculty of human nature". That the perversion of this faculty has contributed to much of the confusion in society and the conflicts in and between individuals can hardly be denied. But neither can any fair-minded

observer discount the preponderating influence exerted by religion on the vital expressions of civilization. Furthermore, its indispensability to social order has repeatedly been demonstrated by its direct effect on laws and morality.

Writing of religion as a social force, Bahá'u'lláh said: "Religion is the greatest of all means for the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein." Referring to the eclipse or corruption of religion, he wrote: "Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine." In an enumeration of such consequences the Bahá'í writings point out that the "perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct, the corruption and dissolution of human institutions, reveal themselves, under such circumstances, in their worst and most revolting aspects. Human character is debased, confidence is shaken, the nerves of discipline are relaxed, the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame is obscured, conceptions of duty, of solidarity, of reciprocity and loyalty are distorted, and the very feeling of peacefulness, of joy and of hope is gradually extinguished."

If, therefore, humanity has come to a point of paralyzing conflict it must look to itself, to its own negligence, to the siren voices to which it has listened, for the source of the misunderstandings and confusion perpetrated in the name of religion. Those who have held blindly and selfishly to their particular orthodoxies, who have imposed on their votaries erroneous and conflicting interpretations of the pronouncements of the Prophets of God, bear heavy responsibility for this confusion—a confusion compounded by the artificial barriers erected between faith and reason, science and religion. For from a fair-minded examination of the actual utterances of the Founders of the great religions, and of the social milieus in which they were obliged to carry out their missions, there is nothing to support the contentions and prejudices deranging the religious communities of mankind and therefore all human affairs.

The teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions, lends force to this latter observation in two particular respects: it sums up the moral attitude, the peace-inducing aspect, extending through these religions irrespective of their place or time of origin; it also signifies an aspect of unity which is their essential virtue, a virtue mankind in its disjointed view of history has failed to appreciate.

Had humanity seen the Educators of its collective childhood in their true character, as agents of one civilizing process, it would no doubt have reaped incalculably greater benefits from the cumulative effects of their successive missions. This, alas, it failed to do.

The resurgence of fanatical religious fervour occurring in many lands cannot be regarded as more than a dying convulsion. The very nature of the violent and disruptive phenomena associated with it testifies to the spiritual bankruptcy it represents. Indeed, one of the strangest and saddest features of the current outbreak of religious fanaticism is the extent to which, in each case, it is undermining not only the spiritual values which are conducive to the unity of mankind but also those unique moral victories won by the particular religion it purports to serve.

However vital a force religion has been in the history of mankind, and however dramatic the current resurgence of militant religious fanaticism, religion and religious institutions have, for many decades, been viewed by increasing numbers of people as irrelevant to the major concerns of the modern world. In its place they have turned either to the hedonistic pursuit of material satisfactions or to the following of man-made ideologies designed to rescue society from the evident evils under which it groans. All too many of these ideologies, alas, instead of embracing the concept of the oneness of mankind and promoting the increase of concord among different peoples, have tended to deify the state, to subordinate the rest of mankind to one nation, race or class, to attempt to suppress all discussion and interchange of ideas, or to callous-

ly abandon starving millions to the operations of a market system that all too clearly is aggravating the plight of the majority of mankind, while enabling small sections to live in a condition of affluence scarcely dreamed of by our forebears.

How tragic is the record of the substitute faiths that the worldly-wise of our age have created. In the massive disillusionment of entire populations who have been taught to worship at their altars can be read history's irreversible verdict on their value. The fruits these doctrines have produced, after decades of an increasingly unrestrained exercise of power by those who owe their ascendancy in human affairs to them, are the social and economic ills that blight every region of our world in the closing years of the twentieth century. Underlying all these outward afflictions is the spiritual damage reflected in the apathy that has gripped the mass of the peoples of all nations and by the extinction of hope in the hearts of deprived and anguished millions.

The time has come when those who preach the dogmas of materialism, whether of the east or the west, whether of capitalism or socialism, must give account of the moral stewardship they have presumed to exercise. Where is the "new world" promised by these ideologies? Where is the international peace to whose ideals they proclaim their devotion? Where are the breakthroughs into new realms of cultural achievement produced by the aggrandizement of this race, of that nation or of a particular class? Why is the vast majority of the world's peoples sinking ever deeper into hunger and wretchedness when wealth on a scale undreamed of by the Pharaohs, the Caesars, or even the imperialist powers of the nineteenth century is at the disposal of the present arbiters of human affairs?

Most particularly, it is in the glorification of material pursuits, at once the progenitor and common feature of all such ideologies, that we find the roots which nourish the falsehood that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive. It is here that the ground must be cleared for the building of a new world fit for our descendants.

That materialistic ideals have, in the light of experience, failed to satisfy the needs of mankind calls for an honest acknowledgement that a fresh effort must now be made to find the solutions to the agonizing problems of the planet. The intolerable conditions pervading society bespeak a common failure of all, a circumstance which tends to incite rather than relieve the entrenchment on every side. Clearly, a common remedial effort is urgently required. It is primarily a matter of attitude. Will humanity continue in its waywardness, holding to outworn concepts and unworkable assumptions? Or will its leaders, regardless of ideology, step forth and, with a resolute will, consult together in a united search for appropriate solutions?

Those who care for the future of the human race may well ponder this advice. "If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine."

II

Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war. However important such practical measures obviously are as elements of the peace process, they are in themselves too superficial to exert enduring influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent yet other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another in an endless

quest for supremacy and dominion. Nor can the present massive dislocation in the affairs of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted.

Certainly, there is no lack of recognition by national leaders of the world-wide character of the problem, which is self-evident in the mounting issues that confront them daily. And there are the accumulating studies and solutions proposed by many concerned and enlightened groups as well as by agencies of the United Nations, to remove any possibility of ignorance as to the challenging requirements to be met. There is, however, a paralysis of will; and it is this that must be carefully examined and resolutely dealt with. This paralysis is rooted, as we have stated, in a deep-seated conviction of the inevitable quarrelsomeness of mankind, which has led to the reluctance to entertain the possibility of subordinating national self-interest to the requirements of world order, and in an unwillingness to face courageously the far-reaching implications of establishing a united world authority. It is also traceable to the incapacity of largely ignorant and subjugated masses to articulate their desire for a new order in which they can live in peace, harmony and prosperity with all humanity.

The tentative steps towards world order, especially since World War II, give hopeful signs. The increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships which enable them to co-operate in matters of mutual interest suggests that eventually all nations could overcome this paralysis. The Association of South East Asian Nations, the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Central American Common Market, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, the European Communities, the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of American States, the South Pacific Forum—all the joint endeavours represented by such organizations prepare the path to world order.

The increasing attention being focused on some of the most deep-rooted problems of the planet is yet another hope-

ful sign. Despite the obvious shortcomings of the United Nations, the more than two score declarations and conventions adopted by that organization, even where governments have not been enthusiastic in their commitment, have given ordinary people a sense of a new lease on life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the similar measures concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination based on race, sex or religious belief; upholding the rights of the child; protecting all persons against being subjected to torture; eradicating hunger and malnutrition; using scientific and technological progress in the interest of peace and the benefit of mankind—all such measures, if courageously enforced and expanded, will advance the day when the spectre of war will have lost its power to dominate international relations. There is no need to stress the significance of the issues addressed by these declarations and conventions. However, a few such issues, because of their immediate relevance to establishing world peace, deserve additional comment.

Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome.

The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people

directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.

Unbridled nationalism, as distinguished from a sane and legitimate patriotism, must give way to a wider loyalty, to the love of humanity as a whole. Bahá'u'lláh's statement is: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." The concept of world citizenship is a direct result of the contraction of the world into a single neighbourhood through scientific advances and of the indisputable interdependence of nations. Love of all the world's peoples does not exclude love of one's country. The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole. Current international activities in various fields which nurture mutual affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased.

Religious strife, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith. Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic questions which this strife raises, and to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders of mankind is to contemplate, with hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of human understanding and peace.

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such

equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.

The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfil this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

A fundamental lack of communication between peoples seriously undermines efforts towards world peace. Adopting an international auxiliary language would go far to resolving this problem and necessitates the most urgent attention.

Two points bear emphasizing in all these issues. One is that the abolition of war is not simply a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace. Based on political agreements alone, the idea of collective security is a chimera. The other point is that the primary challenge in dealing with issues of

peace is to raise the context to the level of principle, as distinct from pure pragmatism. For, in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a spiritual or moral attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of enduring solutions can be found.

There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them.

III

The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and co-operation will prevail.

World order can be founded only on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice—prejudice of every kind—race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.

Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of

the world as one country, the home of humankind. Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies.

In the Bahá'í view, recognition of the oneness of mankind "calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units."

Elaborating the implications of this pivotal principle, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, commented in 1931 that: "Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. 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, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity . . ."

The achievement of such ends requires several stages in the adjustment of national political attitudes, which now verge on anarchy in the absence of clearly defined laws or universally

accepted and enforceable principles regulating the relationships between nations. The League of Nations, the United Nations, and the many organizations and agreements produced by them have unquestionably been helpful in attenuating some of the negative effects of international conflicts, but they have shown themselves incapable of preventing war. Indeed, there have been scores of wars since the end of the Second World War; many are yet raging.

The predominant aspects of this problem had already emerged in the nineteenth century when Bahá'u'lláh first advanced his proposals for the establishment of world peace. The principle of collective security was propounded by him in statements addressed to the rulers of the world. Shoghi Effendi commented on his meaning: "What else could these weighty words signify", he wrote, "if they did not point to the inevitable curtailment of unfettered national sovereignty as an indispensable preliminary to the formation of the future Commonwealth of all the nations of the world? Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a Supreme Tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration.

"A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of capital and labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been

finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age.”

The implementation of these far-reaching measures was indicated by Bahá'u'lláh: “The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men.”

The courage, the resolution, the pure motive, the selfless love of one people for another—all the spiritual and moral qualities required for effecting this momentous step towards peace are focused on the will to act. And it is towards arousing the necessary volition that earnest consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of this process. Bahá'u'lláh insistently drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of consultation for ordering human affairs. He said: “Consultation bestows greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way and guides. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.” The very attempt to achieve peace through the consultative action he proposed can release such a salutary spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

Concerning the proceedings for this world gathering, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh and authorized interpreter of his teachings, offered these insights: "They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking—the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure."

The holding of this mighty convocation is long overdue.

With all the ardour of our hearts, we appeal to the leaders of all nations to seize this opportune moment and take irreversible steps to convoke this world meeting. All the forces of history impel the human race towards this act which will mark for all time the dawn of its long-awaited maturity.

finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law—the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives—shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship—such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahá'u'lláh, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age."

The implementation of these far-reaching measures was indicated by Bahá'u'lláh: "The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men."

The courage, the resolution, the pure motive, the selfless love of one people for another—all the spiritual and moral qualities required for effecting this momentous step towards peace are focused on the will to act. And it is towards arousing the necessary volition that earnest consideration must be given to the reality of man, namely, his thought. To understand the relevance of this potent reality is also to appreciate the social necessity of actualizing its unique value through candid, dispassionate and cordial consultation, and of acting upon the results of this process. Bahá'u'lláh insistently drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of consultation for ordering human affairs. He said: "Consultation bestows greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way and guides. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation." The very attempt to achieve peace through the consultative action he proposed can release such a salutary spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

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Will not the United Nations, with the full support of its membership, rise to the high purposes of such a crowning event?

Let men and women, youth and children everywhere recognize the eternal merit of this imperative action for all peoples and lift up their voices in willing assent. Indeed, let it be this generation that inaugurates this glorious stage in the evolution of social life on the planet.

IV

The source of the optimism we feel is a vision transcending the cessation of war and the creation of agencies of international co-operation. Permanent peace among nations is an essential stage, but not, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, the ultimate goal of the social development of humanity. Beyond the initial armistice forced upon the world by the fear of nuclear holocaust, beyond the political peace reluctantly entered into by suspicious rival nations, beyond pragmatic arrangements for security and coexistence, beyond even the many experiments in co-operation which these steps will make possible lies the crowning goal: the unification of all the peoples of the world in one universal family.

Disunity is a danger that the nations and peoples of the earth can no longer endure; the consequences are too terrible to contemplate, too obvious to require any demonstration. "The well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh wrote more than a century ago, "its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." In observing that "mankind is groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its age-long martyrdom", Shoghi Effendi further commented that: "Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy

inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life."

All contemporary forces of change validate this view. The proofs can be discerned in the many examples already cited of the favourable signs towards world peace in current international movements and developments. The army of men and women, drawn from virtually every culture, race and nation on earth, who serve the multifarious agencies of the United Nations, represent a planetary "civil service" whose impressive accomplishments are indicative of the degree of co-operation that can be attained even under discouraging conditions. An urge towards unity, like a spiritual spring-time, struggles to express itself through countless international congresses that bring together people from a vast array of disciplines. It motivates appeals for international projects involving children and youth. Indeed, it is the real source of the remarkable movement towards ecumenism by which members of historically antagonistic religions and sects seem irresistibly drawn towards one another. Together with the opposing tendency to warfare and self-aggrandizement against which it ceaselessly struggles, the drive towards world unity is one of the dominant, pervasive features of life on the planet during the closing years of the twentieth century.

The experience of the Bahá'í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. It is a community of some three to four million people drawn from many nations, cultures, classes and creeds, engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs of the peoples of many lands. It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of

a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study.

In contemplating the supreme importance of the task now challenging the entire world, we bow our heads in humility before the awesome majesty of the divine Creator, Who out of His infinite love has created all humanity from the same stock; exalted the gem-like reality of man; honoured it with intellect and wisdom, nobility and immortality; and conferred upon man the "unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him", a capacity that "must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation."

We hold firmly the conviction that all human beings have been created "to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization"; that "to act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man"; that the virtues that befit human dignity are trustworthiness, forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all peoples. We reaffirm the belief that the "potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God." These are the motivations for our unshakeable faith that unity and peace are the attainable goal towards which humanity is striving.

At this writing, the expectant voices of Bahá'ís can be heard despite the persecution they still endure in the land in which their Faith was born. By their example of steadfast hope, they bear witness to the belief that the imminent realization of this age-old dream of peace is now, by virtue of the transforming effects of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation, invested with the force of divine authority. Thus we convey to you not only a vision in words: we summon the power of deeds of faith and sacrifice; we convey the anxious plea of our co-religionists everywhere for peace and unity. We join with all

who are the victims of aggression, all who yearn for an end to conflict and contention, all whose devotion to principles of peace and world order promotes the ennobling purposes for which humanity was called into being by an all-loving Creator.

In the earnestness of our desire to impart to you the fervour of our hope and the depth of our confidence, we cite the emphatic promise of Bahá'u'lláh: "These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come."

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of South Africa

Incorporated Association not for gain. Reg. No.: 76/00020/08

P.O. Box 2142 Houghton 2041, 10 Acorn Lane, Houghton Estate 2198
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RACE UNITY DAY

On June 12, 1994 the Baha'i community of South Africa launched a Race Unity Day for the people of this country.

The aim of this annual event will be to raise our consciousness and dedicate a day of remembrance to the need for all of our diverse racial and ethnic groups to not only work together but to celebrate, appreciate and enjoy this diversity.

The governing body of the Baha'i community of South Africa published the enclosed statement, "Overcoming Racial Prejudice - South Africa's Most Challenging Issue" in March 1994 and wishes to present a copy to you and seek your support in establishing Race Unity Day. We plan to ask the government for formal recognition of Race Unity Day as a day of remembrance (not a holiday) from 1995 and would greatly appreciate a letter from you agreeing that such a day would be of value to this country.

All organisations and groups will be encouraged to hold activities and events which would promote racial/ethnic unity on this day and thus help all of us reap the fruits of this beautiful multi-cultural society.

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF SOUTH AFRICA

BYLAE D

Some Thoughts for the Drafting of a Constitution for South Africa

Human beings have been endowed by Divine Providence with immeasurable qualities of spirit and mind without discrimination as to sex, race or nationality. The progressive unfoldment of the potentialities inherent in these qualities enables the human race to fulfil its purpose in carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization. This is confirmed by the record of continuous development of human society as it has traversed the successive stages of its evolution from the emergence of the family as society's basic corporate entity to the unity of tribe, of city-state and of nation.

Now, the world with its myriad peoples and cultures, and through the rapid advances in scientific discovery, has suddenly contracted into a neighbourhood, affirming that the path of its social evolution leads ultimately to global unity, implying the essential oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and thus requiring, at this stage of social maturity, that every unit of society, whether at the local, regional or national level, of which this neighbourhood is composed, adopt a world-embracing vision.

To ensure the orderly continuity of social life on the planet and to encourage the collective realization of humanity's latent endowments, governments are formed, maintaining their authority and capacity to canalize the flow of civilization by upholding the principles of justice. Fundamental to all progress in human affairs is man's right to a just government.

Sensible of this broad context in which its destiny must be shaped, fully conscious of the remarkable opportunity which Providence has bestowed upon it at this ripe time in human history, and confident of the positive influence which a fitting response to the challenges facing it can exert at home and abroad, South Africa must attend to these requisites in its consideration of the provisions of a new constitution.

- Ensure the peace, freedom, well-being, tranquillity and advancement of all persons under its jurisdiction, regardless of race, class, creed or economic condition.
- Safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals.
- Include among the specific rights guaranteed to all citizens: the right to a basic education, the right to work and free choice of employment, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to assemble peacefully, the right to freedom of association with people of all backgrounds.
- Devise a system of government which will maintain a balance between centralized national or federal authority, on the one hand, and decentralized regional or local authority, on the other; which allows a wide latitude for autonomous action at the local level; which adheres to the practice of consultation as the basis of decision-making; which provides mechanisms for acquainting the government with the condition of the people in all areas — mechanisms that will encourage the freedom of the people to express their opinions for the good of the country and to air their grievances with impunity.
- Safeguard the stability of society at its primary source by promoting the well-being and solidarity of the family.
- Strengthen the fabric of society by promoting recognition of the equal rights of men and women.
- Guarantee education for all, and attend to the necessity of educating girls and women, who are the first educators of children, giving primacy to this if for some compelling reason a choice has to be made between the sexes in providing education.
- Foster development of the sciences and the arts, and provide for the stimulation of interest in these essential pursuits of civilized life at all levels of society.
- Regulate the economic life of the country in such a way as to prevent destitution, on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership, on the other; and while promoting advancement in industrial development, maintain the primacy of agriculture, which is vital to the well-being of society.
- Protect the natural resources from misuse, thereby aiming to preserve the fitness of the environment, while at the same time permitting the sources of raw material to be tapped for the economic benefit of the country.
- Guarantee free choice in religious faith and practice, for the fear of God is conducive to the upbuilding of the moral character of a people, a prerequisite of social stability, which cannot be guaranteed only by the enactment of civil laws.
- Adopt a language to serve as the common vehicle of communication among the entire people; teach it in the schools along with the mother tongue in each region.
- Collaborate with international efforts to secure the peaceful progress of the entire human race.

Excerpts from the Bahá'í Writings, that bear on constitutional issues facing South Africa

GOVERNMENT

1. The world of politics is like the world of man; he is seed at first, and then passes by degrees to the condition of embryo and foetus, acquiring a bone structure, being clothed with flesh, taking on his own special form, until at last he reaches the plane where he can befittingly fulfill the words: "the most excellent of Makers." Just as this is a requirement of creation and is based on the universal Wisdom, the political world in the same way cannot instantaneously evolve from the nadir of defectiveness to the zenith of rightness and perfection. Rather, qualified individuals must strive by day and by night, using all those means which will conduce to progress, until the government and the people develop along every line from day to day and even from moment to moment.

2. While the setting up of parliaments, the organizing of assemblies of consultation, constitutes the very foundation and bedrock of government, there are several essential requirements which these institutions must fulfill. First, the elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs and the conduct of foreign relations, skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.

3. ...It is obvious that not until the people are educated, not until public opinion is rightly focussed, not until government officials, even minor ones, are free from even the least remnant of corruption, can the country be properly administered. Not until discipline, order and good government reach the degree where an individual, even if he should put forth his utmost efforts to do so, would still find himself unable to deviate by so much as a hair's breadth from righteousness, can the desired reforms be regarded as fully established.

4. There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved.

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The government of the countries should conform to the Divine Law which gives equal justice to all. This is the only way in which the deplorable superfluity of great wealth and miserable, demoralizing, degrading poverty can be abolished. Not until this is done will the Law of God be obeyed.

ONENESS OF HUMANKIND

5. 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. In another passage He hath proclaimed: 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.

6. The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure....

PEACE

7. True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns - the shining exemplars of devotion and determination - shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking - the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world - should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner,

the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

EDUCATION

8. (A) requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses: to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth. For the mass of the population is uninformed as to these vital agencies which would constitute an immediate remedy for society's chronic ills.

9. ...Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words....

In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

10. The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favor of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rilling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

Every child is potentially the light of the world - and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God's love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host.

CONSULTATION

11. Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

12. In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

13. ...The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly freed from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition: they must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on High and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honoured members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be

darkness upon darkness.... If this be so regarded, that assembly shall be of God, but otherwise it shall lead to coolness and alienation that proceed from the Evil One.... Should they endeavour to fulfill these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the centre of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit.

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

14. O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you.... There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you. Cleave unto that which draweth you together and uniteth you....

15. Universal benefits derive from the grace of the Divine religions, for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honour, to surpassing Kindness and Compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valour and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization....

WOMEN

16. Women's lack of progress and proficiency has been due to her need of equal education and opportunity. Had she been allowed this equality, there is no doubt she would be the counterpart of man in ability and capacity. The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

17. Divine Justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected

since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven. Dignity before God depends, not on sex, but on purity and luminosity of heart. Human virtues belong equally to all!

18. 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.

FAMILY LIFE

19. According to the teachings of Bahá 'u 'lláh the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother - none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honour of one, the honour of all.

