

The World Economy of Bahá'u'lláh

In this essay by Horace Holley, first published in *The Bahá'í World* Volume IV, 1930-1932, the outline of a religious philosophy is revealed which penetrates to the soul of history and explains the strange disorders tormenting the present age.

The principles that underlie the world economy of Bahá'u'lláh are established upon organic laws of human evolution. They interpret the modern problem as a movement in humanity itself. They make the connection between the spiritual and practical affairs of humanity which alone can breathe the breath of life into any social mechanism.

To an unprecedented degree, the power of constructive thought has been released from the realm of private affairs for study of the basic social structure, as responsible men in all countries have since the European War come to realize their new obligation to give concern to the general problem of depression and unrest.

The time is therefore favourable for more widespread knowledge of the fact that a plan of world order was advanced more than 50 years ago which not only anticipates many proposals now receiving serious consideration, but rests upon the substantial foundation of a true analysis of the malady afflicting modern life.

It is, in fact, a matter of importance for the serious student of current conditions, whether his interest is primarily economic, political or sociological, to learn that a body of literature has existed for two generations in which are to be found explicit principles and teachings meeting the very difficulties now so profoundly felt throughout the world.

The world economy of Bahá'u'lláh transcends in scope and purpose the belated response to the risk of calamity made by economists and statesmen under the pressure of events in recent years. His principles are established upon organic laws of human evolution. They interpret the modern problem not as a temporary maladjustment of industry and trade – the effects of an “industrial revolution” – but as a movement in humanity itself. They make the necessary connection between the spiritual and practical affairs of men which alone can breathe the breath of life into any social mechanism.

Careful study of this body of literature makes it apparent that Bahá'u'lláh stood at that major turning-point of social evolution where the long historic trend toward diversity – in language, custom, civil and religious codes and economic practises – came to an end, and the movement was reversed in the direction of unity. The human motive in the new era is necessarily cooperative.

From this point of view it becomes clear that the European War and the uninterrupted sequence of international disturbances since 1918 are, essentially, vital indications that by sheer spiritual

inertia humanity has continued to function under the old competitive motive when conditions have arisen which make cooperation and unity imperative to the very existence of mankind.

Instead of temporary “maladjustment” we have the urgent necessity to transform the whole structure of civilization. Institutions and social organisms created in the age of diversity and competition have become unfit to serve human needs in the age of cooperation and peace. Our present “crisis” discloses more and more clearly the tragic fact that people turn for the divine gifts of peace and sustenance to agencies adapted for the opposite ends of war and destruction.

The new conditions affecting every branch of human activity today are the result of the physical unity of the world achieved during the last century through technological equipment. As the arena of human affairs has become one unit, and is no longer a series of unrelated territories, the law of cause and effect, for the first time in history, operates for society as positively as it operates for the material universe. The consequence is that every public action has its immediate reaction. National and racial or class movements are no longer isolated and irresponsible; they no longer can be made to secure definite and limited objectives, like a small, compact medieval army turned loose among unarmed peasants, but every social movement and influence today affects the structure of society and brings about results of a general character.

Just as this new law of cause and effect connects in one common destiny hitherto isolated geographical areas, so likewise, within the single political or economic area of each nation, consequences of political or economic action now cannot be confined to their own special field, but flow throughout the whole nation and produce effects in all fields.

That is, not only has humanity become an organic unit by reason of geographical relationship, but in addition its structure of civilization has become interdependent by reason of the new relationships affecting such apparently unrelated activities as business and religion, or government philosophy. The real significance of this vital fact is that politics is no longer politics alone, and economics is no longer economics alone, but both are nothing else than facets of the one, indivisible substance of human life.

We have arrived, in other words, at a stage in human evolution when moral value – that which serves the good of humanity and not merely the interest of any one group – determines not alone the desirability but also the feasibility of every public policy and every social program.

That is why the present world crisis escapes every effort to bring it under the control of normal social agencies. When another international war seems imminent, we call the crisis “political” and effort is made to control it by political bodies. When the economic depression seems most acute, we call the crisis “economic” and seek to control it by economic bodies. It would be just as logical to call the crisis “religious” and base our hope of recovery upon the influence of the churches. In reality, the crisis is at once political, economic and religious, but humanity

possesses no responsible, authoritative agency capable of coordinating all the factors and arriving at a world plan which takes all factors into account.

These considerations reveal the vital importance of a new principle of action, a new attitude and a new quality of understanding such as the student of society encounters in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Here one makes contact with a world view raised above local and partisan interests, and a spirit of faith in divine Providence so profound that it sustains the certitude that mankind will be guided through the most terrible storm of confusion and strife the world has ever faced.