December 1990

BYLAE E

Principles for a System of Education for South Africa

- The Baha'i Faith -

PRINCIPLES FOR A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR SOUTH AFRICA

The Baha'i community of South Africa is pleased to offer its thoughts to the discourse on the requirements of a new educational system for our country. We feel an acute responsibility to contribute our views, for the teachings of the Baha'i Faith ascribe to education a crucial role in the elevation of humanity and in the development of the God-given talents and capacities of the individual. We thus offer this document with a profound sense of the importance of the task at hand and with a sincere desire to be of service to the people of our country.

**THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHAI'S OF SOUTH AFRICA**

PO Box 4252 Johannesburg 2000

September 1991

PRINCIPLES FOR A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR SOUTH AFRICA

Human beings have been endowed by Divine Providence with immeasurable qualities of spirit and mind without discrimination as to sex, race or nationality. The progressive unfoldment of the potentialities inherent in these qualities enables the human race to fulfill its purpose in carrying forward an ever-advancing civilization.

The greatest means available for the unfoldment of these potentialities is education. If South Africa is to develop a system of education that will become a powerful means for the advancement of our nation and that will prepare our children to assume their rightful place in the emerging global society, a new perspective on the reality of the human being and on the nature of education is required, lest we unwittingly perpetuate the very attitudes that have fostered prejudice and strife in the past. This new perspective must be based squarely on a recognition of the spiritual nature of man and on the world-embracing vision of the essential oneness and wholeness of humanity.

Below is a summary of these and other principles on which a new system of education may be organized, followed by a fuller discussion of the implications of these principles for the kinds of structures and curricula that are required. Extracts from the Baha'i writings on education are appended.

SUMMARY

- 1. The Spiritual Nature of Man.** Recognition of the transcendent nature of the human spirit and the inherent nobility of man provides a philosophical foundation for education, which is seen as the means for developing one's God-given talents and capacities. In order for one's spiritual qualities to be manifested, moral education and training are essential.
- 2. The Oneness of Mankind.** Order, peace and prosperity can only be founded on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind. Recognition of this truth calls for a curriculum for world citizenship that seeks to eradicate prejudice in all its forms and to replace it with a wider loyalty--a loyalty to the entire human race and to the earth as mankind's common homeland.
- 3. Education Should Be Practical As Well As Academic.** Discovering the child's inherent talents and capacities is best achieved through practical experience in various types of work. Service to the community should permeate the curriculum since it is a key to good citizenship and an honourable life.
- 4. Serving the Needs of the Disadvantaged.** Developing a positive self-concept, a desire for excellence, strong volitional capacities and a positive attitude toward technology are among the attitudes that will empower our children to rise to new heights of attainment.
- 5. The Right of All to a Basic Education.** All citizens must be guaranteed the right to a basic education, including adults who have heretofore been deprived of education.

6. **The Need for a National Auxiliary Language.** Understanding, tolerance and unity among South Africans would be facilitated by selecting through a consultative process a language that all would learn in school in addition to their mother tongue.

DISCUSSION

1. RECOGNITION OF THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF MAN

The Transcendent Nature of the Human Spirit. Education must recognize, first and foremost, the transcendent nature of the human spirit and the inherent nobility of man, whose mysterious nature enables him to envision possibilities, strive for ideals and be guided in his acts by moral and spiritual principles. Viewed in the light of man's spiritual reality, education is the means by which one's God-given talents and capacities are developed. Through education one is able to enrich one's life, pursue higher purposes and contribute to the advancement of society.

Moral Education. If the nobility with which human beings are endowed at birth is to manifest itself in adulthood, children need to receive moral training and guidance at an early age so that they learn to respect the rights of others, to obey the rules of the school and the laws of society, to be honest and trustworthy, courteous and upright. The Baha'i writings state: "Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and a virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger."

Moral education, then, needs to be accorded a central place in the curriculum.

2. THE ONENESS OF MANKIND

Order, peace and prosperity can only be founded on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind. Recognition of this truth calls for a curriculum that cultivates a loyalty wider than the loyalty one feels for one's own race, ethnic group or religion--a loyalty that embraces humanity itself. Such a curriculum would have two complementary points of focus: (1) a curriculum that examines South Africa's multifaceted cultural heritage and (2) a curriculum for world citizenship.

Our Diverse Cultural Heritage. One of the challenges facing South Africa today is the welding of a national identity, an identity that all South Africans share and that embraces all the ethnic groups that make up the rich South African mosaic. Such an identity needs to be based on the principle of unity in diversity. A recognition of the value of various cultural traditions can be achieved through a curriculum that exposes all children to the history, artistic, linguistic and religious

practices and customs of the major population groups so that all children can appreciate the integrity of the various cultures that make up South Africa. Such an appreciation of diversity can be the only true basis on which unity can be established.

A Curriculum for World Citizenship. To be truly effective, however, such a curriculum must be placed within the broader context of a curriculum for world citizenship, a curriculum that prepares all South African children to function effectively within the emerging global society. Such a curriculum would seek to instill in our children an awareness of the essential oneness of mankind, carrying the study of diverse cultures well beyond the borders of South Africa, stressing the valuable contributions other cultures have made to the world and examining their values, customs and beliefs. It would study the effects of prejudice and bigotry in their varied manifestations throughout history, review the forces shrinking the world into a neighbourhood, examine the global challenges the world faces today, and present the earth as mankind's common homeland, a homeland to be cherished, prized and cared for. Such a curriculum will prepare our children to take their rightful place in the world of tomorrow.

The Education of Women. The principle of the oneness of mankind also calls for giving equal treatment, in terms of attitudes, resources and opportunities, to women. The preparation of girls for full participation in such fields as medicine, commerce, industry, law and government is another essential requisite to the upliftment of the nation and the realization of its full potential. The importance of well-educated mothers to the welfare of society cannot be overstated. As the first educators of children, mothers are the chief agents for instilling constructive values and healthy behavioural patterns in their children. Indeed, the education of girls is crucial to breaking the cycle of ignorance and poverty that consigns millions of children throughout the world to a life of deprivation.

An Integrating Principle. The oneness of mankind also serves as a concept around which many aspects of the curriculum can be integrated. Such subjects as geography, social studies, ecology and contemporary social problems can be understood more profoundly within the framework of this overarching principle.

3. EDUCATION SHOULD BE PRACTICAL AS WELL AS ACADEMIC

In addition to equipping each child with the skills of literacy and numeracy, education should also enable the child to acquire useful skills that can be utilized in service to others.

Because each child possesses a unique constellation of talents and capacities, it is important that he be guided to discover what his special talents are so that they may be developed into skills that allow him to make a meaningful contribution to society and to earn a viable livelihood. This means that all children need to be exposed to the sciences, arts, crafts, and various trades and occupations in an environment devoid of prejudice toward any occupation so that they will have a

better opportunity to discover what their natural inclinations are.

Exposure to various trades and occupations needs to be practical as well as theoretical. Children should actually grow crops, plant trees, make garments, prepare meals and build cabinets. Such practical experiences not only foster self-knowledge and lead to the development of useful skills, but show children the value of applying theoretical knowledge to practical situations.

Community Service. Essential to both practical education and moral training is service to the community. It is important that all children participate in real-life projects that improve the quality of the lives of people. This not only helps children acquire practical skills and apply knowledge in practical ways, but makes education relevant to their lives, strengthens their desire to be of service to others and teaches that individual action can make a difference.

4. SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE DISADVANTAGED

Educating a population caught up in a cycle of poverty, under-education, unemployment and deprivation requires emphasizing certain principles and concepts instrumental to their upliftment. Among them are nurturing a positive self-concept, instilling a desire for excellence, strengthening volitional capacities, imparting a positive attitude toward technology and the need for guidance and counselling.

Nurturing a Positive Self-Concept. Children in disadvantaged communities often suffer from a poor self-concept due to the pervasive effects of being treated as second-class citizens and the lack of hope that surrounds those raised in poverty. Teachers and administrators need to be trained to awaken children to their inherent nobility and self-worth, and to value their own talents and capacities. In our schools the belief that children learn best through fear and intimidation needs to be replaced by an attitude of encouragement. Children raised in an environment that on one hand encourages them to experiment, achieve and develop their native interests and on the other sets clear limits of acceptable behaviour enforced in ways that respect their dignity as human beings will acquire the confidence to hold high aims and the self-discipline to achieve them.

Instilling a Desire for Excellence. A hallmark of the human spirit is its aspiration to perfection. No matter what one's occupation, whether as artist, farmer, homemaker, clerk, machine operator or executive, a desire for excellence distinguishes one's performance and becomes a source of dignity and honour. The cultivation of a desire for excellence is an essential object of education. When this desire is matched with the development of a productive skill, the means for living a life of self-sufficiency, dignity and honour is secured.

Strengthening Volitional Capacities. In respect to realizing the latent endowments of the individual, the Baha'i writings assert: "Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure. . . . All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition." Clearly, the achievement of anything valuable in life depends on the exercise of volition. It is

particularly important that children raised in disadvantaged circumstances develop strong volitional abilities. Helping children learn the value of concentration, teaching them to set goals, initiate activities, persevere in the face of obstacles and see their activities through to the end are all part of the development of volitional competencies.

Imparting a Positive Attitude Toward Technology. Today's world is a technological world. One of the adaptations necessary for survival in today's world is being able to use technology to good advantage. Teaching children how to use tools, how to wire an electrical plug and how to operate and repair a machine need to be part of an emerging curriculum for technological literacy. Instilling positive attitudes towards technology at school is especially important because many of our children are unlikely to encounter technology at home and thus are apt to grow up regarding technology as shrouded in mystery. Such an attitude will place them at a disadvantage when they enter the work force or go on for advanced study.

The Need for Guidance and Counselling. Because many of the parents of our children have not had the benefit of education, they are unable to give their children the same kind of advice and guidance as more privileged parents on such matters as study habits, educational opportunities and career options. Therefore it is important that effective supplementary guidance and counselling services be provided to those students who come from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. THE RIGHT OF ALL TO A BASIC EDUCATION

Among the fundamental rights that should be guaranteed to all citizens is the right to a basic education. Whether urban or rural, rich or poor, black or white, all citizens must have access to an education that equips them with the basic tools of literacy and numeracy, and must have access to higher levels of education if they wish. So important is this right that education for all children should be made compulsory. Because the strictures of poverty place pressure on children and youth to become wage earners, the force of law must be applied to guarantee that children receive education.

The right to education extends to adults as well as to children. Millions of adult South Africans have not received a basic education. An effort must be made to make available to those who want it education in reading, writing and mathematics so that the benefits of literacy may be theirs.

6. THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE

Understanding, tolerance and unity among the people of South Africa would be facilitated by the selection, through a consultative process, of a language that all South Africans would learn in addition to their mother tongue. This language-- whatever it may be--would be taught in schools along with a mother tongue identified by the community each school serves.

Selecting a national auxiliary language would in no way diminish the value or undermine the integrity of any of South Africa's existing languages, nor would it detract from the individual's right to learn and use his mother tongue. Indeed, mother tongue instruction would be offered at community schools. Rather, the selection of a national auxiliary language would place all South Africans on an equal footing in terms of access to information, communication within the work place and utilizing the organs, processes and services of government. Most important, it would enable individuals belonging to different ethnic groups to communicate fully with one another

Referring to the need for an auxiliary language on a global basis, the Baha'i writings state: "Difference of speech is one of the most fruitful causes of dislike and distrust that exist between nations, which are kept apart by their inability to understand each other's language more than by any other reason." When an auxiliary language is adopted, "to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home."

EXTRACTS FROM THE BAHA'I WRITINGS ON EDUCATION

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. . . . 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.

--Baha'u'llah

Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City.

--Baha'u'llah

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principle reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

--Abdu'l-Baha

Baha'u'llah has proclaimed the adoption of a universal language. A language shall be agreed upon by which unity will be established in the world. Each person will require training in two languages: his mother tongue and the universal auxiliary form of speech. This will facilitate intercommunication and dispel the misunderstandings which the barriers of language have occasioned in the world. All people worship the same God and are alike His servants. When they are able to communicate freely, they will associate in friendship and concord. . . .

--`Abdu'l-Baha

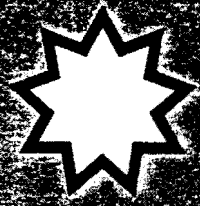
The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfil this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

--The Universal House of Justice

Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind. Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies.

--The Universal House of Justice

BYLAE F



WORLD CITIZENSHIP

A GLOBAL ETHIC FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Bahá'í International Community

World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development is a reprint of a statement presented by the Bahá'í International Community at the first session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It addresses Cluster C: "Education, Science, Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies, Cooperation and Capacity Building." This statement, intended to introduce an important idea to the discussion on sustainable development, is only one aspect of the full range of thought on sustainable development which the Bahá'í International Community plans to contribute during the continuing discourse. For other contributions by the Bahá'í International Community, see, for example, the statements: *Earth Charter*, *International Legislation for Environment and Development*, *Women and Men — Partnership for a Healthy Planet*, and *Sustainable Development and the Human Spirit*.

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WORLD CITIZENSHIP

A GLOBAL ETHIC FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the spirit of Agenda 21, as "a dynamic programme" destined to "evolve over time in the light of changing needs and circumstances,"⁽¹⁾ the Bahá'í International Community offers the following proposal: To inspire the peoples of the world to champion sustainable development, the education programs and public awareness campaigns called for in Agenda 21 should foster the concept of WORLD CITIZENSHIP.

THE VISION OF WORLD CITIZENSHIP

The greatest challenge facing the world community as it mobilizes to implement *Agenda 21* is to release the enormous financial, technical, human and moral resources required for sustainable development. These resources will be freed up only as the peoples of the world develop a profound sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well-being of the entire human family.

This sense of responsibility can only emerge from the acceptance of the oneness of humanity and will only be sustained by a unifying vision of a peaceful, prosperous world society. Without such a global ethic, people will be unable to become active, constructive participants in the world-wide process of sustainable development.⁽²⁾

While *Agenda 21* provides an indispensable framework of scientific knowledge and technical know-how for the implementation of sustainable development, it does not inspire personal commitment to a global ethic. This is not to say that ethics and values were ignored during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process. The call for unifying values was heard throughout this process from Heads of State to UN officials to representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual citizens. In particular, the concepts of "unity in diversity," "world citizenship" and "our common humanity" were invoked to serve as the ethical undergirding for *Agenda 21* and the *Rio Declaration*.⁽³⁾

The greatest challenge facing the world community is to release the enormous financial, technical, human and moral resources required for sustainable development.

World Citizenship

The world community has, thus, already come to a basic accord on the need for a global ethic to vitalize *Agenda 21*. We suggest that the term *world citizenship* be adopted to encompass the constellation of principles, values, attitudes and behaviors that the peoples of the world must embrace if sustainable development is to be realized.

World citizenship begins with an acceptance of the oneness of the human family and the interconnectedness of the nations of “the earth, our home.”⁽⁴⁾ While it encourages a sane and legitimate patriotism, it also insists upon a wider loyalty, a love of humanity as a whole. It does not, however, imply abandonment of legitimate loyalties, the suppression of cultural diversity, the abolition of national autonomy, nor the imposition of uniformity. Its hallmark is “unity in diversity.” *World citizenship* encompasses the principles of social and economic justice, both within and between nations; non-adversarial decision making at all levels of society; equality of the sexes; racial, ethnic, national and religious harmony; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. Other facets of *world citizenship* — all of which promote human honor and dignity, understanding, amity, cooperation, trustworthiness, compassion and a desire to serve — can be deduced from those already mentioned. A few of these principles⁽⁵⁾ have been articulated in *Agenda 21* — most, however, are noticeably lacking. Moreover, no overall conceptual framework is provided under which they can be harmonized and promulgated.

Fostering *world citizenship* is a practical strategy for promoting sustainable development. So long as disunity, antagonism and provincialism characterize the social, political and economic relations within and among nations, a global, sustainable pattern of development can not be established.⁽⁶⁾ Over a century ago Bahá’u’lláh warned, “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.” Only upon a foundation of genuine unity, harmony and understanding among the diverse peoples and nations of the world, can a sustainable global society be erected.

We, therefore, recommend that *world citizenship* be taught in every school and that the oneness of humanity — the principle underlying *world citizenship* — be constantly asserted in every nation.

The concept of *world citizenship* is not new to the world community. It is both implicit and explicit in a host of UN documents, charters and agreements, including the opening words of the UN Charter itself: “We the peoples of the United Nations . . .” It is already being promoted around the world across all cultures by diverse NGOs, academics, citizens’ groups, entertainers, educational

Fostering *world citizenship* is a practical strategy for promoting sustainable development.

programs, artists, and media. These efforts are significant but need to be greatly increased. A carefully planned and orchestrated, long-term campaign to foster *world citizenship*, involving all sectors of society — local, national and international — needs to be put into place. It must be pursued with all the vigor, moral courage and conviction that the United Nations, its member states and all willing partners can muster.

THE PROMOTION OF WORLD CITIZENSHIP

The following proposal for a campaign to promote *world citizenship*⁽⁷⁾ fits naturally into the framework for reorienting education, public awareness, and training toward sustainable development, which is presented in Chapter 36 of *Agenda 21*.

EDUCATION

Education — formal, non-formal, and informal — is indisputably the most effective way to shape values, attitudes, behaviors and skills that will equip the peoples of the world to act in the long-term interests of the planet and humanity as a whole.⁽⁸⁾ The United Nations, governments and educational agencies should seek to make the principle of *world citizenship* part of the standard education of every child.

The details of educational programs and activities incorporating this principle will vary a great deal within and among nations. However, if *world citizenship* is to be understood as a universal principle, all programs must have certain aspects in common. Based on the principle of the oneness of the human race, they should cultivate tolerance and brotherhood, nurturing an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems and strengthening those traditions that contribute to a sustainable, world civilization. They should teach the principle of "unity in diversity" as the key to strength and wealth both for nations and for the world community. They should foster an ethic of service to the common good and convey an understanding of both the rights and the responsibilities of *world citizenship*. These programs and activities should build on the country's positive efforts and highlight its tangible successes, including models of racial, religious, national and ethnic unity. They should emphasize the importance of the UN in promoting global cooperation and understanding; its universal goals, objectives and programs; its immediate relevance to the peoples and nations of

The United Nations, governments and educational agencies should seek to make the principle of *world citizenship* part of the standard education of every child.

the world; and the role that it must increasingly assume in our ever-contracting world.

Before undertaking a campaign to promote *world citizenship*, a common understanding of the concept will need to be developed and agreed upon. The Commission on Sustainable Development might set up a special committee or working group to begin developing guidelines for *world citizenship* and proposals for incorporating this principle into existing formal and non-formal educational programs. Alternatively, the Commission might seek the assistance of the High Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development or the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. The UN Secretariat might even choose to set up a World Citizenship Unit, similar to the erstwhile Peace Studies Unit, to develop these guidelines and coordinate the system-wide implementation of *world citizenship* education. Whatever path is chosen, this task must be given high priority.

World citizenship could be incorporated easily into all of the activities suggested in chapter 36.5. of *Agenda 21* for reorienting education toward sustainable development. A few examples illustrate:

- National advisory bodies/round tables (36.5.c) should facilitate the incorporation of *world citizenship* into educational programs within the country.
- Pre-service and in-service training programs for all teachers, administrators, educational planners and non-formal educators (36.5.d) should include the principle of *world citizenship* in their programs.
- Educational materials on sustainable development produced by UN agencies should encourage *world citizenship* (36.5.g), as should educational materials about the United Nations.
- *Agenda 21* calls for “the development of an international network” to support global efforts to educate for sustainable development (36.5.k). This network could both encourage UN agencies and member NGOs to create materials based on the guidelines for *world citizenship*, and provide the means for sharing them.
- Governments and educational authorities have already been called upon to “eliminate gender stereotyping in curricula” as a means to promote sustainable development

Stereotyping based on religion, culture, gender, race, class, nationality and ethnicity should be eliminated.

(36.5.m). We would recommend that, in the spirit of *world citizenship*, stereotyping based on religion, culture, race, class, nationality and ethnicity also be eliminated.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

People need to think of themselves as world citizens and understand their personal responsibility to promote sustainable development.⁽⁹⁾ Campaigns to raise public awareness of the challenges of *world citizenship* must make use of the full range of media and the arts, including television, video, film, radio, electronic networks, books, magazines, posters, flyers, theater and music. These campaigns should enlist the advertising and entertainment industries, the media — both traditional and non-traditional — the entire UN system, all member states, NGOs, and popular personalities. They should reach out to the home, the work place, public areas and schools. The guidelines for *world citizenship* called for above should be appropriate for use by such public awareness campaigns and should serve as basic reference for all media programming.

World citizenship could be included in the activities presented in chapter 36.10. of *Agenda 21* for increasing public awareness and sensitivity about sustainable development. The following examples illustrate:

- National and international advisory boards (36.10.a) could encourage the various media to adopt the guidelines for *world citizenship*. The media have done much to raise public awareness of global interdependence and the enormous challenges facing the world community. They have also highlighted the seemingly insurmountable differences that divide us.

The media have a responsibility to help people understand that diversity need not be a source of conflict; rather, diversity can and must now serve as a resource for sustainable development. They can do so by focussing on the constructive, unifying and cooperative undertakings that prove humanity's capacity to work together to meet the enormous challenges facing it.

- In promoting "a cooperative relationship with the media" (36.10.e), the United Nations must boldly define its own identity and the promise it holds for the world community. The United Nations was established on high ideals and with a vision of a peaceful, progressive world. By providing a framework for communication

Campaigns to raise public awareness of the challenges of *world citizenship* must make use of the full range of media and the arts.

World citizenship must become the single most important point of ethical reference in all UN activities.

and cooperation, and by initiating innumerable, constructive projects, it has added significantly to the understanding, hope and goodwill in the world. Yet its accomplishments are little known to the generality of mankind.

Using the concept of *world citizenship* as an integrating theme, the United Nations should publicize its ideals, activities and goals, so that people come to understand the unique and vital role the UN plays in the world and, therefore, in their lives. Similarly, the UN should promote *world citizenship* in all its public activities, including celebrations of its historical milestones and tours of United Nations headquarters. Every UN document that deals with sustainable development should also include this principle — beginning with the preamble of the proposed *Earth Charter*. *World citizenship* must become the single most important point of ethical reference in all UN activities.

- The services of the advertising industry (36.10.e) should be enlisted to promote *world citizenship*. Campaigns could be organized around such themes as:

We the Peoples of the United Nations:
Celebrating Unity in Diversity

One Planet, One People

In All Our Diversity,
We Are One Human Family

Our Common Future:
Unity in Diversity

- *World citizenship* should also be promoted—internationally, nationally and locally— through the holding of contests and the presentation of awards(36.10.e).
- While heightening public awareness “regarding the impacts of violence in society” (36.10.1), the media can generate commitment to *world citizenship* by highlighting examples of constructive, unifying undertakings that show the power of unity and common vision.

Each country should be encouraged to earmark resources for promoting *world citizenship*. Consideration should also be given to including among the proposed “indicators of sustainable development” (40.6.) the promotion of this principle. Countries could, for example, be encouraged to report efforts to foster tolerance and appreciation of other cultures, equality of the sexes and the concept of one human family through curricula, entertainment and the media.

THE CHALLENGE OF WORLD CITIZENSHIP

In conclusion, *world citizenship* is a concept as challenging and dynamic as the opportunities facing the world community. We, the peoples and nations of the world, would be wise to embrace courageously its underlying principles and be guided by them in all aspects of our lives — from our personal and community relations to our national and international affairs; from our schools, work places and media to our legal, social and political institutions. We, therefore, urge the Commission to encourage the entire UN system to incorporate the principle of *world citizenship* into the full range of its programs and activities.

The Bahá’í International Community, which for over a century has been fostering *world citizenship*, would be pleased to assist the Commission, governments, NGOs and others to further develop the concepts contained in this document; to provide practical models of racial, religious, national and ethnic unity for sustainable development; and to take part in consultations on this crucial issue. As a global community encompassing the diversity of humanity and sharing a common vision, the Bahá’í International Community will continue to promote sustainable development by encouraging people to see themselves as citizens of one world, the builders of a just and prosperous world civilization.

World citizenship is a concept as challenging and dynamic as the opportunities facing the world community.

NOTES

- (1) *Agenda 21*, Chapter 1.6.
- (2) One of the most often-repeated themes of *Agenda 21* is the vital importance of "broad public participation in decision-making;" "commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups;" "real social partnership;" and "new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people."
- (3) The call for a global ethic was raised often during the UNCED process, with particular intensity at the Earth Summit and Global Forum, from Heads of State to UN officials to NGO representatives; through official UNCED documents, NGO treaties, workshops, books and artistic presentations. The following are just a few examples:
 - The speeches to the Earth Summit by the President of Brazil; the President of France; the Prime Minister of Ireland; the Prime Minister of Japan; the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the President of the United Mexican States; the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the Prime Minister of Turkey; the Prime Minister of Tuvalu; the Secretary of State of the Holy See; and the Secretary-General of UNCED;
 - NGO Treaties prepared at the Global Forum including *The Youth Treaty*, *The Earth Charter*, *The Rio de Janeiro Declaration*, *The People's Earth Declaration*, *The Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility*, and *The Treaty of Ethical Commitments*,
 - Global Forum activities, including the Evening Series in the Park, reflecting "the cultural diversity of the Human Family"; and the Peace Monument, whose inscription reads, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens;"
 - Statements and publications by governments, UN Agencies and NGOs to the various Preparatory Committee sessions and other UNCED-related events including *The Universal Code of Environmental Conduct* (NGO/Media Symposium, October 1990); *In Our Hands: Women and Children First* (Report of the UNCED/UNICEF/UNFPA Symposium, May 1991); *The Earth Charter* (US Citizens Network on UNCED, July 1991); *One Earth Community* (The Working Group of Religious Communities on UNCED, August 1991); *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, October 1991); *An Earth Charter* (International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth, 1991); *Agenda Ya Wananchi* (Roots of the Future, December 1991); *An Environmental Ethic or Earth Charter* (UNEP-UK National Committee, February 1992); *Principles on General Rights and Obligations* (General Assembly document, A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.28, 9 March 1992); *Earth Charter, Japan* (Peoples Forum, Japan, 1992); *Earth Repair Charter* (Earth Repair Foundation, 1992); and *Our Country, The Planet* (Sir Shridath Ramphal, 1992).
- (4) *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, Preamble.
- (5) For example, see *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, Principles 5, 8, 20, 25; and *Agenda 21*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 23, 24 and 36.

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- (6) *See Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Principle 25.*
- (7) Within the context of the principle of *world citizenship*, this program should be “carried out by the various actors according to the different situations, capacities and priorities of the countries and regions” (*Agenda 21, Chapter 1.6.*).
- (8) *Agenda 21, Chapter 36.3.* affirms that “Education. . . should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues. . . . Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people’s attitudes. . . . It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making. To be effective . . . education . . . should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic environment and human (which may include spiritual) development.”
- (9) *Agenda 21, Chapter 36.9.* calls attention to the importance of promoting “broad public awareness as an essential part of a global education effort to strengthen attitudes, values and actions which are compatible with sustainable development.”

BYLAE G

A NEW SET OF TEN COMMANDMENTS

Responding to President Mandela's call for moral values and behaviour in South Africa, Baha'is see this as a global challenge. South Africa is part of a world which has drifted away from the original purity of the teachings of God's messengers to mankind, such as Krishna, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, etc. In order to have a peaceful and unified society, the theme of justice and excellence of service to each other must become the social goal, and the love of God the motive for obedience to law and spiritual transformation. As the new world order emerges, we offer the following restatement of age-old principles in new garb as essential to moral regeneration:

1. Trustworthiness in personal, business and professional relationships, honesty and uprightness in all our dealings.

"Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquility and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. (C. of C. II, p. 329)

2. Elimination of all prejudices, racial, religious, ethnic, gender, class, nationality, tribe, and living the principle of the oneness of mankind.

"World order can be founded only on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm...Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice - prejudice of every kind - race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others." (PWP, 13)

3. The restoration of honour to the institution of marriage and the family, including chastity before marriage and faithfulness to one's spouse.

"When, therefore, the people...undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure."

(C. of C. I, 388)

"Sex relationships of any form outside marriage, are not permissible...and whoso violates this rule will not only be responsible to God, but will incur the necessary punishment from society." (Ibid, 56)

"The Baha'i Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse, but condemns its illegitimate and improper expression such as free love, companionate marriage and others, all of which it considers positively harmful to man and to the society in which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is the natural right of every individual and it is precisely for this purpose that the institution of marriage has been established. The Baha'is do not believe in the suppression of the sex impulse, but in its regulation and control." (Ibid, 56)

4. Abiding by the golden rule which runs as a thread through all religions, and even preferring one's neighbour to one's self.

"The teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions, lends force to this latter observation in two particular respects: it sums up the moral attitude, the peace-inducing aspect, extending through these religions irrespective of their place or time of origin; it also signifies an aspect of unity which is their essential virtue, a virtue mankind in its disjointed view of history has failed to appreciate." (PWP, 6)

5. Consultation must be the method used for the solution of all disagreements and problems, instead of insistence upon one view which leads to violence.

"In this (day) consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended...The purpose is to emphasize the statement that 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." (C. of C. I, 99)

6. No person must strike, wound or murder another person.

"Let none contend with another, and let no soul slay another; this verily, is that which was forbidden you in (the) Book... What! Would ye kill him whom God hath quickened, whom He hath endowed with spirit through a breath from Him?" (KA, p. 46)

7. Obedience to the duly-constituted government, i.e. abiding by the rule of law.

"Theirs is the duty to demonstrate...their unqualified loyalty and obedience to whatever is the considered judgment of their respective governments." (WOB, 64)

"Likewise, they must treat with and behave towards all the governments, nations, communities, kings and subjects with the utmost sincerity, trustworthiness, straightforwardness, love and kindness." (TAB, 435)

8. Work must be done in the spirit of service and elevated to the level of worship of God.

"O people.! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation - such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God...Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others." (KA, p. 30)

9. Self-discipline in avoiding mind-altering drugs, alcohol and all other debilitating substances.

"Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity." (KA, p. 239)

"The use of opium has been forbidden unto you. " (KA, 75)

"Heroin, hashish and other derivatives of cannabis such as marijuana, as well as hallucinogenic agents such as LSA, peyote and similar substances, are regarded as falling under this prohibition." (KA, 238)

10. Absolute prohibition concerning taking another person's property or possessions without his permission.

"Exile and imprisonment are decreed for the thief...We school you with the rod of wisdom and laws, like unto the father who educateth his son, and this for naught but the protection of your own selves and the elevation of your station." (KA, 36)

NOTE: All of the above quotations are taken from Baha'i Scripture.

BYLAE H

BYLAE H

A DIVINE ECONOMY

We could expend endless amounts of energy considering the prospects for the future of the Bahá'í commonwealth based on our observations of the present Bahá'í model and on the plentiful elucidation of that model in the authoritative works of the Bahá'í Faith. But we can hardly give even the most cursory treatment of this theme without alluding to the relationship of the success of this model to a visionary economic system. For if the administrative order revealed in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is a metaphorical expression of the body through which the collective soul of humanity finds expression in this life, then the economic system is the lifeblood of that body.

Nothing we deal with in this life is perhaps more metaphorical than money and finance, since currency only has meaning as it comes to symbolize a system of value. Therefore, monetary systems, like the system of value they metaphorize, have a double function :

The standards and rules that make up a value system have a double function. They are the norms a person appeals to in validating other (lower) standards and rules, and they guide a person's conduct. When a person adopts a value system, he decides to accept certain standards and rules as the basis for justifying his value judgements. But he also decides to place his conduct under the regulation of all the standards and rules of the value system. He commits himself to trying to fulfil the standards and to acting in accordance with the rules. This in turn involves his attitudes.¹

Metaphorical Significance of 'Divine Economy'

It is perhaps because economics is both a gauge of a value system as well as a means of instigating and sustaining it that in discussing the evolution of the Bahá'í commonwealth of the Most Great Peace, Shoghi Effendi often employs the term 'Divine Economy' :

For Bahá'u'lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as 'Abdu'l-Bahá after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy.²

Related to understanding Shoghi Effendi's use of this term is the fact that in its Greek etymology the word economy means literally 'the management of a household', though in a more general sense the term concerns the administration of resources. Inasmuch as the Manifestation has announced that there is now only one household, He has through the revelation of various laws and principles

metaphorically opened up the doors to the various rooms in that household that all of the family within that edifice might become acquainted, might nurture and care for one another, might become reunited and thereby better manage family affairs. But as we have so often noted, knowledge of this newly-revealed identity achieved when the doors are flung open is only the first step. What is then required is to act appropriately to facilitate the management of that household, to determine what needs the various members have, what obligations each member has to the others, what is just and equitable for all concerned.

The Critical Importance of Economics

'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms that an equitable economic system is an essential requisite for a coördinated world community and states that to achieve a unified household, 'a readjustment of the economic order will come about . . .'³ Rather than simply becoming an index to existing inequities or exigencies, a literal economic system will be employed to foster a new spiritual reality and relationship.

He indicates that the methods of achieving this condition will be the 'readjustment and equalization of the economic standards',⁴ the legislation of which and the 'principles of guidance' for which are enunciated in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He concludes, 'This readjustment of the social economy is of the greatest importance inasmuch as it ensures the stability of the world of humanity; and until it is effected, happiness and prosperity are impossible.'⁵

Shoghi Effendi cautions that while the Bahá'í writings indicate certain general principles about what should occur in a just world commonwealth, there are no detailed or specific statements in the Bahá'í writings regarding a single economic theory or practice :

There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic system, nor can its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists in the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world.⁶

More recent statements by the Universal House of Justice confirm this and clarify this caution by stating that a 'fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made'.⁷ Furthermore, as with other aspects of the Bahá'í model as it relates to an evolving commonwealth, we can be sure that the application of economic practices to foster and secure a just commonwealth will necessarily change as the world federation evolves and matures. The point is that there is a subtle relationship between human spiritual principles and the metaphorical expression and implementation of that value system; they are inextricably linked, something perhaps more clearly indicated in the various laws

of Bahá'u'lláh that relate to the individual's daily life.*

Abolition of Extremes of Poverty and Wealth

While we are quite limited in the specificity of observations we might make about what particular steps should be taken to bring about economic justice in a world commonwealth, we can with a degree of certainty infer several worthwhile considerations about the kinds of change that must occur to bring about a genuine world commonwealth. For example, while nations and territories will retain a practical degree of autonomy, the Bahá'í writings state that a world currency will be established.⁸ Furthermore, we know that an abiding principle of that future system will be the abolition of the extremes of poverty and wealth.⁹ Therefore, we might correctly presume that in countries where an extremely small percentage of the population controls a vast majority of a nation's wealth, there would be an immediate need for remedial legislation to bring about economic health.

But clearly all particular national or territorial economic problems will be reviewed in terms of the worldwide condition of humanity. For example, it is estimated that even under present circumstances, humanity is currently capable of producing sufficient food to provide for the world's population. What is lacking is a synthesis of collective will and a system of distribution. However such a synthesis comes about, the principle for such an action is clear :

Is it possible for one member of a family to be subjected to the utmost misery and to abject poverty and for the rest of the family to be comfortable? It is impossible unless those members of the family be senseless, atrophied, inhospitable, unkind.¹⁰

How a more equitable distribution of wealth will occur will no doubt become an increasingly pertinent and crucial subject of an evolving commonwealth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá enunciates certain principles which, if applied as parts of an overall plan of treatment, would foster economic justice without destroying the incentive to be productive which economic reward can sometimes foster. In this context it is important to note that the abolition of extremes does not imply the abolition of incentive nor that all people should receive the same wage, any more than we can assert that all people are capable of the same productivity and contribution to society :

Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise.¹¹

The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that [sic] men are unequal in their ability, and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources.¹²

* Bahá'u'lláh reveals economic laws regarding dowry, the Huqúqu'lláh, inheritance, mendicancy, charitable donations, etc., some of which were discussed in the final chapter.

A System of Taxation

Balanced against this concept of remuneration as related to capacity and performance is the concept of extreme disparity which is so characteristic of contemporary society. 'Abdu'l-Bahá enunciates at least two temporary methods of responding to this. One is a just system of graduated taxation. In one example of how such a system might be applied, 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes a community wherein each individual's taxes are adjudged according to the weight of his income against his expenses :

Now, if his income be equal to his expenditures, from such a farmer nothing whatever will be taken. That is, he will not be subjected to taxation of any sort, needing as he does all his income. Another farmer may have expenses running up to one thousand dollars we will say, and his income is two thousand dollars. From such an one a tenth will be required, because he has a surplus.¹³

'Abdu'l-Bahá goes on to describe how the percentage of tax increases as the individual surplus increases, though unlike similar systems of taxation operant in some countries at present, there is no stated ceiling to such increases, though it could well be that in implementing such a system, the world commonwealth would see fit to impose one.

Linked to this concept of graduated taxation is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's description of a kind of welfare system on a community level wherein there is established a common fund, a 'general storehouse which will have a number of revenues'.¹⁴ From such a public trust or storehouse will derive monies to meet such needs as assisting farmers and, caring for orphans, the disabled, the poor, the elderly. In short, 'no one will remain in need or in want'.¹⁵ Trustees will be elected in villages to oversee the income of the storehouse, and any surplus will be transferred to the national treasury. 'Abdu'l-Bahá notes that such a system in a large city will necessarily be much more complex, but the abiding principle will still be operant.

One other interesting point about this system, itself hinting at another economic principle, is the attention given in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example to the farmer in this arrangement. This does not seem to be a co-incidence. He states that 'the peasant class and the agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service'.¹⁶ Where so many contemporary societies, in the East as well as the West, have come to attribute importance to the acquisition of wealth, the system as implied in these examples reverses this process and gives economic support

** 'The first revenue will be that of the tenth or tithes. The second revenue (will be derived) from the animals. The third revenue, from the minerals, that is to say, every mine prospected or discovered, a third thereof will go to this vast storehouse. The fourth is this : whosoever dies without leaving any heirs all his heritage will go to the general storehouse. Fifth, if any treasures shall be found on the land they should be devoted to this storehouse' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity, p. 39).*

according to the real service a vocation renders society. In this sense we can envision that part of future economic decisions will be based on pragmatic benefit a vocation renders to the just and healthy function of society, not simply to what the market will allow.

Other Means of Rectifying Inequities

Besides measures taken to eliminate the extremes of poverty and wealth are other methods to foster economic justice in a world commonwealth. For example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses the value of profit-sharing as one means of deterring the antipathy between labour and management, as well as assisting in a more equitable distribution of wealth, the elimination of strikes, and the increase of the worker's enthusiasm for his or her job, something modern companies are rapidly coming to appreciate.* While this arrangement is hardly a sufficient solution to economic disparity and injustice, the Guardian notes that 'Profit-sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems'.¹⁷

Perhaps the greatest single phenomenon in the establishment of this commonwealth to heal the economic woes that currently threaten so much of humanity will be the incalculable increase in available monies when nations agree to disarm. 'Abdu'l-Bahá cites the growing economic burden resulting from governments attempting to maintain standing armies as one decisive factor in bringing about a universal peace accord, and Shoghi Effendi enumerates the specific ways in which humanity will benefit from this redistribution of energies'

Charitable Giving as the Heart of any Solution

In addition to the immense and almost incalculable benefits that will be derived from the transference of energy and monies from armaments to public welfare and the general economy, another prominent source of revenue for the common good will derive, in addition to whatever legislated means are devised for redistribution of resources, from a reorientation of the human society (and eventually the human

* 'For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees and give a fairly certain percentage of their products to their working men in order that the employees may receive, beside their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

'No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares, will give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees and will write the shares in their names, so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month or year whatever they may earn after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity, p. 43).

heart). That is, when energies are focused away from an adversarial relationship and towards mutual benefit of the common household, the voluntary or charitable redistribution will also become a major factor, perhaps the most important ingredient, in ameliorating the grievous injustices that currently tear at the vitals of society. *

Motivating such voluntary giving will be the emerging realization that everyone is equally an integral part of one social organism :

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others.¹⁸

Related to this principle of giving are several requisites that currently guide Bahá'ís in their own voluntary contributions within the Bahá Faith, principles which we can assume would most probably function equally effectively and importantly in the context of charitable contributions made within such a commonwealth. The first of these is the purely voluntary act of giving that currently guide Bahá'ís in their own voluntary contributions within the Bahá'í Faith, principles which we can assume would most probably function equally effectively and importantly in the context of charitable contributions made within such a commonwealth. The first of these is the purely voluntary act of giving : funds should not be solicited. The motivation for giving thus becomes an internal spiritual process. Second is the principle of anonymity with regard to contributions. No matter how much or how little one gives, the community at large is not privy to information about what one choses to give. A third principle is the idea of universal participation - that there is a special energy generated when everyone participates in this symbolic act, regardless of the extent to which they contribute. No doubt part of this energy derives from the spiritual force engendered by the unity of purpose as demonstrated in this metaphorical act. Finally, giving should involve some degree of sacrifice. Obviously this is a purely subjective determination, but for the process of giving to improve the spiritual condition of the giver, it must involve conscious effort.

Put simply, money is entirely symbolic in nature, and our relationships with it are inevitably loaded with symbolic meaning. Attachment to money obviously implies attachment to the things of this world that money represents. Likewise, the generous contribution of one's acquired wealth to the welfare of the public good is, symbolically, an expression of one's recognition of and love for the family of which he or she is a part, a giving of oneself. Therefore, this metaphorical exercise provides an exquisite means by which such understanding and perspective can be acquired on a systematic basis so that a budgetary analysis of one's expenditures would become tantamount to an assessment of one's values.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that 'The rich too must be merciful to the poor contributing from willing hearts to their needs without being forced or compelled to do so' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 107).

Huqúqu'lláh as the Solution

But if charitable giving will function as a helpful source of ameliorating economic disparity in that future commonwealth, Bahá'u'lláh has provided another method which will be the principal way in which the funding in all the needs of such a society can be met, as well as a crucial tool for the spiritual training of the citizenry : the law of Huqúqu'lláh ('the Right of God'). Both a law and a sacred institution, the Huqúqu'lláh represents 'one of the key instruments for constructing the foundation and supporting the structure of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh'.¹⁹ In general, the law states that one should give to this fund 19 percent of all 'assessable possessions' in excess of the equivalent of 19 mithqáls of gold, excluding one's residence and its 'needful' furnishings. This is paid only once on the excess that exists after one deducts living expenses, losses and taxes. Furthermore, this amount is not paid again until additional income in excess of the value of 19 mithqáls is acquired.

It is important to note, however, that even this fund, though commanded by law and 'crucial to the material well-being of the emerging Bahá'í commonwealth' is purely a matter between the individual and God :

That the observance and enforcement of this law, so crucial to the material well-being of the emerging Bahá'í commonwealth, should thus have been left entirely to the faith and conscience of the individual, gives substance to and sheds light on what the beloved Master calls the spiritual solution to economic problems.²⁰

Obviously the universal application of this law would have an amazing effect on the distribution of resources and the elimination of the extremes of poverty and wealth. Likewise, the examination of the law as a symbolic gesture reveals a dramatic method of expressing the recognition that one's well-being is entirely dependent on the grace of God. In addition, the law of Huqúqu'lláh serves as a beneficial exercise in confirming the temporary nature of our relationship to the physical world in our eternal spiritual evolution.

1. *Taylor, Normative Discourse, p. 129.*
2. *Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p. 19.*
3. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, promulgation, p. 102.*
4. *ibid. p. 107.*
5. *ibid. pp. 181-2.*
6. *Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Lights, no. 1868, p. 550.*
7. *The Universal House of Justice, Promise, para. 30.*
8. *See Shoghi Effendi, World Order, p. 203.*
9. *See Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 281.*
10. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations, p. 39.*
11. *ibid. p. 37.*
12. *Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Lights, no. 1867, p. 550.*
13. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations, p. 40.*
14. *ibid. p. 39.*
15. *ibid. p. 40.*
16. *ibid. p. 39.*
17. *Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, quoted in Lights, no. 1869, p. 550.*
18. *'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections, p. 302.*
19. *The Universal House of Justice, Horizon, p. 172.*
20. *ibid. p. 173.*

BYLAE I

TURNING POINT For All NATIONS

*A Statement of the Bahá'í International Community
on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations*

October 1995

Bahá'í International Community, United Nations Office, New York

Hoping that you are keeping well.