In contradistinction to those social plans which attempt to rationalize an abstract system of political economy and apply it, with or without the element of compulsion, to the body of humanity in naive disregard of the complexity of human nature, the principles of Bahá'u'lláh operate from the heart outward to the social structure. His principles interpret the realities of man's spiritual nature, upholding an ideal civilization which will come into being gradually, by voluntary action of those who understand it, accept it as truth and strive for its attainment as the fulfillment of their own highest aspiration.

His aim was the unity of mankind in the world of the mind and spirit, that the external unity in process of realization might become man's blessing, the means of peace and cooperation, rather than a bitter curse, the means of chaos and strife. Through the leaven of spiritual knowledge those prejudices which now divide the hearts and confuse the minds, setting nation against nation, class against class and creed against creed, will be transmuted into a common loyalty and positive fellowship identifying social order with true ethics and true mystical experience.

If we desire material abundance, leisure, security, opportunity for broader knowledge, a larger conquest of nature and a social environment enabling men to enjoy creative relationships – we seek to give actuality to those visions and desires which society now resists and makes impossible – the door of attainment is unity and cooperation. As unity of personality brings power to individuals, so human fellowship will release yet dormant capacities in the race.

Bahá'u'lláh exemplified the possibility of this human fellowship and its capacity to transform society from the clash of hostile communities to an organic structure embracing the world. The literature expressing his insight into human reality, when responsive to the transforming spirit of the one God, links together those necessary steps in evolution which lead from the new outlook required by the individual to a world order coordinating the different aspects of social activity now functioning separately and aimlessly: education, religious devotion, industry, finance, trade, government.

Before adding certain important details to these fundamental tenets, it is desirable to meet the attitude which represents the chief danger to human welfare at this time, namely the opinion that

a few superficial alterations in the political and economic organization are sufficient to overcome the difficulties we now confront.

The Nature of World Unrest

Warfare and strife have ever been present in human society, but since the outbreak of military operations in Europe seventeen years ago, the principle of war has been enormously reinforced. The cessation of hostilities by no means meant the termination of war. The military period served to exhaust and destroy all the human and social resources at the command of governments, but the consuming flame was communicated from the field of battle to the broader field of business, where its destructiveness assumed new forms.

In passing from the military to the economic domain, the principle of war escaped the control vested by society in government, which throughout history has served to confine the area and duration of violent combat within the attainment of definite objectives. The principle of war today – that is, the condition of organized conflict – spreads throughout the body of society, engaging all civil activities and setting not only nation against nation but class against class and interest against interest. In this domain no government nor any other social institution is powerful enough to stamp out the flames. Civilization has become one continuous crisis, a state of unending civil war. Meanwhile, under the steady pressure of fear arising as much from the possibility of domestic revolution as of foreign aggression, the military establishments directed by all leading governments have accumulated means of violence sufficient virtually to destroy the human race.

As long as war can be regarded as abnormal, a temporary emergency within the control of responsible governments, ended at will by victory or surrender, its operation does not interrupt fixed social habits nor affect fundamental ideas. A people during war temporarily abandons its civil routine and its inherited moral and religious tenets, as a family abandons a house injured by storm, to re-enter it when the storm has subsided and repair whatever damage has been done. But when the principle of war has carried over from the limited field of government operation to the unlimited field of general social activity, we have a condition in which the inherited capital of social loyalty and constructive idealism is readily impaired. The steady, relentless pressure exercised by a society divided against itself and reduced to the elemental struggle for existence affects the form and nature both of government and other responsible institutions. It affects also the aims and habits of the mass of the people. The failure of social philosophies emanating from ancient religious teachings opens the door to philosophies and doctrines essentially materialistic in aim and outlook. These compete for the control of the state and its complex agencies of legislation, finance and public education, altering radically the traditional relations of political parties. Industry has the alternative of entering this political struggle at the risk of separating the interests of labor, capital and consumer, or of concentrating upon its business task at the risk of finding its international markets crippled by nationalistic policies abroad and its domestic market

interfered with by socialistic programs at home. As materialistic philosophies spread among a confused, a burdened and disillusioned people, religious bodies follow industry in its effort to control legislation and education in order to safeguard their special interests and values, with the result that the power of the state to adopt broad and fundamental public policies is sacrificed to the clash of determined interests. Only occasionally, and timidly, can the state rise above this interminable wrangle to consider its true relations to the world situation as a whole.