W.M.

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Turning Point for All Nations

A Statement of the Bahá'í International Community on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations

"Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life."

Shoghi Effendi, 1936

I. OVERVIEW: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION

The 20th Century, one of the most tumultuous periods in human history, has been marked by numerous upheavals, revolutions and radical departures from the past. Ranging from the collapse of the colonial system and the great nineteenth century empires to the rise and fall of broad and disastrous experiments with totalitarianism, fascism and communism, some of these upheavals have been extremely destructive, involving the deaths of millions, the eradication of old lifestyles and traditions, and the collapse of time-honored institutions.

Other movements and trends have been more obviously positive. Scientific discoveries and new social insights have spurred many progressive social, economic and cultural transformations. The way has been cleared for new definitions of human rights and affirmations of personal dignity, expanded opportunities for individual and collective achievement, and bold new avenues for the advancement of human knowledge and consciousness.

These twin processes -- the collapse of old institutions on the one hand and the blossoming of new ways of thinking on the other -- are evidence of a single trend

which has been gaining momentum during the last hundred years: the trend toward ever-increasing interdependence and integration of humanity.

This trend is observable in wide-ranging phenomena, from the fusion of world financial markets, which in turn reflect humanity's reliance on diverse and interdependent sources of energy, food, raw materials, technology and knowledge, to the construction of globe-girdling systems of communications and transportation. It is reflected in the scientific understanding of the earth's interconnected biosphere, which has in turn given a new urgency to the need for global coordination. It is manifest, albeit in a destructive way, in the capacities of modern weapons systems, which have gradually increased in power to the point where it is now possible for a handful of men to bring an end to human civilization itself. It is the universal consciousness of this trend -- in both its constructive and destructive expressions -- that lends such poignancy to the familiar photograph of the earth as a swirling sphere of blue and white against the infinite blackness of space, an image crystallizing the realization that we are a single people, rich in diversity, living in a common homeland.

This trend is reflected, too, in steady efforts by the nations of the world to forge a world political system that can secure for humanity the possibility of peace, justice and prosperity. Twice in this century humanity has attempted to bring about a new international order. Each attempt sought to address the emergent recognition of global interdependence, while nevertheless preserving intact a system which put the sovereignty of the state above all else. In the perspective of the century now ending, the League of Nations, a breakthrough in the concept of collective security, marked a first decisive step toward world order.

The second effort, born from the cataclysm of World War II and based on a Charter drawn up principally by the victors of that conflagration, has for fifty years provided an international forum of last resort, a unique institution standing as a noble symbol for the collective interests of humanity as a whole.

As an international organization, the United Nations has demonstrated humanity's capacity for united action in health, agriculture, education, environmental protection, and the welfare of children. It has affirmed our collective moral will to build a better future, evinced in the widespread adoption of international human rights Covenants. It has revealed the human race's deep-seated compassion, evidenced by the devotion of financial and human resources to the assistance of people in distress. And in the all-important realms of peace-building, peace-making and peace-keeping, the United Nations has blazed a bold path toward a future without war.¹

Yet the overall goals set out in the Charter of the United Nations have proved elusive. Despite the high hopes of its founders, the establishment of the United Nations some fifty years ago did not usher in an era of peace and prosperity for all.²

Although the United Nations has surely played a role in preventing a third world war, the last half decade has nevertheless been marked by numerous local, national and regional conflicts costing millions of lives. No sooner had improved relations between the superpowers removed the ideological motivation for such conflicts, than long-

smoldering ethnic and sectarian passions surfaced as a new source of conflagration. In addition, although the end of the Cold War has reduced the threat of a global, terminal war, there remain instruments and technologies -- and to some extent the underlying passions -- which could bring about planet-wide destruction.

With respect to social issues, likewise, grave problems persist. While new levels of consensus have been reached on global programs to promote health, sustainable development and human rights, the situation on the ground in many areas has deteriorated. The alarming spread of militant racialism and religious fanaticism, the cancerous growth of materialism, the epidemic rise of crime and organized criminality, the widespread increase in mindless violence, the ever-deepening disparity between rich and poor, the continuing inequities faced by women, the intergenerational damage caused by the pervasive break-down of family life, the immoral excesses of unbridled capitalism and the growth of political corruption -- all speak to this point. At least a billion live in abject poverty and more than a third of the world's people are illiterate.³

As the twin processes of collapse and renewal carry the world toward some sort of culmination, the 50th anniversary of the United Nations offers a timely opportunity to pause and reflect on how humanity may collectively face its future. Indeed, there have emerged of late a wide range of useful proposals for strengthening the United Nations and improving its capacity to coordinate the responses of nations to these challenges.

These proposals fall roughly into three categories. One group addresses primarily bureaucratic, administrative and financial problems within the United Nations system. Another group comprises those that suggest reconfiguring bodies like the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and the Bretton Woods economic institutions. Still others propose to undertake changes in the United Nations political structure, calling, for example, for an expansion of the Security Council and/or a reconsideration of the United Nations Charter itself.⁴

Most of these works are constructive; some are also provocative. Among them, one of the most balanced and thoughtful is the report of the Commission on Global Governance, entitled, *Our Global Neighborhood*, which argues for the widespread adoption of new values, as well as structural reforms in the United Nations system.⁵

It is in the spirit of contributing to the ongoing discussion and consultation on this issue of paramount importance that the Bahá'í International Community has been moved to share its views. Our perspective is based on three initial propositions.

First, discussions about the future of the United Nations need to take place within the broad context of the evolution of the international order and its direction. The United Nations has co-evolved with other great institutions of the late twentieth century. It is in the aggregate that these institutions will define -- and themselves be shaped by -- the evolution of the international order. Therefore, the mission, role, operating principles and even activities of the United Nations should be examined only in the light of how they fit within the broader objective of the international order.

Second, since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. This relationship between the individual and the collective constitutes the moral foundation of most of the human rights which the instruments of the United Nations are attempting to define. It also serves to define an overriding purpose for the international order in establishing and preserving the rights of the individual.

Third, the discussions about the future of the international order must involve and excite the generality of humankind. This discussion is so important that it cannot be confined to leaders – be they in government, business, the academic community, religion, or organizations of civil society. On the contrary, this conversation must engage women and men at the grassroots level. Broad participation will make the process self-reinforcing by raising awareness of world citizenship and increase support for an expanded international order.

II. RECOGNIZING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: A CALL TO WORLD LEADERS

The Bahá'í International Community regards the current world confusion and the calamitous condition of human affairs as a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet.

The human race, as a distinct, organic unit, has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age.⁶ The process of global integration, already a reality in the realms of business, finance, and communications, is beginning to materialize in the political arena.

Historically, this process has been accelerated by sudden and catastrophic events. It was the devastation of World Wars I and II that gave birth to the League of Nations and the United Nations, respectively. Whether future accomplishments are also to be reached after similarly unimaginable horrors or embraced through an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth. Failure to take decisive action would be unconscionably irresponsible.

Since sovereignty currently resides with the nation-state, the task of determining the exact architecture of the emerging international order is an obligation that rests with heads of state and with governments. We urge leaders at all levels to take a deliberate role in supporting a convocation of world leaders before the turn of this century to consider how the international order might be redefined and restructured to meet the challenges facing the world. As some have suggested, this gathering might be called the World Summit on Global Governance.⁷

This proposed Summit might build on the experience gained from the series of highly successful United Nations conferences in the early 1990s. These conferences, which have included the World Summit for Children in 1990, the Earth Summit in 1992, the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, have established a new methodology for global deliberations on critical issues.

A key to the success of these deliberations has been the substantive participation by organizations of civil society. Painstaking negotiations among government delegations about changes in the world's political, social and economic structures have been informed and shaped by the vigorous involvement of these organizations, which tend to reflect the needs and concerns of people at the grass roots. It is also significant that in each case, the gathering of world leaders, in the presence of civil society and the global media, gave the stamp of legitimacy and consensus to the processes of the conference.

In preparing for the proposed Summit, world leaders would be wise to heed these lessons, to reach out to as wide a circle as possible and to secure the goodwill and support of the world's peoples.

Some fear that international political institutions inevitably evolve toward excessive centralization and constitute an unwarranted layer of bureaucracy. It needs to be explicitly and forcefully stated that any new structures for global governance must, as a matter of both principle and practicality, ensure that the responsibility for decision-making remains at appropriate levels.⁸

Striking the right balance may not always be easy. On the one hand, genuine development and real progress can be achieved only by people themselves, acting individually and collectively, in response to the specific concerns and needs of their time and place. It can be argued that the decentralization of governance is the *sine qua non* of development.⁹ On the other hand, the international order clearly requires a degree of global direction and coordination.

Therefore, in accordance with the principles of decentralization outlined above, international institutions should be given the authority to act only on issues of international concern where states cannot act on their own or to intervene for the preservation of the rights of peoples and member states. All other matters should be relegated to national and local institutions.¹⁰

Furthermore, in devising a specific framework for the future international order, leaders should survey a broad range of approaches to governance. Rather than being modeled after any single one of the recognized systems of government, the solution may embody, reconcile and assimilate within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them.

For example, one of the time-tested models of governance that may accommodate the world's diversity within a unified framework is the federal system. Federalism has proved effective in decentralizing authority and decision-making in large, complex, and [409]

heterogeneous states, while maintaining a degree of overall unity and stability. Another model worth examining is the commonwealth, which at the global level would place the interest of the whole ahead of the interest of any individual nation.

Extraordinary care must be taken in designing the architecture of the international order so that it does not over time degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery corrupting the life and machinery of the constituent political institutions.

In 1955, during the first decade review of the UN charter, the Bahá'í International Community offered a statement to the United Nations, based on ideas articulated nearly a century before by Bahá'u'lláh. "The Bahá'í concept of world order is defined in these terms: A world Super-State in whose favor all the nations of the world will have ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for the purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. This State will have to include an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the Commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members are elected by the peoples in their respective countries and whose election is confirmed by their respective governments; a Supreme Tribunal whose judgment has a binding effect even in cases where the parties concerned have not voluntarily agreed to submit their case to its consideration."¹¹

While we believe this formulation of a world government is at once the ultimate safeguard and the inevitable destiny of humankind, we do recognize that it represents a long-term picture of a global society. Given the pressing nature of the current state of affairs, the world requires bold, practical and actionable strategies that go beyond inspiring visions of the future. Nevertheless, by focusing on a compelling concept, a clear and consistent direction for evolutionary change emerges from the mire of contradictory views and doctrines.

III. DEFINING A ROLE FOR THE UN WITHIN THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The United Nations was the centerpiece of the international system created by the victors of World War II and, during the long decades of ideological conflict between the East and the West, it served its original purpose as a forum for international dialogue. Over the years, its mandate has been expanded to include not only international standard-setting and promotion of social and economic development but also peacekeeping operations on several continents.

Over the same period, the political reality of our world has experienced a dramatic transformation. At the time of the UN's inception, there were some fifty independent states. That number has grown to exceed 185. At the close of World War II, governments were the main actors on the global scene. Today, the growing influence of organizations of civil society and of multinational corporations has created a much more intricate political landscape.

Despite the growing complexity in its mission, the United Nations system has retained more or less the same structure that was designed for a new international organization some fifty years ago. It is not surprising then that the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary has stimulated a new dialogue about its ability to meet the political realities of the 21st Century. Unfortunately, in this dialogue, criticism has far outweighed praise.

Most criticisms of the United Nations are based on comparisons with leading organizations in the private sector or on measurements relative to inflated baseline expectations. Although some specific comparisons may be useful in increasing productivity, more general exercises of this kind are essentially unfair. The United Nations lacks not only the clear authority, but also the requisite resources to act effectively in most instances. Accusations of the UN's failure are in fact indictments of the member states themselves.

Judged in isolation from the reality within which it operates, the United Nations will always seem inefficient and ineffective. However, if it is viewed as one element of a larger process of development in systems of international order, the bright light of analysis would shift from the UN's shortcomings and failures to shine on its victories and accomplishments. With an evolutionary mindset, the early experience of the United Nations offers us a rich source of learnings about its future role within the international regime.

An evolutionary mindset implies the ability to envision an institution over a long time frame — perceiving its inherent potential for development, identifying the fundamental principles governing its growth, formulating high-impact strategies for short-term implementation, and even anticipating radical discontinuities along its path.

Studying the United Nations from this perspective unveils significant opportunities to strengthen the current system without the wholesale restructuring of its principal institutions or the intensive re-engineering of its core processes. In fact, we submit that no proposal for UN reform can produce high impact unless its recommendations are internally consistent and direct the UN along a projected evolutionary path toward a distinctive and relevant role within the future international order.

We believe the combination of recommendations described herein meets these conditions and that their adoption would represent a measured but significant step toward building a more just world order.¹²

A. Resuscitating the General Assembly

The foundation for any system of governance is the rule of law and the primary institution for promulgating law is the legislature. While the authority of local and national legislatures is generally respected, regional and international legislative bodies have been the subject of fear and suspicion.

In addition, the United Nations General Assembly has been a target of attack for its ineffectiveness. Although some of the accusations hurled against it are unfounded,

there are at least two shortcomings that hamper the ability of the General Assembly to have impact.

First, the current arrangement gives undue weight to state sovereignty, resulting in a curious mix of anarchy and conservatism. In a reformed United Nations, the legislative branch and its voting structure will need to represent more accurately the people of the world as well as nation-states.¹³

Second, General Assembly resolutions are not binding unless they are separately ratified as a treaty by each member state. If the current system, which places state sovereignty above all other concerns, is to give way to a system which can address the interests of a single and interdependent humanity, the resolutions of the General Assembly -- within a limited domain of issues -- must gradually possess the force of law with provisions for both enforcement and sanctions.

These two shortcomings are closely linked inasmuch as the majority of the world's people, suspicious and fearful of world government, are unlikely to submit to an international institution unless it is itself more genuinely representative.¹⁴

Nevertheless, in the short term, five practical measures are possible to strengthen the General Assembly, enhance its reputation and align it with a longer term direction.

1. Raising minimum requirements for membership

The minimum standards for conduct by a government towards its people have been well established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent international covenants, collectively referred to as the International Bill of Human Rights.

Without an unshakable commitment to regular and periodic elections with universal participation by secret ballot, to freedom of expression and to other such human rights, a member state stands in the way of the active and intelligent participation of the vast majority of its population in the affairs of its own communities.

We propose that there should be consequences for member states that violate these standards. Similarly, nations seeking recognition should be denied membership until they openly espouse these standards or make recognizable efforts to move in that direction.

2. Appointing a Commission to study borders and frontiers

Outstanding irredentist claims continue to be a major source of conflict and war, highlighting the critical need for general agreements on national boundaries. Such treaties can only be arrived at after consideration of the arbitrary manner in which many nation-states were originally defined and of all outstanding claims of nations and ethnic groups.

Rather than relegating such claims to the World Court, we believe it would be best to establish a special International Commission to research all claims affecting international boundaries and then, after careful consideration, to make recommendations for action.¹⁵ The results would serve as an early warning system for growing tension among civil or ethnic groups and assessment of threats in situations benefiting from early preventive diplomacy.

In order to establish a genuine community of nations in the long run, it will be necessary to settle finally all disputes over borders. This research would serve that end.

3. Searching for new financial arrangements.

Primarily triggered by the unwillingness of some member states to remit their general assessments on time, compounded by the absence of authority to collect any interest accrued because of that delay, and further aggravated by the bureaucratic inefficiencies in parts of its operations, the annual budget shortfall pressures the UN into a crisis management mentality.

Voluntary payments from member states will never be a reliable approach to finance an international institution. Vigorous approaches to revenue generation must be devised to enable the smooth functioning of the UN machinery. We propose the immediate appointment of an expert Task Force to begin a rigorous search for solutions.

In studying alternatives, the Task Force should be mindful of several fundamental principles. First, there should be no assessments without representation. Second, in the interest of fairness and justice, assessments should be graduated. Third, mechanisms for encouraging voluntary contributions by individuals and communities should not be overlooked.¹⁶

4. Committing to a universal auxiliary language and a common script

The United Nations, which currently uses six official languages, would derive substantial benefit from either choosing a single existing language or creating a new one to be used as an auxiliary language in all its fora. Such a step has long been advocated by many groups, from the Esperantists to the Bahá'í International Community itself.¹⁷ In addition to saving money and simplifying bureaucratic procedures, such a move would go far toward promoting a spirit of unity.

We propose the appointment of a high-level Commission, with members from various regions and drawn from relevant fields, including linguistics, economics, the social sciences, education and the media, to begin careful study on the matter of an international auxiliary language and the adoption of a common script.

We foresee that eventually, the world cannot but adopt a single, universally agreed-upon auxiliary language and script to be taught in schools worldwide, as a supplement

to the language or languages of each country. The objective would be to facilitate the transition to a global society through better communication among nations, reduction of administrative costs for businesses, governments and others involved in global enterprise, and a general fostering of more cordial relations between all members of the human family.¹⁸

This proposal should be read narrowly. It does not in any way envision the decline of any living language or culture.

5. Investigating the possibility of a single international currency

The need to promote the adoption of a global currency as a vital element in the integration of the global economy is self-evident. Among other benefits, economists believe that a single currency will curb unproductive speculation and unpredictable market swings, promote a leveling of incomes and prices worldwide, and thereby result in significant savings.¹⁹

The possibility of savings will not lead to action unless there is an overwhelming body of evidence addressing the relevant concerns and doubts of skeptics, accompanied by a credible implementation plan. We propose the appointment of a Commission consisting of the most accomplished government leaders, academics and professionals to begin immediate exploration into the economic benefits and the political costs of a single currency and to hypothesize about an effective implementation approach.

B. Developing a Meaningful Executive Function

At the international level, the single most important executive function is the enforcement of a collective security pact.²⁰

Collective security implies a binding covenant among nations to act in concert against threats to the collective. The effectiveness of the covenant depends on the degree to which members commit themselves to the collective good, even if motivated by a sense of enlightened self-interest.

Within the United Nations, the enforcement role is largely carried out by the Security Council, with other functions of the executive being shared with the Secretariat. Both are hampered in fulfilling their mandated roles. The Security Council suffers from an inability to take decisive action. The Secretariat is pressured by the complex demands of the member states.

In the short term, four practical measures are possible to strengthen the executive function within the United Nations.

1. Limiting the exercise of the veto power

The original intention of the UN Charter in conferring veto power to the five Permanent Members was to prevent the Security Council from authorizing military actions against a Permanent Member or requiring the use of its forces against its will.²¹ In fact, beginning with the Cold War, the veto power has been exercised repeatedly for reasons to do with regional or national security.

In its 1955 submission on UN reform, the Bahá'í International Community argued for the gradual elimination of the concepts of "permanent membership" and "veto power" as confidence in the Security Council would build. Today, forty years later, we reaffirm that position. However, we also propose that, as a transitional step, measures be introduced to curb the exercise of the veto power to reflect the original intention of the Charter.

2. Institutionalizing ad hoc military arrangements

To support the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, and to add credibility to resolutions of the Security Council, an International Force should be created.²² Its loyalty to the UN and its independence from national considerations must be assured. Fully armed, the command and control of such a Force would reside with the Secretary-General under the authority of the Security Council. Its finances, however, would be determined by the General Assembly. In constructing such a force, the Secretary-General would seek to draw competent personnel from all regions of the world.

If properly implemented, this Force would also provide a sense of security that might encourage steps toward global disarmament, thereby making possible an outright ban on all weapons of mass destruction.²³ Furthermore, in line with the principle of collective security, it would become gradually understood that states need only maintain armaments sufficient for their own defense and the maintenance of internal order.

As an immediate step toward the establishment of this Force, the present system of ad hoc arrangements could be institutionalized to establish core regional forces for rapid deployment during a crisis.

3. Applying the notion of collective security to other problems of the global commons

Although originally conceived within the context of a threat of military aggression, the principle of collective security, some argue, may now be applied in an expansive manner to all threats which, although apparently local in nature, are actually the result of the complex breakdown of the present-day global order. These threats include but are not limited to international drug trafficking, food security, and the emergence of new global pandemics.²⁴

We believe this issue would have to be included on the agenda of the proposed Global Summit. However, it is unlikely that expansive formulations of collective security would precede the fundamental case of military aggression.

4. Retaining successful UN institutions with independent executive function

Some of the more independent organizations within the UN family, such as the UN International Children's Emergency Fund, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Universal Postal Union, the International Telegraph and Communications Union, the International Labor Organization, and the World Health Organization, have enjoyed conspicuous success with focused but important areas of international concern.

Generally, these organizations already have their own executive function. Their independence should be retained and reinforced as part of the international executive.²⁵

C. A Strengthened World Court

In any system of governance, a strong judicial function is necessary to moderate the powers of the other branches and to enunciate, promulgate, protect and deliver justice. The drive to create just societies has been among the fundamental forces in history²⁶ -- and without doubt no lasting world civilization can be founded unless it is firmly grounded in the principle of justice.

Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected. An age that sees the people of the world increasingly gaining access to information of every kind and to a diversity of ideas will find justice asserting itself as the ruling principle of successful social organization.

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is "the best beloved of all things" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group.

At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision-making, because it is the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved. Far from encouraging the punitive spirit that has often masqueraded under its name in the past, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, in the achievement of human interaction, a consultative climate is encouraged that permits options to be examined dispassionately and appropriate courses of action selected. In such a climate the perennial tendencies toward manipulation and partisanship are far less likely to deflect the decision-making process.

Such a conception of justice will be gradually reinforced by the realization that in an interdependent world, the interests of the individual and society are inextricably intertwined. In this context, justice is a thread that must be woven into the consideration of every interaction, whether in the family, the neighborhood, or at the global level.

We see in the current United Nations system the foundation for a strengthened World Court. Established in 1945 as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice is characterized by many positive elements. The current system for the selection of judges, for example, seeks to create a judicial panel which is representative of a wide range of peoples, regions, and judicial systems.²⁷

The Court's primary shortcoming is that it lacks the authority to issue legally binding decisions, except in those cases where states have chosen in advance to be bound by its decisions. Without jurisdiction, the Court is powerless to administer justice.²⁸ In time, the decisions of the World Court may become binding and enforceable upon all states; however, in the short term, the World Court might be strengthened through two other measures.

1. Extending the Court's jurisdiction

Currently, the Court's jurisdiction is limited to a few categories of cases, and only nations have standing to bring an action. We propose that in addition to member states, other organs of the United Nations should be given the right to bring cases before the Court.

2. Coordinating the thematic courts

The World Court should act as an umbrella for existing and new thematic courts, that arbitrate and adjudicate international cases within specific thematic domains.

Early components of a unified system can already be found in the specialized courts for arbitration of such matters as commerce and transportation, and in the proposals for such bodies as an International Criminal Court and a Chamber for Environmental Matters. Other issue areas that might need to be addressed under such a system would include courts for international terrorism and drug trafficking.

IV. RELEASING THE POWER OF THE INDIVIDUAL: A CRITICAL CHALLENGE OF THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The primary objective of governing institutions at all levels is the advancement of human civilization. This objective is difficult to satisfy without the inspired and

intelligent participation of the generality of humankind in the life and affairs of the community.

With a focus on building institutions and creating a community of nations, international bodies have historically remained distant from the minds and hearts of the world's people. Separated by several layers of government from the international arena and confused by the media's coverage of international news, the vast majority of people have not yet developed an affinity for institutions like the United Nations. Only those individuals who have had some access to the international arena through channels like organizations of civil society seem able to identify with these institutions.

Paradoxically, international institutions cannot develop into an effective and mature level of government and fulfill their primary objective to advance human civilization, if they do not recognize and nurture their relationship of mutual dependency with the people of the world. Such recognition would set in motion a virtuous cycle of trust and support that would accelerate the transition to a new world order.

The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge on the part of every individual. International institutions will succeed in eliciting and directing the potentialities latent in the peoples of the world to the extent that their exercise of authority is moderated by their obligation to win the confidence, respect, and genuine support of those whose actions they seek to govern and to consult openly and to the fullest extent possible with all those whose interests are affected.

Individuals who become confident and respectful of these institutions will, in turn, demand that their national governments increase their support, both political and economic, for the international order. In turn, the international institutions, with increased influence and power, will be better positioned to undertake further actions to establish a legitimate and effective world order.

Along with the measures for strengthening its structure, the United Nations needs to adopt initiatives that release the latent power in all people to participate in this galvanizing process. To this end, certain themes that accelerate the advancement of the individual and society warrant special consideration. Among them, promoting economic development, protecting human rights, advancing the status of women, and emphasizing moral development are four priorities so closely tied to the advancement of civilization that they must be emphasized as part of the United Nations agenda.

A. Promoting Economic Development

Economic development strategies employed by the United Nations, the World Bank and a number of governments during the last fifty years, however sincerely conceived and executed, have fallen far short of aspirations. In much of the world, the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots" has widened and is accelerating with the persistent disparity in income levels. Social problems have not subsided. In fact, crime and

disease are not just on the rise; they are also becoming endemic and more difficult to combat.

These failures can be traced to a number of factors. They include a misplaced focus on large-scale projects and bureaucratic over-centralization, unjust terms of international trade, a pervasive corruption that has been allowed to flourish throughout the system, the exclusion of women from the decision-making processes at all levels, a general inability to ensure that resources reach the poor, and the diversion of development resources into military hardware.

A dispassionate examination of these factors betrays a common systematic and fundamental flaw in the current paradigm for economic development: material needs are often addressed without taking into account the spiritual factors and their motivating power.

Development should not become confused with the creation of an unsustainable consumer society. True prosperity encompasses spiritual as well as material well-being. Food, drink, shelter and a degree of material comfort are essential, but human beings cannot and never will find fulfillment in these necessities. Nor is contentment to be found in the somewhat more intangible material attainments such as social recognition or political power. Ultimately, not even intellectual achievement satisfies our deepest needs.

It is in the hunger for something more, something beyond ourselves, that the reality of the human spirit can be properly understood. Although the spiritual side of our nature is obscured by the day-to-day struggle for material attainment, our need for the transcendent cannot long be disregarded. Thus a sustainable development paradigm must address both the spiritual aspirations of human beings and their material needs and desires.

Education is the best investment in economic development. "Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess," writes Bahá'u'lláh. "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."²⁹ Education implies more than a process of mastering a narrow body of knowledge or learning a set of life skills. In truth, education, which should be a fundamental imperative of development, must also teach the process for knowledge acquisition, cultivate the powers of intellect and reasoning, and infuse the student with indispensable moral qualities.

It is this comprehensive approach to education that allows people to contribute to the creation of wealth and encourage its just distribution.³⁰

Genuine wealth is created when work is undertaken not simply as a means of earning a livelihood but also as a way to contribute to society. We hold that meaningful work is a basic need of the human soul, as important to the proper development of the individual as nutritious food, clean water and fresh air are to the physical body.

Because of the spiritually damaging nature of dependency, schemes which focus solely on redistributing material wealth are doomed to failure in the long run. Distribution of wealth must be approached in an efficient and equitable manner. In fact, it must be intimately integrated with the process of wealth creation.

We propose the following recommendation to the United Nations system for promoting more effective development.

1. Launching a determined campaign to implement Agenda 21

The plan of action formulated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development incorporated a wide range of views from civil society and a set of principles not unlike those articulated in this statement. Unfortunately, however, little has been done by member states to implement the measures described in the plan.

If the objectives of Agenda 21 are to be addressed and satisfied, an expanded effort, different in nature but comparable in scale and commitment to the Marshall Plan for the redevelopment of post-war Europe, might be necessary. In this case, the Bretton Woods institutions would be called upon to mount a pronounced campaign to expedite national implementation efforts. A mandate of this nature can result only from a conference, similar to the first Bretton Woods meetings fifty years ago, dedicated to a wholesale re-examination of these institutions. The purpose of this re-examination would be to make available to the people of the world sufficient resources so that they could implement local initiatives. Moreover, the conference could also expand its agenda to address deeper issues of global economic security through the redefinition of existing institutions or the creation of new structures.³¹

If successful, this new machinery could also be extended to coordinate implementation of the measures identified at the recent Social Summit.

B. Protecting Fundamental Human Rights

Over the five decades since the United Nations was founded, an understanding has emerged that human rights must be recognized and protected internationally if peace, social progress and economic prosperity are to be established.

The foundation for international agreement on the nature of human rights is the all-important Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and elaborated in two international covenants -- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. In addition, some 75 other conventions and declarations identify and promote the rights of women and children, the right to freedom of worship, and the right to development, to name but a few.

The current United Nations human rights regime has two major shortcomings: limited means for enforcement and follow-up, and too little emphasis on the responsibilities that accompany all rights.

Human rights enforcement at the international level needs to be handled in a manner similar to the treatment of military aggression under a collective security regime. The violation of human rights in one state must be considered the concern of all, and enforcement mechanisms must provide for a unified response on the part of the entire international community. The question of when and how to intervene to protect human rights is more difficult to answer. Vigorous enforcement will require a high degree of global consensus on what constitutes a flagrant and willful violation.

Important steps toward global consensus were taken during the process leading up to the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, which affirmed unequivocally that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, and ended the long-standing debate about the relative importance of civil and political rights as compared to social, economic and cultural rights.³² Conference resolutions also confirmed that human rights must be applied irrespective of differences of racial background, ethnic origin, religious belief or national identity. They encompass the equality of women and men; they include for all individuals worldwide the same rights to freedom of investigation, information and religious practice; and they embody the right of everyone to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and health care.³³ Beyond the need to build consensus and strengthen enforcement of human rights, it is important to establish a greater understanding that to each right is attached a corresponding responsibility.

The right to be recognized as a person before the law, for example, implies the responsibility to obey the law -- and to make both the laws and the legal system more just. Likewise, in the socio-economic realm, the right to marry carries with it the responsibility to support the family unit, to educate one's children and to treat all family members with respect.³⁴ The right to work cannot be divorced from the responsibility to perform one's duties to the best of one's ability. In the broadest sense, the notion of "universal" human rights implies a responsibility to humanity as a whole.

Ultimately, while it is up to the individual to fulfill the responsibility in each such area, it is up to international institutions to protect the related human right. We propose three measures for immediate action.

1. Strengthening machinery of UN for monitoring, implementation and follow-up

The United Nations machinery for the monitoring, implementation and follow-up of government compliance with international covenants is inadequate. The Centre for Human Rights consists of a very small professional staff struggling to support efforts to monitor the compliance by countries of all treaties they have ratified.

We believe the resources assigned to this Centre must be dramatically increased if it is to discharge its duties properly.

2. Encouraging universal ratification of international conventions on human rights

Since ratifying the international conventions on human rights creates an obligation for member states, albeit not a practically enforceable one, the Secretary-General and all bodies of the UN might consider every opportunity to encourage member states to act on this issue. In fact, a demanding timeline for universal ratification may be an inspiring goal to be set by the General Assembly.

3. Assuring respect for the monitoring organs of UN involved in human rights

Since the mandate of the human rights monitoring agencies is of a very serious nature, the UN needs to be particularly mindful of perceptions created by the structure and processes of these agencies and equally deliberate in acting to resolve compromising situations.

We believe it would be prudent to explore during the nomination process the qualifications of member states in visible positions and to exclude from election to membership on the Commission on Human Rights and other monitoring agencies, any member states that have not yet ratified the international conventions. While these member states would still be able to fully participate in deliberations, it would protect the United Nations from a potentially embarrassing and compromising situation.

We also believe that a single exception is warranted to the above rule. Member states, not under the scrutiny of the UN, that have sufficient protection for fundamental human rights within their constitutions, but which have not been able to complete the ratification process because of internal political reasons, should not be barred from election to visible positions.

Finally, it also seems prudent for member states that have ratified the international conventions but are under scrutiny for gross human rights violations to be disqualified from election to the offices of conferences and other meetings of the Commission on Human Rights. This will prevent a widespread perception of the proceedings as a mockery.

C. Advancing the Status of Women

The creation of a peaceful and sustainable world civilization will be impossible without the full participation of women in every arena of human activity.³⁵ While this proposition is increasingly supported, there is a marked difference between intellectual acceptance and its implementation.

It is time for the institutions of the world, composed mainly of men, to use their influence to promote the systematic inclusion of women, not out of condescension or presumed self-sacrifice but as an act motivated by the belief that the contributions of

women are required for society to progress.³⁶ Only as the contributions of women are valued will they be sought out and woven into the fabric of society. The result will be a more peaceful, balanced, just and prosperous civilization.³⁷

The obvious biological differences between the sexes need not be a cause for inequality or disunity. Rather, they are an aspect of complementarity. If the role of women as mothers is properly valued, their work in nurturing and educating children will be respected and properly rewarded. It should also be acknowledged that the child-bearing role does not diminish one's aptitude for leadership, or undermine one's intellectual, scientific or creative capacity. Indeed, it may be an enhancement.

We believe progress on a few critical fronts would have the greatest impact on the advancement of women. We share the following perspectives which are foundational to the recommendations which follow.

First and foremost, violence against women and girls, one of the most blatant and widespread abuses of human rights, must be eradicated. Violence has been a fact of life for many women throughout the world, regardless of race, class, or educational background. In many societies, traditional beliefs that women are inferior or a burden make them easy targets of anger and frustration. Even strong legal remedies and enforcement mechanisms will have little effect until they are supported by a transformation in the attitudes of men. Women will not be safe until a new social conscience takes hold, one which will make the mere expression of condescending attitudes towards women, let alone any form of physical violence, a cause for deep shame.

Second, the family remains the basic building block of society and behaviors observed and learned there will be projected onto interactions at all other levels of society. Therefore, the members of the institution of the family must be transformed so that the principle of equality of women and men is internalized. Further, if the bonds of love and unity cement family relationships, the impact will reach beyond its borders and affect society as a whole.

Third, while the overall goal of any society must be to educate all its members, at this stage in human history the greatest need is to educate women and girls.³⁸ For over twenty years, studies have consistently documented that, of all possible investments, educating women and girls pays the highest overall dividends in terms of social development, the eradication of poverty and the advancement of community.³⁹

Fourth, the global dialogue on the role of men and women must promote recognition of the intrinsic complementarity of the two sexes. For the differences between them are a natural assertion of the necessity of women and men to work together to bring to fruition their potentialities for advancing civilization, no less than for perpetuating the human race. Such differences are inherent in the interactive character of their common humanity. This dialogue needs to consider the historical forces which have led to the oppression of women and examine the new social, political and spiritual realities which are today transforming our civilization.

As a starting point for this dialogue we offer this analogy from the Bahá'í Writings: "The world of humanity has two wings -- one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible."⁴⁰ In addition, we propose the following three specific measures.

1. Increasing the participation of women in member state delegations

We recommend that member states be encouraged to appoint an increased number of women to ambassadorial or similar diplomatic positions.

2. Encouraging universal ratification of international conventions that protect women's rights and improve their status

As with the international conventions on human rights, the Secretary-General and all bodies of the UN should consider every opportunity to encourage member states to proceed with ratification of conventions and protocols that protect women's rights and seek their advancement.

3. Planning ahead for implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action

The Forward-Looking Strategies declaration adopted at the Nairobi conference was highly bold and imaginative, yet its implementation was rather ineffective.⁴¹ We believe that a lesson should be learned from this unfortunate experience and deliberate plans be put into place to ensure that the Platform of Action emerging from the Beijing conference does not meet a similar fate.

We propose that a monitoring system be established to prepare status reports on the implementation of adopted measures and to make presentations to the General Assembly annually, highlighting the top twenty and bottom twenty member states in terms of compliance.

D. Emphasizing Moral Development

The process of integrating human beings into larger and larger groups, although influenced by culture and geography, has been driven largely by religion, the most powerful agent for changing human attitudes and behavior. By religion, however, we mean the essential foundation or reality of religion, not the dogmas and blind imitations which have gradually encrusted it and which are the cause of its decline and effacement.

In the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá "Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit. . . . Without the spirit the world of mankind is lifeless."⁴²

The concept of promoting specific morals or values may be controversial, especially in this age of humanistic relativism. Nevertheless, we firmly believe there exists a common set of values that have been obscured from recognition by those who exaggerate minor differences in religious or cultural practice for political purposes.⁴³ These foundation virtues, taught by all spiritual communities, constitute a basic framework for moral development.

Reflection on the commonalities inherent in the great religious and moral systems of the world reveals that each one espouses unity, cooperation and harmony among people, establishes guidelines for responsible behavior and supports the development of virtues which are the foundation for trust-based and principled interactions.⁴⁴

1. Promoting the development of curricula for moral education in schools

We advocate a universal campaign to promote moral development. Simply put, this campaign should encourage and assist local initiatives all over the world to incorporate a moral dimension into the education of children. It may necessitate the holding of conferences, the publication of relevant materials and many other supportive activities, all of which represent a solid investment in a future generation.

This campaign for moral development may begin with a few simple precepts. For example, rectitude of conduct, trustworthiness, and honesty are the foundation for stability and progress; altruism should guide all human endeavor, such that sincerity and respect for the rights of others become an integral part of every individual's actions; service to humanity is the true source of happiness, honor and meaning in life.

We also believe the campaign will be successful only to the extent that the force of religion is relied upon in the effort. The doctrine of the separation of church and state should not be used as a shield to block this salutary influence. Specifically, religious communities will have to be drawn in as collaborative partners in this important initiative.

As it proceeds, this campaign will accelerate a process of individual empowerment that will transform the way in which people, regardless of economic class, social standing, or ethnic, racial or religious background, interact with their society.

V. A TURNING POINT FOR ALL NATIONS: A CALL TO WORLD LEADERS

We have reached a turning point in the progress of nations.

*"Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life."*⁴⁵

Over a century ago, Bahá'u'lláh taught that there is but one God, that there is only one human race, and that all the world's religions represent stages in the revelation of God's will and purpose for humanity. Bahá'u'lláh announced the arrival of the time, foretold in all of the world's scriptures, when humanity would at last witness the uniting of all peoples into a peaceful and integrated society.

He said that human destiny lies not merely in the creation of a materially prosperous society, but also in the construction of a global civilization where individuals are encouraged to act as moral beings who understand their true nature and are able to progress toward a greater fulfillment that no degree of material bounty alone can provide.

Bahá'u'lláh was also among the first to invoke the phrase "new world order" to describe the momentous changes in the political, social and religious life of the world. "The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective," He wrote. "Soon will the present-day order be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead."⁴⁶

To this end, He laid a charge on the leaders and members of society alike. "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."⁴⁷

Above all else, leaders for the next generation must be motivated by a sincere desire to serve the entire community and must understand that leadership is a responsibility; not a path to privilege. For too long, leadership has been understood, by both leaders and followers, as the assertion of control over others. Indeed, this age demands a new definition of leadership and a new type of leader.⁴⁸

This is especially true in the international arena. In order to establish a sense of trust, win the confidence, and inculcate a fond affinity in the hearts of the world's people for

institutions of the international order, these leaders will have to reflect on their own actions.

Through an unblemished record of personal integrity, they must help restore confidence and trust in government. They must embody the characteristics of honesty, humility and sincerity of purpose in seeking the truth of a situation. They must be committed to and guided by principles, thereby acting in the best long-term interests of humanity as a whole.

"Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own selves," Bahá'u'lláh wrote. "Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men."⁴⁹

ENDNOTES

¹ Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. 1992. *An Agenda for Peace: Peace-making and Peace-Keeping*. Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council, January 31, New York: United Nations.

² Surely the preamble to The Charter of the United Nations is among the most inspired passages in the history of human governance:

"WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

"to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

"to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

"to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

"AND FOR THESE ENDS

"to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and

"to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

"to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institutions of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

"to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

"HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.

"Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations."

United Nations. 1994. *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice*. United Nations Department of Public Information. DPI/511 - 93243 - April 1994 - 40M.

³ The World Bank. 1994. *World Development Report*. pp. 162 - 163. (Oxford: Oxford University Press.)

⁴ There have been a number of recent proposals which discuss the need for reforms in the United Nations system within a particular issue area. *Our Common Future*, the report of The World Commission on Environment and Development, for example, suggested a number of changes, such as the creation of a special UN "Board for Sustainable Development" to coordinate UN action in promoting development while protecting the environment. The World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.)

Likewise, the report of The Brandt Commission, "Common Crisis North-South: Co-operation for World Recovery", makes suggestions for reform in the critical area of finance, trade and energy, as they affect North-South imbalances. The Brandt Commission, *Common Crisis North-South: Co-operation for World Recovery*. (London: Pan Books, 1983.)

The literature proposing widespread changes in the United Nations is also voluminous and continues to grow, especially in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The first major and serious reassessments of the United Nations began in the 1950s, in anticipation of the 10th anniversary of the Charter. In this regard the publication in 1958 of *World Peace Through World Law* by Louis B. Sohn and Grenville Clark, which was among the first solid proposals to suggest eliminating the veto power, must be considered a milestone. Grenville Clark, and Louis B. Sohn, *World Peace Through World Law*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.)

More recent proposals range from The Stockholm Initiative, which offers a generalist vision of what might be done to strengthen the United Nations, to Harold Stassen's recent *United Nations: a Working Paper for Restructuring*, which gives an article-by-article proposal for rewriting the UN Charter. Benjamin Ferencz's latest book, *New Legal Foundations for Global Survival*, offers a series of hard-headed and legal-minded suggestions for reform based on the premise that nations, peoples and individuals must be free to pursue their destinies in whatever way they may see fit - providing it does not jeopardize or destroy the fundamental human rights of others to live in peace and dignity.

The Stockholm Initiative on Global Security and Governance 1991. *Common Responsibility in the 1990's*. (Stockholm: Prime Minister's Office, Stockholm, Sweden.)

Harold Stassen, *United Nations: A Working Paper for Restructuring*. (Minneapolis: Learner Publications Company, 1994.)

Benjamin Ferencz, *New Legal Foundations for Global Survival* (Oceana Publications, 1994)

⁵ The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.)

⁶ Many thinkers have recognized the reality of oneness and understood its implications for the development of human society, including paleontologist Richard Leaky: "We are one species, one people. Every individual on this earth is a member of 'homo sapiens sapiens', and the geographical variations we see among peoples are simply biological nuances on the basic theme. The human capacity for culture permits its elaboration in widely different and colorful ways. The often very deep differences between those cultures should not be seen as divisions between people. Instead, cultures should be interpreted for what they really are: the ultimate declaration of belonging to the human species."

Richard E. Leakey, and Rodger Lewin, *Origins: What new discoveries reveal about the emergence of our species and its possible future*. (New York: Dutton, 1977.)

In general terms, the writings of Shoghi Effendi offer a thorough and extended exposition on the concept of the oneness of humanity. A brief summary of the concept, as Bahá'ís view it, can be found in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*.

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1938.) pp. 42-43.

⁷ We are not alone in making this proposal. The Commission on Global Governance writes in *Our Global Neighborhood*: "Our recommendation is that the General Assembly should agree to hold a World Conference on Governance in 1998, with its decisions to be ratified and put into effect by 2000."

The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1995.) p.351.

⁸ Two commonly used maxims illustrate this principle. "Small is beautiful," a maxim coined in the early '70s as an economic principle, applies equally to governance. Schumacher explains: "In the affairs of men, there always appears to be a need for at least two things simultaneously, which, on the face of it, seem to be incompatible and to exclude one another. We always need both freedom and order. We need the freedom of lots and lots of small, autonomous unities, and, at the same time, the orderliness of large-scale, possibly global, unity and coordination."

Schumacher, E.F. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973.) p. 65.

"Think globally, act locally," a slogan promoted by environmental and community development activists, captures a perspective in which the need for overall global coordination is carefully balanced against the need for local and national autonomy.

⁹ "Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society... [a system of world governance] seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. 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, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other."

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1974.) pp. 41-42.