The individual, meanwhile, finds himself more and more conditioned by this general, ever-changing and menacing competition. He finds himself becoming a lone being in a social jungle threatening his welfare at many points. Isolated goodwill and personal integrity tend to lose their meaning as he finds that they no longer produce their habitual result in terms of his life and work. He feels that there is no longer any connection between ultimate faith and today's shelter and food. He finds materialism in his church and idealism in his economic party.

Above all, he witnesses the confounding of leadership in high places and recognizes that the balance of competing forces is so complete that no social group can through political influence successfully enforce its will upon the whole population. Under these conditions the final impact of world unrest upon the mass of people is anti-social, manifested in indifference, in uneasy fear or in determination to seek the short cut through direct action.

The combined and successive shock to human nature of the butchery during the war, the depreciation of currencies, the post-war revolutions, unemployment, public dishonesty, and the rise of materialistic philosophies to the stature of fully developed institutions, not to mention other vital factors such as the inadequacy of the education afforded by public school and sectarian church, and the social blindness exhibited by responsible leaders in all fields of human activity since 1914, has been underestimated in the promotion of plans promising general improvement. The ultimate triumph of the principle of war has been to reduce the richly varied capacities of people to the sheer instinct to survive. Society is no longer under control – it is a rudderless ship, an unpiloted plane. No one can predict events, and no authority can deal properly with the emergencies that continually arise.

An adequate social diagnosis, one on which a permanent plan of betterment may be founded, can at this time scarcely afford to overlook these three essential facts: first, that through their inability to establish real peace and their endorsement of universally destructive instruments of warfare, governments no longer protect life and property, but, on the contrary, have become the chief source of peril to mankind; second, that as the result of the concentration of the means of production and distribution, without corresponding social policy, industry and commerce no longer feed, clothe and shelter the people, but, on the contrary, have increased the area and intensity of poverty and destitution; and, third, that through the diversity and strife of creeds, and their materialistic dependence upon civil authority to enforce moral principles, established religion no longer intensifies the inner life of man, relating people one to another in the spirit of

cooperation and sincere consultation for mutual protection and general betterment, but, on the contrary, poisons the very sources of loyalty and understanding and fans the flame of competition and dissension which, passing out from the church into life, sanctioned nationalism in the state and self-aggrandisement in business affairs.

By gradual, imperceptible stages, the constructive instruments of civilization have acquired destructive aims. The condition called “peace” is one in which antagonisms and strifes grow to the breaking point within each nation; the condition called “war” is the only one in which people in each nation attain solidarity and exercise collective will. The logical end of either condition is the same.

Regarded from the institutional point of view, this age marks the end of a civilization which no longer serves mankind. From the point of view of human experience, it marks the complete and final frustration of the instinct of physical self-preservation, which man shares with the beast, as the dominating social motive. Both statements reflect the same truth, for it is the instinct of physical self-preservation which throughout history has impelled humanity to organize the competitive institutions of state, industry and church which are miscalled “civilization.”

Disillusion would only be justified if human society could be successfully established on the war principle. An age which has fully proved that war no longer leads to the fruits of victory, and that a competitive economy no longer produces wealth, is an age permeated and sustained by providential forces. The complexity of the problem, and the greatness of the crisis, is in itself the true measure of human capacity.

To realize that antagonism and hatred, no matter how magnified by the leverage of social institutions, no matter how gilded and refined by cultural and doctrinal philosophies, threaten the very existence of humanity, is to perceive that human life functions under other and higher laws than those which condition the life of the brute. It is likewise to perceive that, all along, the external man-made world of civilization has had no true inner correspondence with the spiritual nature and infinitely varied talents, desires and thoughts of the race. Only by continuous suppression of one entire aspect of his being – his latent and passive reality – has man, acting from emergency to emergency, made competition the dominant motive in comparison to cooperation. Both motives are always present; if competition has created governments and industrial systems, the vision of unfulfilled love has supplied the power and inspiration for true music, art and poetry in every age.

The rise of science in the modern age has enormously reinforced the latent powers of men in comparison to those faculties developed during the era of external struggle against the physical environment. Important as its technological achievement has been, the ultimate value of science lies not in its inventions but in its assertion of yet-undeveloped resources within the mind and soul. The faculties that make for discovery in the realm of the material universe can, and will, be

employed in the more important realm of spiritual reality. Science restores the balance between man as being and man as desiring and doing. It reveals a new measure of human capacity, and confirms the integrity of the race as the vehicle for further evolution. While the effects of science so far have been negative no less than positive, a spiritual science conceived with the central problem of human welfare can provide the agencies necessary for the functioning of the spirit of cooperation throughout society.