¹⁰ Writing in the 1930s, Shoghi Effendi, who then led the worldwide Bahá'í community, sketched out some of the functions and responsibilities for a future world legislature. Among other things, he wrote: "a world legislature, whose members will, as trustees of the whole of mankind... enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples."

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1974) p. 203

This view is shared by such scholars as Jan Tinbergen, winner of the 1969 Nobel prize for Economics, who stated, "Mankind's problems can no longer be solved by national governments. What is needed is a World Government. This can best be achieved by strengthening the United Nations system."

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Report 1994. *Global Governance for the 21st Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press.) p.88.

¹¹ Bahá'í International Community. Proposals to the United Nations for Charter Revision. May 23, 1955.

¹² Throughout His writings, Bahá'u'lláh consistently uses the terms "order", "world order" and "new world order" to describe the ongoing and momentous series of changes in the political, social and religious life of the world. In the late 1860s, He wrote: "The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System - the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed."

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi and a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992.)

¹³ 'Abdu'l Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Trans. Marzieh Gail. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1957.) p. 24.

¹⁴ United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), *States of Disarray: The social effects of globalization*. (London: KPC Group. 1995) pp. 106-109.

¹⁵ There are many ways that such a Commission, or even the World Legislature itself, might go about determining fair and just borders for all nations. But as daunting as the task may seem, it is an important part of the process of building a new order. Wrote 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns - the shining exemplars of devotion and determination - shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve

and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking – the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world – should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure."

'Abdu'l Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Trans. Marzieh Gail. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1957.) pp. 64-65.

¹⁶ According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, charitable giving in the United States in 1994 rose by 3.6 percent to \$130 billion. Karen W. Arenson, "Charitable Giving Rose 3.6% in 1994, Philanthropy Trust Says," *The New York Times*, Thursday, 25 May 1995, sec. A, p.22.

¹⁷ "Regarding the whole question of an International Language.... We, as Bahá'ís, are very anxious to see a universal auxiliary tongue adopted as soon as possible; we are not the protagonists of any one language to fill this post. If the governments of the world agree on an existing language, or a constructed, new tongue, to be used internationally, we would heartily support it because we desire to see this step in the unification of the human race take place as soon as possible."

Shoghi Effendi, *Directives of the Guardian*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.) p.39.

In making this proposal, we wish to call attention to the term "auxiliary." The Bahá'í teachings value and promote cultural diversity, not uniformity. At this point in history, then, we do not envision imposing a single language worldwide. Rather, what we imagine is that peoples and nations would be keep their own local and national languages – while at the same time be encouraged to learn a universal language. Certainly such a universal language should ultimately be taught, as a required subject, in all of the world's schools. But this should in no way detract from legitimate expressions of national and local linguistic and cultural diversity.

¹⁸ "The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script," wrote Bahá'u'lláh in the late-1800s. "When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home."

Shoghi Effendi, trans., *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1983.) p.250.

¹⁹ In a "special contribution" to the 1994 Human Development Report, James Tobin, winner of the 1981 Nobel Prize for Economics, observes that "a permanent single currency" would eliminate much if not all of the turbulence currently associated with the huge amount of currency speculation on world markets today. Observing that such a single world currency is probably a long way off, he proposes as an interim measure an "international uniform tax" on spot transactions in foreign exchange.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Report 1994. *A Tax on International Currency Transactions*. (New York: Oxford University Press.) p.70.

²⁰ The principle of collective security was put forth by Bahá'u'lláh over a century ago in letters to the kings and rulers of the world: "Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should anyone among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice."

Shoghi Effendi, trans. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1976.) p.254.

²¹ The Report of the Independent Working Group on the Future of the United Nations. *The United Nations in its Second Half-Century*. (Yale University Press Service, 1995.) p. 16.

²² Glenview Foundation, *The Stassen Draft Charter for a New United Nations to Emerge from the Original, to Serve World Peace and Progress for the Next Forty Years*. (Philadelphia: Glenview Foundation. 1985.)

Grenville Clark and Louis B. Sohn, *World Peace Through World Law*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.)

Keith Hindell, "Reform of the United Nations?" in *The World Today: Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*. (United Kingdom, Feb. 1992.) Vol. 48, No. 2. pp.30-33.

John Logue, "New World Order Means Reformed U.N.", *World Federalist News*, July 1992.

Benjamin B. Ferencz and Ken Keyes Jr., *Planethood: The Key to Your Future*. (Coos Bay, Oregon: Love Line Books. 1991.)

Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. 1992. *An Agenda for Peace: Peace-making and Peace-Keeping*. Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council, January 31, New York: United Nations.

²³ This is not to say that steps to ban such weapons should await the full development and deployment of such a Force. We wholeheartedly support current steps to renew the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to firmly establish a comprehensive test ban, as well as any further efforts to eliminate nuclear, chemical and/or biological weapons. Likewise, stronger efforts must be made to restrict and control conventional weapons such as land mines, which kill indiscriminately.

²⁴ ul Haq, Mahbub, 1994. Senior Advisor to UNDP Administrator. Team Leader of the Group that prepares the UNDP annual Human Development Reports which have brought, in recent years, fresh insights to development theory and practice, including a new concept on human security.

²⁵ Erskine Childers, ed. *Challenges to the United Nations: Building a Safer World*. (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1994.) pp.21-25.

²⁶ John Huddleston, *The Search for a Just Society*. (Kidlington, Oxford: George Ronald. 1989.)

²⁷ About 75 years ago 'Abdu'l-Bahá offered the following suggestions for a future world court: "the national assemblies of each country and nation -- that is to say parliaments -- should elect two or three persons who are the choicest of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. The Supreme Tribunal will be composed of these people, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be

any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is! But by a limited and restricted League the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should."

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l Bahá. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and by Marzieh Gail. (Great Britain: W & J Mackay Ltd. 1978.) pp. 306-307.

²⁸ At the present time, for example, the Court's jurisdiction is limited to 1) cases which the parties refer to it jointly by special agreement, 2) matters concerning a treaty or convention in force which provides for reference to the Court, and 3) specified classes of legal disputes between States for which they have recognized the jurisdiction of the Court as compulsory. Europa World Year Book 1994. Vol.I. *International Court of Justice.* p.22.

²⁹ *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.* Trans. Shoghi Effendi. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1983.) p.260.

"The primary most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time." 'Abdu'l Bahá. *The Secret of Divine Civilization.* Trans. Marzieh Gail. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1957.) p.109.

"This same difference is noticeable among animals; some have been domesticated, educated, others left wild. The proof is clear that the world of nature is imperfect, the world of education perfect. That is to say, man is rescued from the exigencies of nature by training and culture; consequently, education is necessary, obligatory. But education is of various kinds. There is a training and development of the physical body which ensures strength and growth. There is intellectual education or mental training for which schools and colleges are founded. The third kind of education is that of the spirit. Through the breaths of the Holy Spirit man is uplifted into the world of moralities and illumined by the lights of divine bestowals. The moral world is only attained through the effulgence of the Sun of Reality and the quickening life of the divine spirit."

'Abdu'l Bahá, in a Talk delivered in St. Paul on 20 September 1912. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace.* p.329-330.

³⁰ Governments and their partners must bear in mind that material equality is neither achievable nor desirable. Absolute equality is a chimera. At various points along the way, there will nevertheless be the necessity for the redistribution of some of the world's wealth. For, indeed, it is becoming increasingly obvious that unbridled capitalism does not provide the answer either. Some regulation and redistribution is necessary to promote material justice. In this regard, a tax on income is, in principle, one of the fairest and most equitable means. There must also be a role for the voluntary sharing of wealth – both at an individual and an institutional level. Equal opportunities for economic advancement and progress, however, must be woven into the very fabric of the new order. Ultimately, the most important regulation on any economic system is the moral regulation that begins in the hearts and minds of people.

³¹ The Establishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a commendable first step in the right direction and may be useful in the long run, as one of the tools that could be the basis for funding Agenda 21, if its operational scale is enlarged and its mandate redefined.

³² World Conference on Human Rights. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. 14-25 June 1993. Vienna-Austria.

³³ A further elaboration of this concept can be found in *The Prosperity of Humankind*, a statement of the Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information, published in February 1995: "The activity most intimately linked to the consciousness that distinguishes human nature is the individual's exploration of reality for himself or herself. The freedom to investigate the purpose of existence and to develop the endowments of human nature that make it achievable requires protection. Human beings must be free to know. That such freedom is often abused and such abuse grossly encouraged by features of contemporary society does not detract in any degree from the validity of the impulse itself.

"It is this distinguishing impulse of human consciousness that provides the moral imperative for the enunciation of many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and the related Covenants. Universal education, freedom of movement, access to information, and the opportunity to participate in political life are all aspects of its operation that require explicit guarantee by the international community. The same is true of freedom of thought and belief, including religious liberty, along with the right to hold opinions and express these opinions appropriately.

"Since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. This trusteeship constitutes the moral foundation of most of the other rights -- principally economic and social -- which the instruments of the United Nations are attempting similarly to define. The security of the family and the home, the ownership of property, and the right to privacy are all implied in such a trusteeship. The obligations on the part of the community extend to the provision of employment, mental and physical health care, social security, fair wages, rest and recreation, and a host of other reasonable expectations on the part of the individual members of society.

"The principle of collective trusteeship creates also the right of every person to expect that those cultural conditions essential to his or her identity enjoy the protection of national and international law. Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. On the one hand, cultural expressions need to be protected from suffocation by the materialistic influences currently holding sway. On the other, cultures must be enabled to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization, free of manipulation for partisan political ends."

Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind*. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre. 1995.)

³⁴ Ultimately, respect for human rights must begin in the family: "Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household, and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations, and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, all fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore, as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered." 'Abdu'l Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdul-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*. Comp. Howard MacNutt. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1987.) p.157

³⁵ "When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battlefield after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind."
'Abdu'l Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Comp. Howard MacNutt. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1982.) pp.174-175.

³⁶ "Let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible. For the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. God willing, this is to be so." From a Talk by 'Abdu'l Bahá to Federation of Women's Clubs, Chicago, Illinois on 2 May 1912.
'Abdul Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1982.) p.77.

³⁷ "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 weight 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."
'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in John E. Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 156., 4th rev. ed., 1976, Wilmette: Bahá'í Books, published by Pyramid Publications for Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

³⁸ This principle, that women and girls should receive priority over men and boys in access to education, has been a long-standing principle in the Bahá'í teachings. Speaking in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "In proclaiming the oneness of mankind [Bahá'u'lláh] taught that men and women are equal in the sight of God and that there is no distinction to be made between them. The only difference between them now is due to lack of education and training. If woman is given equal opportunity of education, distinction and estimate of inferiority will disappear... Furthermore, the education of women is of greater importance than the education of men, for they are the mothers of the race, and mothers rear the children. The first teachers of children are the mothers. Therefore, they must be capably trained in order to educate both sons and daughters. There are many provisions in the words of Baha'u'llah in regard to this."
"He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes."
'Abdu'l Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. Comp. Howard MacNutt. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1982.) pp.174-175.

³⁹ Lawrence H. Summers, Vice President & Chief Economist for the World Bank, *Investing in All the People*. 1992. Also, USAID. 1989. *Technical Reports in Gender and Development. Making the Case for the Gender Variable: Women and the Wealth and Well-being of Nations*. Office of Women in Development.

⁴⁰ *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l Bahá*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and by Marzieh Gail. (Great Britain: W & J. Mackay Ltd. 1978.) p.302.

⁴¹ The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. As adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985.

⁴² *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l Bahá*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre and by Marzieh Gail. (Great Britain: W & J. Mackay Ltd. 1978.) p.303.

⁴³ The interfaith declaration entitled "Towards a Global Ethic," which was produced by an assembly of religious and spiritual leaders from virtually every major world religion and spiritual movement at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, suggests that it is indeed possible for the world's religions to find much common ground in this regard. The declaration states: "We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic... There already exist ancient guidelines for human behavior which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order."

⁴⁴ The Golden Rule, the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, is an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions:

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." *Udana-Varqa*, 5:18.

Zoroastrianism: "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self." *Dadistan-i Dinik*, 94:5.

Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary." *The Talmud*, Shabbat, 31a.

Hinduism: "This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbour which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after." *The Mahábháratá*.

Christianity: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." *Luke* 6:31.

Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." *Sunnah*.

Taoism: The good man "ought to pity the malignant tendencies of others; to regard their gains as if they were his own, and their losses in the same way." *The Thai-Shang*.

Confucianism: "Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you." *Analects*, XV, 23

Bahá'í Faith: "He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil." *Gleanings*.

⁴⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Willmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1938.) p. 202.

⁴⁶ Bahá'u'lláh. *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre. 1978.) p.113.

⁴⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by Habib Taherzadeh with the assistance of a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre. 1982.) p.167.

⁴⁸ The Commission on Global Governance writes: "As the world faces the need for enlightened responses to the challenges that arise on the eve of the new century, we are concerned at the lack of leadership over a wide spectrum of human affairs. At national, regional, and international levels, within communities and in international organizations, in governments and in non-governmental bodies, the world needs credible and sustained leadership.

"It needs leadership that is proactive, not simply reactive, that is inspired, not simply functional, that looks to the longer term and future generations for whom the present is held in

trust. It needs leaders made strong by vision, sustained by ethics, and revealed by political courage that looks beyond the next election.

"This cannot be leadership confined within domestic walls. It must reach beyond country, race, religion, culture, language, life-style. It must embrace a wider human constituency, be infused with a sense of caring for others, a sense of responsibility to the global neighborhood."

Report of the Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1995.) p.353.

⁴⁹ *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. Translated by Shoghi Effendi. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust. 1976.) p.7.

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THE
PROSPERITY
OF
HUMANKIND

THE
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OF
HUMANKIND

BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY
Office of Public Information

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHÁ'Í WORLD CENTRE

23 January 1995

To the National Spiritual Assemblies
of the Bahá'ís throughout the world

Dear Friends,

As the twentieth century rapidly approaches its end, there is a marked acceleration in the efforts of governments and peoples to reach common understandings on issues affecting the future of humankind. The 1992 Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the forthcoming March 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, to be followed in September by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, are conspicuous indications of this acceleration. These events are as capstones to the myriad activities taking place in different parts of the world involving a wide range of nongovernmental organizations and networks in an urgent search for values, ideas and practical measures that can advance prospects for the peaceful development of all peoples. In this endeavor can be discerned the gathering momentum of an emerging unity of thought in world undertakings, the realization of which our sacred scriptures describe as one of the lights of unity that will illumine the path to peace. The Bahá'ís around the world are, of course, heartened by such hopeful trends and will continue increasingly to lend moral and practical support to them as opportunities allow.

In view of the intensive attention being given to the issues of social and economic development since the Earth Summit in Brazil, we requested the Bahá'í International Community's Office of Public Information to prepare a statement on the concept of global prosperity in the context of the Bahá'í Teachings. This statement is now ready for distribution. We are therefore very pleased to send each of you herewith a copy of "The Prosperity of Humankind" and to commend it to your use as you pursue activities that enable you to interact with governments, organizations, and people everywhere. Our confident hope is that the statement will assist you to foster understanding of this important topic among the members of your communities and thus vitalize their contribution to the constructive social processes at work throughout the planet.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

*The Universal House
of Justice*

Enclosure

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THE PROSPERITY OF HUMANKIND

To an extent unimaginable a decade ago, the ideal of world peace is taking on form and substance. Obstacles that long seemed immovable have collapsed in humanity's path; apparently irreconcilable conflicts have begun to surrender to processes of consultation and resolution; a willingness to counter military aggression through unified international action is emerging. The effect has been to awaken in both the masses of humanity and many world leaders a degree of hopefulness about the future of our planet that had been nearly extinguished.

Throughout the world, immense intellectual and spiritual energies are seeking expression, energies whose gathering pressure is in direct proportion to the frustrations of recent decades. Everywhere the signs multiply that the earth's peoples yearn for an end to conflict and to the suffering and ruin from which no land is any longer immune. These rising impulses for change must be seized upon and channeled into overcoming the remaining barriers that block realization of the age-old dream of global peace. The effort of will required for such a task cannot be summoned up merely by appeals for action against the countless ills afflicting society. It must be galvanized by a vision of human prosperity in the fullest sense of the term—an awakening to the possibilities of the spiritual and material well-being now brought within grasp. Its beneficiaries must be all of the planet's inhabitants, without distinction, without the imposition of conditions unrelated to the fundamental goals of such a reorganization of human affairs.

History has thus far recorded principally the experience of tribes, cultures, classes, and nations. With the physical unification of the planet in this century and acknowledgement of the interdependence of all who live on it, the history of humanity as one people is now beginning. The long, slow civilizing of human character has been a sporadic development, uneven and admittedly inequitable in the material advantages it has conferred. Nevertheless, endowed with the wealth of all the genetic and cultural diversity that has evolved through past ages, the earth's inhabitants are now challenged to draw on their collective inheritance to take up, consciously and systematically, the responsibility for the design of their future.

It is unrealistic to imagine that the vision of the next stage in the advancement of civilization can be formulated without a searching reexamination of the attitudes and assumptions that currently underlie approaches to social and economic development. At the most obvious level, such rethinking will have to address practical matters of policy, resource utilization, planning procedures, implementation methodologies, and organization. As it proceeds, however, fundamental issues will quickly emerge, related to the long-term goals to be pursued, the social structures required, the implications for development of principles of social justice, and the nature and role of knowledge in effecting enduring change. Indeed, such a reexamination will be driven to seek a broad consensus of understanding about human nature itself.

Two avenues of discussion open directly onto all of these issues, whether conceptual or practical, and it is along these two avenues that we wish to explore, in the pages that follow, the subject of a strategy of global development. The first is prevailing beliefs about the nature and purpose of the development process; the second is the roles assigned in it to the various protagonists.

The assumptions directing most of current development planning are essentially materialistic. That is to say, the purpose of development is defined in terms of the successful cultivation in all societies of those means for the achievement of material prosperity that have, through trial and error, already come to characterize certain regions of the world. Modifications in development discourse do indeed occur, accommodating differences of culture and political system and responding to the alarming dangers posed by environmental degradation. Yet the underlying materialistic assumptions remain essentially unchallenged.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is no longer possible to maintain the belief that the approach to social and economic development to which the materialistic conception of life has given rise is capable of meeting humanity's needs. Optimistic forecasts about the changes it would generate have vanished into the ever-widening abyss that separates the living standards of a small and relatively diminishing minority of the world's inhabitants from the poverty experienced by the vast majority of the globe's population.

This unprecedented economic crisis, together with the social breakdown it has helped to engender, reflects a profound error of conception about human nature itself. For the levels of response elicited from human beings by the incentives of the prevailing order are not only inadequate, but seem almost irrelevant in the face of world events. We are being shown that, unless the development of society finds a purpose beyond the mere amelioration of material conditions, it will fail of attaining even these goals. That purpose must be sought in spiritual dimensions of life and motivation that

transcend a constantly changing economic landscape and an artificially imposed division of human societies into "developed" and "developing".

As the purpose of development is being redefined, it will become necessary also to look again at assumptions about the appropriate roles to be played by the protagonists in the process. The crucial role of government, at whatever level, requires no elaboration. Future generations, however, will find almost incomprehensible the circumstance that, in an age paying tribute to an egalitarian philosophy and related democratic principles, development planning should view the masses of humanity as essentially recipients of benefits from aid and training. Despite acknowledgement of participation as a principle, the scope of the decision making left to most of the world's population is at best secondary, limited to a range of choices formulated by agencies inaccessible to them and determined by goals that are often irreconcilable with their perceptions of reality.

This approach is even endorsed, implicitly if not explicitly, by established religion. Burdened by traditions of paternalism, prevailing religious thought seems incapable of translating an expressed faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature into confidence in humanity's collective capacity to transcend material conditions.

Such an attitude misses the significance of what is likely the most important social phenomenon of our time. If it is true that the governments of the world are striving through the medium of the United Nations system to construct a new global order, it is equally true that the peoples of the world are galvanized by this same vision. Their response has taken the form of a sudden efflorescence of countless movements and organizations of social change at local, regional, and international levels. Human rights, the advance of women, the social requirements of sustainable economic development, the overcoming of prejudices, the moral education of children, literacy, primary health care, and a host of other vital concerns each commands the urgent advocacy of organizations supported by growing numbers in every part of the globe.

This response of the world's people themselves to the crying needs of the age echoes the call that Bahá'u'lláh raised over a hundred years ago: "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements." The transformation in the way that great numbers of ordinary people are coming to see themselves—a change that is dramatically abrupt in the perspective of the history of civilization—raises fundamental questions about the role assigned to the general body of humanity in the planning of our planet's future.

I

The bedrock of a strategy that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must be the consciousness of the oneness of humankind. Deceptively simple in popular discourse, the concept that humanity constitutes a single people presents fundamental challenges to the way that most of the institutions of contemporary society carry out their functions. Whether in the form of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life, conflict is accepted as the mainspring of human interaction. It represents yet another expression in social organization of the materialistic interpretation of life that has progressively consolidated itself over the past two centuries.

In a letter addressed to Queen Victoria over a century ago, and employing an analogy that points to the one model holding convincing promise for the organization of a planetary society, Bahá'u'lláh compared the world to the human body. There is, indeed, no other model in phenomenal existence to which we can reasonably look. Human society is composed not of a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each one of whom is endowed with intelligence and will; nevertheless, the modes of operation that characterize man's biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity. Paradoxically, it is precisely the wholeness and complexity of the order constituting the human body—and the perfect integration into it of the body's cells—that permit the full realization of the distinctive capacities inherent in each of these component elements. No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole. The physical well-being thus achieved finds its purpose in making possible the expression of human consciousness; that is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts.

What is true of the life of the individual has its parallels in human society. The human species is an organic whole, the leading edge of the evolutionary process. That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inhering diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. What the peoples of the world are today experiencing, Bahá'u'lláh said, is their collective coming-of-age, and it is through this emerging maturity of the race that the principle of unity in diversity will find full expression. From its earliest beginnings in

the consolidation of family life, the process of social organization has successively moved from the simple structures of clan and tribe, through multitudinous forms of urban society, to the eventual emergence of the nation-state, each stage opening up a wealth of new opportunities for the exercise of human capacity.

Clearly, the advancement of the race has not occurred at the expense of human individuality. As social organization has increased, the scope for the expression of the capacities latent in each human being has correspondingly expanded. Because the relationship between the individual and society is a reciprocal one, the transformation now required must occur simultaneously within human consciousness and the structure of social institutions. It is in the opportunities afforded by this twofold process of change that a strategy of global development will find its purpose. At this crucial stage of history, that purpose must be to establish enduring foundations on which planetary civilization can gradually take shape.

Laying the groundwork for global civilization calls for the creation of laws and institutions that are universal in both character and authority. The effort can begin only when the concept of the oneness of humanity has been wholeheartedly embraced by those in whose hands the responsibility for decision making rests, and when the related principles are propagated through both educational systems and the media of mass communication. Once this threshold is crossed, a process will have been set in motion through which the peoples of the world can be drawn into the task of formulating common goals and committing themselves to their attainment. Only so fundamental a reorientation can protect them, too, from the age-old demons of ethnic and religious strife. Only through the dawning consciousness that they constitute a single people will the inhabitants of the planet be enabled to turn away from the patterns of conflict that have dominated social organization in the past and begin to learn the ways of collaboration and conciliation. "The well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh writes, "its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."

II

Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected. An age that

sees the people of the world increasingly gaining access to information of every kind and to a diversity of ideas will find justice asserting itself as the ruling principle of successful social organization. With ever greater frequency, proposals aiming at the development of the planet will have to submit to the candid light of the standards it requires.

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is "the best beloved of all things" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgments, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.

At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision making, because it is the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved. Far from encouraging the punitive spirit that has often masqueraded under its name in past ages, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, in the achievement of human progress, the interests of the individual and those of society are inextricably linked. To the extent that justice becomes a guiding concern of human interaction, a consultative climate is encouraged that permits options to be examined dispassionately and appropriate courses of action selected. In such a climate the perennial tendencies toward manipulation and partisanship are far less likely to deflect the decision-making process.

The implications for social and economic development are profound. Concern for justice protects the task of defining progress from the temptation to sacrifice the well-being of the generality of humankind—and even of the planet itself—to the advantages which technological breakthroughs can make available to privileged minorities. In design and planning, it ensures that limited resources are not diverted to the pursuit of projects extraneous to a community's essential social or economic priorities. Above all, only development programs that are perceived as meeting their needs and as being just and equitable in objective can hope to engage the commitment of the masses of humanity, upon whom implementation depends. The relevant human qualities such as honesty, a willingness to work, and a spirit of cooperation are successfully harnessed to the accomplishment of enormously demanding collective goals when every member of society—indeed every component group within society—can trust that they are protected by standards and assured of benefits that apply equally to all.

At the heart of the discussion of a strategy of social and economic development, therefore, lies the issue of human rights. The shaping of such a strategy calls for the promotion of human rights to be freed from the grip of the false dichotomies that have for so long held it hostage. Concern that

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each human being should enjoy the freedom of thought and action conducive to his or her personal growth does not justify devotion to the cult of individualism that so deeply corrupts many areas of contemporary life. Nor does concern to ensure the welfare of society as a whole require a deification of the state as the supposed source of humanity's well-being. Far otherwise: the history of the present century shows all too clearly that such ideologies and the partisan agendas to which they give rise have been themselves the principal enemies of the interests they purport to serve. Only in a consultative framework made possible by the consciousness of the organic unity of humankind can all aspects of the concern for human rights find legitimate and creative expression.

Today, the agency on whom has devolved the task of creating this framework and of liberating the promotion of human rights from those who would exploit it is the system of international institutions born out of the tragedies of two ruinous world wars and the experience of worldwide economic breakdown. Significantly, the term "human rights" has come into general use only since the promulgation of the United Nations Charter in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights three years later. In these history-making documents, formal recognition has been given to respect for social justice as a correlative of the establishment of world peace. The fact that the Declaration passed without a dissenting vote in the General Assembly conferred on it from the outset an authority that has grown steadily in the intervening years.

The activity most intimately linked to the consciousness that distinguishes human nature is the individual's exploration of reality for himself or herself. The freedom to investigate the purpose of existence and to develop the endowments of human nature that make it achievable requires protection. Human beings must be free to know. That such freedom is often abused and such abuse grossly encouraged by features of contemporary society does not detract in any degree from the validity of the impulse itself.

It is this distinguishing impulse of human consciousness that provides the moral imperative for the enunciation of many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and the related Covenants. Universal education, freedom of movement, access to information, and the opportunity to participate in political life are all aspects of its operation that require explicit guarantee by the international community. The same is true of freedom of thought and belief, including religious liberty, along with the right to hold opinions and express these opinions appropriately.

Since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. This trusteeship constitutes the moral foundation of most of the other rights—principally economic and social—which the instruments of the United Nations are attempting similarly to define. The security of the family and the home, the ownership

of property, and the right to privacy are all implied in such a trusteeship. The obligations on the part of the community extend to the provision of employment, mental and physical health care, social security, fair wages, rest and recreation, and a host of other reasonable expectations on the part of the individual members of society.

The principle of collective trusteeship creates also the right of every person to expect that those cultural conditions essential to his or her identity enjoy the protection of national and international law. Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. On the one hand, cultural expressions need to be protected from suffocation by the materialistic influences currently holding sway. On the other, cultures must be enabled to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization, free of manipulation for partisan political ends.

“The right of men”, Bahá’u’lláh says, “is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance.”

III

In order for the standard of human rights now in the process of formulation by the community of nations to be promoted and established as prevailing international norms, a fundamental redefinition of human relationships is called for. Present-day conceptions of what is natural and appropriate in relationships—among human beings themselves, between human beings and nature, between the individual and society, and between the members of society and its institutions—reflect levels of understanding arrived at by the human race during earlier and less mature stages in its development. If humanity is indeed coming of age, if all the inhabitants of the planet constitute a single people, if justice is to be the ruling principle of social organization—then existing conceptions that were born out of ignorance of these emerging realities have to be recast.

Movement in this direction has barely begun. It will lead, as it unfolds, to a new understanding of the nature of the family and of the rights and responsibilities of each of its members. It will entirely transform the role of women at every level of society. Its effect in reordering people's relation to the work they do and their understanding of the place of economic activity in their lives will be sweeping. It will bring about far-reaching changes in the governance of human affairs and in the institutions created to carry it out. Through its influence, the work of society's rapidly proliferating nongovernmental organizations will be increasingly rationalized. It will ensure the creation of binding legislation that will protect both the environment and the development needs of all peoples. Ultimately, the restructuring or transformation of the United Nations system that this movement is already bringing about will no doubt lead to the establishment of a world federation of nations with its own legislative, judicial, and executive bodies.

Central to the task of reconceptualizing the system of human relationships is the process that Bahá'u'lláh refers to as consultation. "In all things it is necessary to consult," is His advice. "The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation."

The standard of truth seeking this process demands is far beyond the patterns of negotiation and compromise that tend to characterize the present-day discussion of human affairs. It cannot be achieved—indeed, its attainment is severely handicapped—by the culture of protest that is another widely prevailing feature of contemporary society. Debate, propaganda, the adversarial method, the entire apparatus of partisanship that have long been such familiar features of collective action are all fundamentally harmful to its purpose: that is, arriving at a consensus about the truth of a given situation and the wisest choice of action among the options open at any given moment.

What Bahá'u'lláh is calling for is a consultative process in which the individual participants strive to transcend their respective points of view, in order to function as members of a body with its own interests and goals. In such an atmosphere, characterized by both candor and courtesy, ideas belong not to the individual to whom they occur during the discussion but to the group as a whole, to take up, discard, or revise as seems to best serve the goal pursued. Consultation succeeds to the extent that all participants support the decisions arrived at, regardless of the individual opinions with which they entered the discussion. Under such circumstances an earlier decision can be readily reconsidered if experience exposes any shortcomings.

Viewed in such a light, consultation is the operating expression of justice in human affairs. So vital is it to the success of collective endeavor that it must constitute a basic feature of a viable strategy of social and economic development. Indeed, the participation of the people on whose commitment

and efforts the success of such a strategy depends becomes effective only as consultation is made the organizing principle of every project. "No man can attain his true station", is Bahá'u'lláh's counsel, "except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation."

IV

The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge, on the part of individuals and social organizations alike. Universal education will be an indispensable contributor to this process of capacity building, but the effort will succeed only as human affairs are so reorganized as to enable both individuals and groups in every sector of society to acquire knowledge and apply it to the shaping of human affairs.

Throughout recorded history, human consciousness has depended upon two basic knowledge systems through which its potentialities have progressively been expressed: science and religion. Through these two agencies, the race's experience has been organized, its environment interpreted, its latent powers explored, and its moral and intellectual life disciplined. They have acted as the real progenitors of civilization. With the benefit of hindsight, it is evident, moreover, that the effectiveness of this dual structure has been greatest during those periods when, each in its own sphere, religion and science were able to work in concert.

Given the almost universal respect in which science is currently held, its credentials need no elaboration. In the context of a strategy of social and economic development, the issue rather is how scientific and technological activity is to be organized. If the work involved is viewed chiefly as the preserve of established elites living in a small number of nations, it is obvious that the enormous gap which such an arrangement has already created between the world's rich and poor will only continue to widen, with the disastrous consequences for the world's economy already noted. Indeed, if most of humankind continue to be regarded mainly as users of products of science and technology created elsewhere, then programs ostensibly designed to serve their needs cannot properly be termed "development".

A central challenge, therefore—and an enormous one—is the expansion

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of scientific and technological activity. Instruments of social and economic change so powerful must cease to be the patrimony of advantaged segments of society, and must be so organized as to permit people everywhere to participate in such activity on the basis of capacity. Apart from the creation of programs that make the required education available to all who are able to benefit from it, such reorganization will require the establishment of viable centers of learning throughout the world, institutions that will enhance the capability of the world's peoples to participate in the generation and application of knowledge. Development strategy, while acknowledging the wide differences of individual capacity, must take as a major goal the task of making it possible for all of the earth's inhabitants to approach on an equal basis the processes of science and technology which are their common birth-right. Familiar arguments for maintaining the status quo grow daily less compelling as the accelerating revolution in communication technologies now brings information and training within reach of vast numbers of people around the globe, wherever they may be, whatever their cultural backgrounds.

The challenges facing humanity in its religious life, if different in character, are equally daunting. For the vast majority of the world's population, the idea that human nature has a spiritual dimension—indeed that its fundamental identity is spiritual—is a truth requiring no demonstration. It is a perception of reality that can be discovered in the earliest records of civilization and that has been cultivated for several millenia by every one of the great religious traditions of humanity's past. Its enduring achievements in law, the fine arts, and the civilizing of human intercourse are what give substance and meaning to history. In one form or another its promptings are a daily influence in the lives of most people on earth and, as events around the world today dramatically show, the longings it awakens are both inextinguishable and incalculably potent.

It would seem obvious, therefore, that efforts of any kind to promote human progress must seek to tap capacities so universal and so immensely creative. Why, then, have spiritual issues facing humanity not been central to the development discourse? Why have most of the priorities—indeed most of the underlying assumptions—of the international development agenda been determined so far by materialistic world views to which only small minorities of the earth's population subscribe? How much weight can be placed on a professed devotion to the principle of universal participation that denies the validity of the participants' defining cultural experience?

It may be argued that, since spiritual and moral issues have historically been bound up with contending theological doctrines which are not susceptible of objective proof, these issues lie outside the framework of the international community's development concerns. To accord them any significant role would be to open the door to precisely those dogmatic influences that

have nurtured social conflict and blocked human progress. There is doubtless a measure of truth in such an argument. Exponents of the world's various theological systems bear a heavy responsibility not only for the disrepute into which faith itself has fallen among many progressive thinkers, but for the inhibitions and distortions produced in humanity's continuing discourse on spiritual meaning. To conclude, however, that the answer lies in discouraging the investigation of spiritual reality and ignoring the deepest roots of human motivation is a self-evident delusion. The sole effect, to the degree that such censorship has been achieved in recent history, has been to deliver the shaping of humanity's future into the hands of a new orthodoxy, one which argues that truth is amoral and facts are independent of values.

So far as earthly existence is concerned, many of the greatest achievements of religion have been moral in character. Through its teachings and through the examples of human lives illumined by these teachings, masses of people in all ages and lands have developed the capacity to love. They have learned to discipline the animal side of their natures, to make great sacrifices for the common good, to practise forgiveness, generosity, and trust, to use wealth and other resources in ways that serve the advancement of civilization. Institutional systems have been devised to translate these moral advances into the norms of social life on a vast scale. However obscured by dogmatic accretions and diverted by sectarian conflict, the spiritual impulses set in motion by such transcendent figures as Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad have been the chief influence in the civilizing of human character.

Since, then, the challenge is the empowerment of humankind through a vast increase in access to knowledge, the strategy that can make this possible must be constructed around an ongoing and intensifying dialogue between science and religion. It is—or by now should be—a truism that, in every sphere of human activity and at every level, the insights and skills that represent scientific accomplishment must look to the force of spiritual commitment and moral principle to ensure their appropriate application. People need, for example, to learn how to separate fact from conjecture—indeed to distinguish between subjective views and objective reality; the extent to which individuals and institutions so equipped can contribute to human progress, however, will be determined by their devotion to truth and their detachment from the promptings of their own interests and passions. Another capacity that science must cultivate in all people is that of thinking in terms of process, including historical process; however, if this intellectual advancement is to contribute ultimately to promoting development, its perspective must be unclouded by prejudices of race, culture, sex, or sectarian belief. Similarly, the training that can make it possible for the earth's inhabitants to participate in the production of wealth will advance the aims of

development only to the extent that such an impulse is illumined by the spiritual insight that service to humankind is the purpose of both individual life and social organization.

V

It is in the context of raising the level of human capacity through the expansion of knowledge at all levels that the economic issues facing humankind need to be addressed. As the experience of recent decades has demonstrated, material benefits and endeavors cannot be regarded as ends in themselves. Their value consists not only in providing for humanity's basic needs in housing, food, health care, and the like, but in extending the reach of human abilities. The most important role that economic efforts must play in development lies, therefore, in equipping people and institutions with the means through which they can achieve the real purpose of development: that is, laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness.

The challenge to economic thinking is to accept unambiguously this purpose of development—and its own role in fostering creation of the means to achieve it. Only in this way can economics and the related sciences free themselves from the undertow of the materialistic preoccupations that now distract them, and fulfill their potential as tools vital to achieving human well-being in the full sense of the term. Nowhere is the need for a rigorous dialogue between the work of science and the insights of religion more apparent.

The problem of poverty is a case in point. Proposals aimed at addressing it are predicated on the conviction that material resources exist, or can be created by scientific and technological endeavor, which will alleviate and eventually entirely eradicate this age-old condition as a feature of human life. A major reason why such relief is not achieved is that the necessary scientific and technological advances respond to a set of priorities only tangentially related to the real interests of the generality of humankind. A radical reordering of these priorities will be required if the burden of poverty is finally to be lifted from the world. Such an achievement demands a determined quest for appropriate values, a quest that will test profoundly both the spiritual and scientific resources of humankind. Religion will be severely hampered in contributing to this joint undertaking so long as it is

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held prisoner by sectarian doctrines which cannot distinguish between contentment and mere passivity and which teach that poverty is an inherent feature of earthly life, escape from which lies only in the world beyond. To participate effectively in the struggle to bring material well-being to humanity, the religious spirit must find—in the Source of inspiration from which it flows—new spiritual concepts and principles relevant to an age that seeks to establish unity and justice in human affairs.

Unemployment raises similar issues. In most of contemporary thinking, the concept of work has been largely reduced to that of gainful employment aimed at acquiring the means for the consumption of available goods. The system is circular: acquisition and consumption resulting in the maintenance and expansion of the production of goods and, in consequence, in supporting paid employment. Taken individually, all of these activities are essential to the well-being of society. The inadequacy of the overall conception, however, can be read in both the apathy that social commentators discern among large numbers of the employed in every land and the demoralization of the growing armies of the unemployed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there is increasing recognition that the world is in urgent need of a new “work ethic”. Here again, nothing less than insights generated by the creative interaction of the scientific and religious systems of knowledge can produce so fundamental a reorientation of habits and attitudes. Unlike animals, which depend for their sustenance on whatever the environment readily affords, human beings are impelled to express the immense capacities latent within them through productive work designed to meet their own needs and those of others. In acting thus they become participants, at however modest a level, in the processes of the advancement of civilization. They fulfill purposes that unite them with others. To the extent that work is consciously undertaken in a spirit of service to humanity, Bahá'u'lláh says, it is a form of prayer, a means of worshipping God. Every individual has the capacity to see himself or herself in this light, and it is to this inalienable capacity of the self that development strategy must appeal, whatever the nature of the plans being pursued, whatever the rewards they promise. No narrower a perspective will ever call up from the people of the world the magnitude of effort and commitment that the economic tasks ahead will require.

A challenge of similar nature faces economic thinking as a result of the environmental crisis. The fallacies in theories based on the belief that there is no limit to nature's capacity to fulfill any demand made on it by human beings have now been coldly exposed. A culture which attaches absolute value to expansion, to acquisition, and to the satisfaction of people's wants is being compelled to recognize that such goals are not, by themselves, realistic guides to policy. Inadequate, too, are approaches to economic issues whose decision-making tools cannot deal with the fact that most of

the major challenges are global rather than particular in scope.

The earnest hope that this moral crisis can somehow be met by deifying nature itself is an evidence of the spiritual and intellectual desperation that the crisis has engendered. Recognition that creation is an organic whole and that humanity has the responsibility to care for this whole, welcome as it is, does not represent an influence which can by itself establish in the consciousness of people a new system of values. Only a breakthrough in understanding that is scientific and spiritual in the fullest sense of the terms will empower the human race to assume the trusteeship toward which history impels it.

All people will have sooner or later to recover, for example, the capacity for contentment, the welcoming of moral discipline, and the devotion to duty that, until relatively recently, were considered essential aspects of being human. Repeatedly throughout history, the teachings of the Founders of the great religions have been able to instill these qualities of character in the mass of people who responded to them. The qualities themselves are even more vital today, but their expression must now take a form consistent with humanity's coming-of-age. Here again, religion's challenge is to free itself from the obsessions of the past: contentment is not fatalism; morality has nothing in common with the life-denying puritanism that has so often presumed to speak in its name; and a genuine devotion to duty brings feelings not of self-righteousness but of self-worth.

The effect of the persistent denial to women of full equality with men sharpens still further the challenge to science and religion in the economic life of humankind. To any objective observer the principle of the equality of the sexes is fundamental to all realistic thinking about the future well-being of the earth and its people. It represents a truth about human nature that has waited largely unrecognized throughout the long ages of the race's childhood and adolescence. "Women and men", is Bahá'u'lláh's emphatic assertion, "have been and will always be equal in the sight of God." The rational soul has no sex, and whatever social inequities may have been dictated by the survival requirements of the past, they clearly cannot be justified at a time when humanity stands at the threshold of maturity. A commitment to the establishment of full equality between men and women, in all departments of life and at every level of society, will be central to the success of efforts to conceive and implement a strategy of global development.

Indeed, in an important sense, progress in this area will itself be a measure of the success of any development program. Given the vital role of economic activity in the advancement of civilization, visible evidence of the pace at which development is progressing will be the extent to which women gain access to all avenues of economic endeavor. The challenge goes beyond ensuring an equitable distribution of opportunity, important as that

is. It calls for a fundamental rethinking of economic issues in a manner that will invite the full participation of a range of human experience and insight hitherto largely excluded from the discourse. The classical economic models of impersonal markets in which human beings act as autonomous makers of self-regarding choices will not serve the needs of a world motivated by ideals of unity and justice. Society will find itself increasingly challenged to develop new economic models shaped by insights that arise from a sympathetic understanding of shared experience, from viewing human beings in relation to others, and from a recognition of the centrality to social well-being of the role of the family and the community. Such an intellectual breakthrough—strongly altruistic rather than self-centered in focus—must draw heavily on both the spiritual and scientific sensibilities of the race, and millenia of experience have prepared women to make crucial contributions to the common effort.

VI

To contemplate a transformation of society on this scale is to raise both the question of the power that can be harnessed to accomplish it and the issue inextricably linked to it, the authority to exercise that power. As with all other implications of the accelerating integration of the planet and its people, both of these familiar terms stand in urgent need of redefinition.

Throughout history—and despite theologically or ideologically inspired assurances to the contrary—power has been largely interpreted as advantage enjoyed by persons or groups. Often, indeed, it has been expressed simply in terms of means to be used against others. This interpretation of power has become an inherent feature of the culture of division and conflict that has characterized the human race during the past several millenia, regardless of the social, religious, or political orientations that have enjoyed ascendancy in given ages, in given parts of the world. In general, power has been an attribute of individuals, factions, peoples, classes, and nations. It has been an attribute especially associated with men rather than women. Its chief effect has been to confer on its beneficiaries the ability to acquire, to surpass, to dominate, to resist, to win.

The resulting historical processes have been responsible for both ruinous setbacks in human well-being and extraordinary advances in civilization. To appreciate the benefits is to acknowledge also the setbacks, as well as the

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clear limitations of the behavioral patterns that have produced both. Habits and attitudes related to the use of power which emerged during the long ages of humanity's infancy and adolescence have reached the outer limits of their effectiveness. Today, in an era most of whose pressing problems are global in nature, persistence in the idea that power means advantage for various segments of the human family is profoundly mistaken in theory and of no practical service to the social and economic development of the planet. Those who still adhere to it—and who could in earlier eras have felt confident in such adherence—now find their plans enmeshed in inexplicable frustrations and hindrances. In its traditional, competitive expression, power is as irrelevant to the needs of humanity's future as would be the technologies of railway locomotion to the task of lifting space satellites into orbits around the earth.