The providential character of the crisis actually consists in the fact that it is a crisis – a challenge to human understanding not to be diverted or put off to a more convenient season. Because it is worldwide, it lays its burden as heavily upon America as Europe, upon the East no less than upon the West, upon government as upon industry, and upon religion as upon government. Humanity shares one universal experience of suffering and grief, bears one unavoidable responsibility, reacts to one supreme stimulus serving to quicken the slumbering, passive “inner” powers – hence humanity grows in understanding of its fundamental reality and is trained to function through collective resources and instruments.

The present unrest has no real meaning or ultimate value until it is recognized as a movement in humanity and only secondarily a disturbance in the institutional elements of civilization. Political exigencies and economic depression have become so acute that the symptoms are mistaken for the actual disease. The first principle, and the foundation upon which the new order stands, is the oneness of humanity – the interdependence of the race in a common origin and destiny. The social organization that now fails to function is one constructed upon the assumption of diversity and separateness, which has produced a society motivated by competition.

The Analogy of Rome

Fortunately, the history of our own civilization offers, on a smaller scale, an era closely paralleling the present condition.

The Roman Empire, at a certain point, also established a civilization opposed to the best interests of humanity. Its institutional society likewise entered a time of “transition” when the competitive instinct began to fail, faced with political, economic and religious problems too complex for solution by traditional means. But through the power of the Christian faith, those problems were transmuted into a higher human process. The claim of that faith no doubt remained consistently ignored or condemned by those indoctrinated with the social science of the period, but the fact remains that the stream of human evolution abandoned the institutions of civilization and flowed onward through the channels of a movement reflecting the needs and capacities of humanity. The restoration of society came about through the loyalty of regenerated individuals welded in a cooperative group, not through the reorganization of tariffs, wages, public statutes and trade. Up to the limit of human capacity, the people of faith constituted a society in which a bond and

relationship, like that animating the members of a family, replaced the formal procedures and unfeeling contacts sanctioned by the political and economic science of the ruined state.

The essence of that experience was the triumph of humanity over civilization. The early Christians dipped themselves in the eternal stream of human reality, recovered the vision of God, and armed only with devotion and faith, stood fast against the shocks of a collapsing society and eventually laid the foundation for a “new age.” Their faith in Christ released the mysterious forces of the spirit within; by sacrifice they were able to re-create society on a higher moral basis, nearer the ultimate aim of a cooperative world.

The early Christian world was, however, a definitely limited area, hemmed in by barbaric hordes and prevented from expanding the Christian experience to include humanity. The movement outward came to an end; Christianity organized itself for defence, admitting within itself the fatal influence of dissension and force; the new social body after it had repudiated the law of universal love revealed the presence of spiritual disease by dividing on issues of scientific truth; this fissure gradually widened until Protestantism made it permanent, and modern civilization, with its inner conflict between “secular” and “religious” values was the inevitable result. Nothing in this gradual decay can be made to serve as argument against the true significance of religion. Christianity restored the power of the heart.

The “truth” of Christianity, and of all religions founded by a prophetic spirit, is, however, not a constant but a variable; a rise toward the vision of God, followed by a darkening and degeneration. It is a spring time of spiritual fertility, followed by summer and the harvest of autumn, and terminating in the cold of winter. Civilization may be likened to a clock that must be wound. The historic process that reduced Christianity from a source of inner renewal to a mere institutionalism operated also in the case of Judaism, Muhammadanism, Buddhism and the other religions. Each regenerated an area of humanity, revived civilization, created new and better conditions for mankind and slowly died, to yield place to another prophet and a renewal of faith.

A New Cycle of Human Power

Bahá'u'lláh, whose mission was promulgated by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in Europe and America, completed the circle of religion as the expression of man’s real nature and possibility in relation to God, to society and to the physical universe. He joined the arcs described by Jesus and the prophets of other races. In his teaching are made those necessary connections between ethics, science and sociology which carry into society and civilization the full integrity of the principle of love. Bahá'u'lláh is the first interpreter of humanity as a unified organism capable of coordinating its resources of mind and heart. “Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country,” Bahá'u'lláh declared more than fifty years ago, “rather let him glory in this, that he loves his kind.” Standing in the same relation of sacrifice toward the unmoral institutions of

modern society that Jesus held toward the civilization of Palestine and Rome, Bahá'u'lláh manifested a spiritual power which likewise created a movement of faith and devotion among the people paralleled by extreme hatred and antagonism on the part of the official leaders in his environment. Today his teaching has the dimension of history – a story written indelibly in the blood of Persian martyrs.

The movement entered the West in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who travelled throughout Europe and America during 1911 and 1912 to expound Bahá'u'lláh's doctrine in relation to the political, economic and social problems of the age.