The analogy is more than a little apt. The human race is being urged by the requirements of its own maturation to free itself from its inherited understanding and use of power. That it can do so is demonstrated by the fact that, although dominated by the traditional conception, humanity has always been able to conceive of power in other forms critical to its hopes. History provides ample evidence that, however intermittently and ineptly, people of every background, throughout the ages, have tapped a wide range of creative resources within themselves. The most obvious example, perhaps, has been the power of truth itself, an agent of change associated with some of the greatest advances in the philosophical, religious, artistic, and scientific experience of the race. Force of character represents yet another means of mobilizing immense human response, as does the influence of example, whether in the lives of individual human beings or in human societies. Almost wholly unappreciated is the magnitude of the force that will be generated by the achievement of unity, an influence "so powerful", in Bahá'u'lláh's words, "that it can illuminate the whole Earth."

The institutions of society will succeed in eliciting and directing the potentialities latent in the consciousness of the world's peoples to the extent that the exercise of authority is governed by principles that are in harmony with the evolving interests of a rapidly maturing human race. Such principles include the obligation of those in authority to win the confidence, respect, and genuine support of those whose actions they seek to govern; to consult openly and to the fullest extent possible with all whose interests are affected by decisions being arrived at; to assess in an objective manner both the real needs and the aspirations of the communities they serve; to benefit from scientific and moral advancement in order to make appropriate use of the community's resources, including the energies of its members. No single principle of effective authority is so important as giving priority to building and maintaining unity among the members of a society and the members of its administrative institutions. Reference has already been made

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to the intimately associated issue of commitment to the search for justice in all matters.

Clearly, such principles can operate only within a culture that is essentially democratic in spirit and method. To say this, however, is not to endorse the ideology of partisanship that has everywhere boldly assumed democracy's name and which, despite impressive contributions to human progress in the past, today finds itself mired in the cynicism, apathy, and corruption to which it has given rise. In selecting those who are to take collective decisions on its behalf, society does not need and is not well served by the political theater of nominations, candidature, electioneering, and solicitation. It lies within the capacity of all people, as they become progressively educated and convinced that their real development interests are being served by programs proposed to them, to adopt electoral procedures that will gradually refine the selection of their decision-making bodies.

As the integration of humanity gains momentum, those who are thus selected will increasingly have to see all their efforts in a global perspective. Not only at the national, but also at the local level, the elected governors of human affairs should, in Bahá'u'lláh's view, consider themselves responsible for the welfare of all of humankind.

VII

The task of creating a global development strategy that will accelerate humanity's coming-of-age constitutes a challenge to reshape fundamentally all the institutions of society. The protagonists to whom the challenge addresses itself are all of the inhabitants of the planet: the generality of humankind, members of governing institutions at all levels, persons serving in agencies of international coordination, scientists and social thinkers, all those endowed with artistic talents or with access to the media of communication, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations. The response called for must base itself on an unconditioned recognition of the oneness of humankind, a commitment to the establishment of justice as the organizing principle of society, and a determination to exploit to their utmost the possibilities that a systematic dialogue between the scientific and religious genius of the race can bring to the building of human capacity. The enterprise requires a radical rethinking of most of the concepts and assumptions currently governing social and economic life. It must be wedded, as well, to

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a conviction that, however long the process and whatever setbacks may be encountered, the governance of human affairs can be conducted along lines that serve humanity's real needs.

Only if humanity's collective childhood has indeed come to an end and the age of its adulthood is dawning does such a prospect represent more than another utopian mirage. To imagine that an effort of the magnitude envisioned here can be summoned up by despondent and mutually antagonistic peoples and nations runs counter to the whole of received wisdom. Only if, as Bahá'u'lláh asserts to be the case, the course of social evolution has arrived at one of those decisive turning points through which all of the phenomena of existence are impelled suddenly forward into new stages of their development, can such a possibility be conceived. A profound conviction that just so great a transformation in human consciousness is underway has inspired the views set forth in this statement. To all who recognize in it familiar promptings from within their own hearts, Bahá'u'lláh's words bring assurance that God has, in this matchless day, endowed humanity with spiritual resources fully equal to the challenge:

O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared.

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things.

The turmoil now convulsing human affairs is unprecedented, and many of its consequences enormously destructive. Dangers unimagined in all history gather around a distracted humanity. The greatest error that the world's leadership could make at this juncture, however, would be to allow the crisis to cast doubt on the ultimate outcome of the process that is occurring. A world is passing away and a new one is struggling to be born. The habits, attitudes, and institutions that have accumulated over the centuries are being subjected to tests that are as necessary to human development as they are inescapable. What is required of the peoples of the world is a measure of faith and resolve to match the enormous energies with which the Creator of all things has endowed this spiritual springtime of the race. "Be united in counsel," is Bahá'u'lláh's appeal,

be one in thought. May each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion.

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Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavors be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

THE PROSPERITY OF HUMANKIND

To an extent unimaginable a decade ago, the ideal of world peace is taking on form and substance. Obstacles that long seemed immovable have collapsed in humanity's path; apparently irreconcilable conflicts have begun to surrender to processes of consultation and resolution; a willingness to counter military aggression through unified international action is emerging. The effect has been to awaken in both the masses of humanity and many world leaders a degree of hopefulness about the future of our planet that had been nearly extinguished.

Throughout the world, immense intellectual and spiritual energies are seeking expression, energies whose gathering pressure is in direct proportion to the frustrations of recent decades. Everywhere the signs multiply that the earth's peoples yearn for an end to conflict and to the suffering and ruin from which no land is any longer immune. These rising impulses for change must be seized upon and channeled into overcoming the remaining barriers that block realization of the age-old dream of global peace. The effort of will required for such a task cannot be summoned up merely by appeals for action against the countless ills afflicting society. It must be galvanized by a vision of human prosperity in the fullest sense of the term—an awakening to the possibilities of the spiritual and material well-being now brought within grasp. Its beneficiaries must be all of the planet's inhabitants, without distinction, without the imposition of conditions unrelated to the fundamental goals of such a reorganization of human affairs.

History has thus far recorded principally the experience of tribes, cultures, classes, and nations. With the physical unification of the planet in this century and acknowledgement of the interdependence of all who live on it, the history of humanity as one people is now beginning. The long, slow civilizing of human character has been a sporadic development, uneven and admittedly inequitable in the material advantages it has conferred. Nevertheless, endowed with the wealth of all the genetic and cultural diversity that has evolved through past ages, the earth's inhabitants are now challenged to draw on their collective inheritance to take up, consciously and systematically, the responsibility for the design of their future.

It is unrealistic to imagine that the vision of the next stage in the advancement of civilization can be formulated without a searching reexamination of the attitudes and assumptions that currently underlie approaches to social and economic development. At the most obvious level, such rethinking will have to address practical matters of policy, resource utilization, planning procedures, implementation methodologies, and organization. As it proceeds, however, fundamental issues will quickly emerge, related to the long-term goals to be pursued, the social structures required, the implications for development of principles of social justice, and the nature and role of knowledge in effecting enduring change. Indeed, such a reexamination will be driven to seek a broad consensus of understanding about human nature itself.

Two avenues of discussion open directly onto all of these issues, whether conceptual or practical, and it is along these two avenues that we wish to explore, in the pages that follow, the subject of a strategy of global development. The first is prevailing beliefs about the nature and purpose of the development process; the second is the roles assigned in it to the various protagonists.

The assumptions directing most of current development planning are essentially materialistic. That is to say, the purpose of development is defined in terms of the successful cultivation in all societies of those means for the achievement of material prosperity that have, through trial and error, already come to characterize certain regions of the world. Modifications in development discourse do indeed occur, accommodating differences of culture and political system and responding to the alarming dangers posed by environmental degradation. Yet the underlying materialistic assumptions remain essentially unchallenged.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, it is no longer possible to maintain the belief that the approach to social and economic development to which the materialistic conception of life has given rise is capable of meeting humanity's needs. Optimistic forecasts about the changes it would generate have vanished into the ever-widening abyss that separates the living standards of a small and relatively diminishing minority of the world's inhabitants from the poverty experienced by the vast majority of the globe's population.

This unprecedented economic crisis, together with the social breakdown it has helped to engender, reflects a profound error of conception about human nature itself. For the levels of response elicited from human beings by the incentives of the prevailing order are not only inadequate, but seem almost irrelevant in the face of world events. We are being shown that, unless the development of society finds a purpose beyond the mere amelioration of material conditions, it will fail of attaining even these goals. That purpose must be sought in spiritual dimensions of life and motivation that

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The earnest hope that this moral crisis can somehow be met by deifying nature itself is an evidence of the spiritual and intellectual desperation that the crisis has engendered. Recognition that creation is an organic whole and that humanity has the responsibility to care for this whole, welcome as it is, does not represent an influence which can by itself establish in the consciousness of people a new system of values. Only a breakthrough in understanding that is scientific and spiritual in the fullest sense of the terms will empower the human race to assume the trusteeship toward which history impels it.

All people will have sooner or later to recover, for example, the capacity for contentment, the welcoming of moral discipline, and the devotion to duty that, until relatively recently, were considered essential aspects of being human. Repeatedly throughout history, the teachings of the Founders of the great religions have been able to instill these qualities of character in the mass of people who responded to them. The qualities themselves are even more vital today, but their expression must now take a form consistent with humanity's coming-of-age. Here again, religion's challenge is to free itself from the obsessions of the past: contentment is not fatalism; morality has nothing in common with the life-denying puritanism that has so often presumed to speak in its name; and a genuine devotion to duty brings feelings not of self-righteousness but of self-worth.

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BYLAE K

'n BEROEP OM 'n VELDTOG VIR VREDE IN SUID-AFRIKA TE VOER

Ons, die mense van Suid-Afrika, van alle kleure en etniese groepe, van alle geloofs- en politieke oortuiginge, van alle uithoeke en streke, van die hostels tot die "townships", van studente tot die werklose jeug en van alle stande en alle vlakke in die samelewing, verklaar hiermee dat ons nie met gevoude arms kan staan en toekyk hoe die bloed van ons landgenote, ons broers en susters, ons ouers en ons kinders in die strate van ons land vloei nie.

Niemand anders as onself, wat gesamentlik en individueel, in ons organisasies, ons gemeenskappe, ons hostels, ons werksplekke en elke ander plek waar ons vergader, sal vrede in Suid-Afrika teweeg bring nie. Vrede is in ons hande. Daar moet vrede heers in ons land!

Ons doen 'n beroep op alle Suid-Afrikaners om by ons aan te sluit op Donderdag, 2 September 1993 wanneer ons die Nasionale Vredesveldtog van stapel stuur met 'n dramatiese nasionale oomblik van stilte. Ons doen 'n beroep op elkeen in die land om:

- Deel te neem aan 5 minute van stilte om 12:00 die middag van Donderdag, 2 September 1993. In die eerste minuut sal die hele Suid-Afrika 'n minuut van stilte eerbiedig. Vir die daaropvolgende vier minute sal 'n vredeslied gesing en uitgesaai word. Almal teenwoordig kan hande vat om 'n menseketting te vorm as teken van solidariteit en eenheid en/of deelneem aan enige ander toepaslike aktiwiteit waarop plaaslik besluit mag word.
- 'n Blou lint te dra as teken van verbintenis tot die veldtog vir die vestiging van vrede.
- Daardie aand by die geloofsgemeenskap aan te sluit en dienste by te woon wat gewy sal word aan die verkryging van vrede in Suid-Afrika of om enige ander kollektiewe aktiwiteit, waarin vrede 'n sentrale rol speel, te reël en daaraan deel te neem.

Vrede kan nie in een dag verkry word nie. Die Nasionale Vredesveldtog sal regdeur September voortgesit word en ook daarna wanneer organisasies, verenigings, gemeenskappe en individue voortgaan met die bevordering van vrede deur middel van verskillende aktiwiteite. Alle Suid-Afrikaners word uitgenooi en uitgedaag om kreatief betrokke te raak by die veldtog vir vrede en om nie vir ander te wag om aktiwiteite te reël nie. Die sekretariaat van die Nasionale Vredesveldtog sal 'n dagboek hou van alle aktiwiteite wat rondom vrede gereël word en sal die inligting publiseer.

VREDE IS IN ONS HANDE!!!! VREDE IN ONS LAND!!!!



A CALL TO CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE IN SOUTH AFRICA

We, the people of South Africa, from all colours and ethnic groups, from all religious and political groups, from labour and employers, from all localities and regions, from the hostels to the townships, from the students to the unemployed youth and from all walks of life and all scopes of our society, hereby declare that we cannot stand by and fold our arms when the blood of our compatriots, our brothers and sisters, our parents and our children is flowing in the streets of our land.

None but ourselves, acting collectively and individually, in our organisations, our communities, our hostels, our places of employment and every other place in which we gather, will bring about peace in South Africa. Peace is in our hands. Peace must prevail in our land!

We call on all South Africans to join us on Thursday September 2 1993 when we launch the National Peace Campaign with a dramatic national standstill. We call on every person in South Africa to:

- **Participate in a five minute standstill at 12 noon on Thursday September 2 1993. In the first minute, total silence will be observed by all of South Africa. In the remaining four minutes a peace song will be sung and broadcast over the air. Those present could join hands in a human chain as a sign of solidarity and unity and/or any other relevant activities that may be decided locally.**
- **To wear a blue ribbon as a symbol of commitment to the campaign for the establishment of peace.**
- **To join the religious community in the evening in services dedicated to the attainment of peace in South Africa or to organise and participate in any other collective activity in which peace will be a central theme.**

Peace cannot be won in one day. The National Peace Campaign will continue throughout September and beyond as organisations, associations, communities and individuals continue to promote peace through various activities. All South Africans are invited and challenged to be creative in campaigning for peace and not to wait for others to organise activities. The secretariat of the National Peace Campaign will maintain and publicise a diary of such events.

PEACE IS IN OUR HANDS!!! PEACE IN OUR LAND!!!



BYLAE L

World Religion Day

National Baha'i Centre,

16 January 1994

5:00 p.m.

Tea

Music from the Baha'i World Congress

Prayer

"O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavour, and grant them strength to serve thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord."

- Baha'u'llah

Introduction to the Baha'i Faith

Children's choir

The Thread of Unity in Religion

Fulfilment

Hindu to Baha'i

Jewish to Baha'i

Christian to Baha'i

Muslim to Baha'i

Second Generation Baha'i

The March of the Nations

Prayer for Mankind

Music from the Baha'i House of Worship in Australia

This programme is sponsored by the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Johannesburg.

BYLAE M

**The Baha'i Literacy Programme
for
South Africa**

**Literacy
for
Spiritual Empowerment**

'The cause of universal education . . . deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principle reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens.'

From: "The Promise of World Peace"

(A Statement from The Universal House of Justice, 1985)

As the world progresses inexorably to the establishment of the Lesser Peace, the Universal House of Justice has urged Baha'is and Baha'i Communities to prepare spiritually and administratively for Entry by Troops when suddenly great numbers of persons will enter the Baha'i Faith.

In 1993 the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa included the promotion of literacy in the national goals for the Three-Year Plan (1993-1995), and a National Literacy Committee was appointed to initiate and co-ordinate a Baha'i literacy campaign nation-wide.

The National Literacy Committee appeals to all Baha'is to consider the high rate of illiteracy in South Africa (as high as 80% in some communities) and the impact that this will have on the sustained growth and consolidation of the Faith in South Africa. Even Baha'i Communities that at present have a very high literacy rate may in the near future be flooded with new Believers who are illiterate or semi-literate.

The Baha'i Faith demands a high level of literacy of its Believers - persons who cannot write are unable to complete their Baha'i voting ballots without assistance, and those who cannot read require an intermediary to read for them and are thus deprived of the blessing of deepening themselves in the Baha'i Writings independently and in private. In its Ridvan Message of 1989, the Universal House of Justice laid special emphasis on the promotion of literacy as one of the cornerstones of socio-economic progress, since our efforts to live the Baha'i life are reinforced by our accessibility to the Holy Word. To Bahai's, therefore, literacy has a spiritual dimension and implies much more than simply being able to read and write.

Baha'i literacy programmes are unique in that they are infused with the Baha'i worldview. They are based on Baha'i principles, focus on the spiritual empowerment of the learners, and are founded on the belief that the educational process will be imbued, confirmed and assisted by the Holy Spirit. The ultimate

goal for the learners is that each one will become an active worker for the unity of mankind and an enthusiastic builder of the New World Order:

. . . Baha'i literacy programmes will also be concerned with liberating people from oppression, but the goal will now be to help each one become an active worker for the cause of the unity of mankind and for the building of a new World Order. I think that one of the greatest values of these literacy programmes will be to make, of the illiterate people of the world, spiritual educators of the human race . . .

(Dr Farzam Arbab, *Literacy, Culture and Social Ideology*, 1989)

The National Literacy Committee will provide those LSA's, Baha'i Communities or individuals who wish to know more about the Baha'i literacy programme with a complimentary Information Package.

The Information Package contains an Information Brochure (which explains the Baha'i perspective on Literacy and outlines the various activities and support services of the Literacy Committee) and a copy of our quarterly Literacy Committee Newsletter. These Newsletters (which are published under the auspices of the NSA of the Baha'is of South Africa) are intended to provide Baha'is with intellectually stimulating and spiritually uplifting reading material in an easy-to-read style, and can be used as reading texts in a variety of teaching situations (eg. literacy classes, deepening classes, youth classes etc.) where Believers would find a simplified text in plain English easier to comprehend. The Newsletters cover various topics, concentrating on providing shortened and simplified versions of communications and compilations from the Universal House of Justice (eg. *Entry by Troops, The Building of the Arc on Mount Carmel, Scholarship*)

If you wish to receive this Information Package, please write to: The Secretary, National Literacy Committee of the Baha'is of South Africa, P.O. Box 30924, Wonderboompoort, 0033 (tel: 012 - 3356765).

A MESSAGE
FROM THE NATIONAL LITERACY COMMITTEE
OF THE BAHÁ'IS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Since promoting literacy is one of the goals of the Three-Year Plan for South Africa, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa appointed a National Literacy Committee to co-ordinate Baha'i literacy initiatives country-wide.

The National Literacy Committee sees its function as being threefold:

1. to raise awareness among the Baha'is of the importance of becoming literate or of combatting illiteracy among their fellow-Baha'is and in the community at large;
2. to train literacy instructors to conduct Baha'i literacy programmes;
3. to establish Baha'i literacy projects under the auspices of Local Spiritual Assemblies.

Illiteracy deprives the Friends of the joy of reading the Holy Writings independently and in private and of completing Baha'i voting ballots without the assistance of others.

Illiteracy has reached alarming proportions in our country, with approximately 50% of the population being functionally illiterate.

Since the NSA envisages bringing 100,000 new Believers into the Faith during the Three-Year Plan, all Baha'is should realise the importance of integrating socio-economic projects, one of these being literacy, into their teaching work.

If you are interested in promoting literacy please complete the following questionnaire and return it to the National Literacy Committee.

We are eagerly awaiting your reply!

TO: The National Literacy Committee
c/o 137 Booysen Street
Les Marais
Pretoria
0084
Tel: 012 - 762325 or 012 - 3356765

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YES! I am interested in promoting literacy in South Africa!

My particular interests are: (tick the relevant box)

1. becoming a Baha'i literacy instructor
2. setting up a Baha'i literacy project in my community
3. learning more about Baha'i literacy programmes
4. attending a one-day institute on literacy
5. attending a week-end workshop on literacy

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

BAHA'I COMMUNITY:

BYLAE N

ART EXHIBITION

AT THE NATIONAL BAHÁ'Í CENTRE

You are cordially invited

As part of the Johannesburg City Council's "*Arts Alive*" project for the month of September, 1993, a public exhibition of paintings by Paul Webster, the winner of the Reginald Turvey Art Bursary for 1993, and selected works by Turvey will be shown in the main hall.

Opening

Friday, 10 September, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

6:30 p.m. ☛ Introduction of Paul Webster

8:00 p.m. ☛ "Arts and Crafts in the Baha'i Community"
(Lowell Johnson, biographer of Reginald Turvey)

Venue

National Baha'i Centre, 10 Acorn Lane (corner of Louis Botha Avenue, Houghton Estate.) ☛ 487-2077/99

Weekend hours

Saturday, September 11, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 12, 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

"If a man engageth with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he had been worshipping God in churches and temples."

Bahá'í'lláh

THE ONENESS OF

GOD
RELIGION
MANKIND

FIRESIDES AT THE BAHÁ'Í NATIONAL CENTRE

Friday evenings at 8.00pm

10 Acorn Lane, Houghton Estate 2198

Tel: (011) 487-2077 487-2099 672-3754

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 1 September | GLOBAL NEIGHBOURS
Lowell Johnson, Author and Former Researcher for the UN Secretariat |
| 8 September | UNITY OF RELIGION
Hamid Massoudi, International Consultant to the United Nations |
| 15 September | PROGRESSIVE REVELATION
Suha Rawhani, Chemical Engineer and Environmental Specialist |
| 22 September | THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
Jeff Albert, Motion Picture Writer and Producer |
| 29 September | THE WORD OF GOD
Don Clifford Fouché, Arts Specialist |

The Baha'i community of Sandton welcomes you to a continuation
of its series of talks on :

The Oneness of Mankind

From the teachings of **BAHA'U'LLAH**

The Evolution of Religion

Mr. Jeff Albert, American Motion Picture Writer and Producer
Monday 23 May 1994

The Nature of the Human Soul

Dr. Robert Sarracino, Research physicist
Monday 30 May 1994

Marriage and Family

Mrs. Glynis Mackenzie, BA, STD
Monday 6 June 1994

Socio-Economic Developments

Mr. Hamid Bastani, Architect and Civil Engineer
Monday 13 June 1994

Unity in Diversity

Dr. Johan Hammes, MBCHB, Specializing in Psychiatry at Weskoppies Hospital
Monday 20 June 1994

Art and Human Developments

Mrs. Karen Mckerron of Karen Mckerron Gallery
Monday 27 June 1994

Time:

19:45 For 20:00 To 21:00

Venue:

 **Karen Mckerron**
GALLERY

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42 Mandeville Road PO Box 69048
Bryanston 2021 Tel. (011) 704-2537
Fax (011) 704-3090

GERAADPLEEGDE BRONNE

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