Speaking in the City Temple, London, in September, 1911 – on the eve of the great war which he foresaw and warned people against – he used these significant words: “This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of the unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundations of true humanity.

“The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

“In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather cooperation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only... There is one God; mankind is one; the foundations of religion are one. Let us worship Him, and give praise for all His great prophets and messengers who have manifested His brightness and glory.”

This conception of world unrest as the gathering of the latent resources of mankind for release in a “new cycle of human power” emanates from the depths of truth. It focuses in one point the complex issues which specialists in many fields are separately unable to meet; it recovers for human imagination, human understanding and human will the control of events apparently dominated by an uncontrollable social “machine.”

But with this statement should be paralleled another statement, made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Baptist Temple, Philadelphia, June 9, 1912 : “True religion is the source of love and agreement among men, the cause of the development of praiseworthy qualities; but the people are holding to the counterfeit and imitation, negligent of the reality which unifies, so they are bereft and deprived of the radiance of religion. They follow superstitions inherited from their fathers and ancestors... That which was meant to be conducive to life has become the cause of death; that which should have been an evidence of knowledge is now a proof of ignorance; that which was a

factor in the sublimity of human nature has proved to be its degradation. Therefore the realm of the religionist has gradually narrowed and darkened and the sphere of the materialist has widened and advanced; for the religionist has held to imitation and counterfeit, neglecting and discarding holiness and the sacred reality of religion. When the sun sets it is time for bats to fly. They come forth because they are creatures of night.”

Here we have the obverse of the picture – the negative condition opposed to the positive, the blind submission to external, “institutional” truth in contradistinction to faith in human values; in other words, civilization in active opposition to the real interests of humanity. Between these polar extremes, currents of immeasurable power flow through modern society, destroying all forms of organized selfishness and at the same time quickening human minds and hearts with the capacity to realize that only through unity and cooperation can the race survive.

The concentration of moral force and intelligence upon one objective creates a tool for the accomplishment of the greatest task. The objective laid upon conscience and reason alike in this stage of evolution is world order and peace. In this aim the ideals of religion become identical with the requirements of economics and social science.

Up to the economic depression, world peace was held to be merely a political problem, a matter of treaty between the sovereign states. The depression served to reveal the fact that world peace in reality is a question of social justice and not merely the cessation of military strife. It revealed also that from the point of view of social justice the states are no longer sovereign, but have become areas of economic and psychological revolution. This fact makes the League of Nations, as now constituted, an inadequate instrument for international control. It is as though the Federal Government at Washington consisted merely of delegates from nearly fifty sovereign states, whose deliberations to become effective had to be ratified separately by each state legislature and who possessed no Federal army or navy, while each state maintained a complete military establishment in competition with every other state, and refused to yield to Washington any essential elements of its local sovereignty. Such a condition in one country could not be termed a national government, nor can the League be properly regarded as an international government. The League at Geneva seems to represent the limit of attainment possible to the old civilization; it is not yet an organism of humanity.

Objectives of Social Progress

Chaos and revolution will continue, with increased momentum, until social justice creates an instrument of world government, a government possessing the sovereignty of mankind, to which the national states are subordinated as provinces having only local jurisdiction. This is the central issue of the world today, the unescapable obligation written in financial, political, social and moral terms that all may eventually read.

For world government differs from the present national governments not merely through an extension of the physical area of jurisdiction, but in the dimension of social responsibility as well. It alone can effect disarmament, create a safe currency, reconcile the discord of classes, establish an education conforming to basic human needs, and overcome the sinister peril resident in the divergent theories of capitalism and communism. Not until world government exists can the divorce between “religious” and “secular” values be ended, the greatest curse in human experience. World government implies social administration by the elect of mankind – men whose executive talents are imbued with moral principles. It is the partisan politician who maintains social disunity that he may have the privilege of fishing in troubled waters.

World government is the only source of stability for local communities in all nations. The local community today is the victim of the evils of civilization, dragged as it is by the chariot wheels of national politics and large scale industry. In the unemployment prevalent in larger towns and cities, and the prostration of agriculture which saps the life of small towns and villages, we see the brake applied which is gradually bringing civilization to an absolute standstill.

As world government is the first, so a regenerated local community is the second objective of social progress. The essential human relations are all maintained locally. It is our community environment which finally determines the quality of human life. Here our inner attitudes begin that cycle of social influence culminating either in peace or war. Here takes place the impact of education upon the unprejudiced child soul which produces the motives and reactions of adult life.

The transformation needed to make the local community over from the condition of a diseased cell in a disordered social body, into the condition of a healthy cell in a sound organism, is the extension of the social relationship from the political to the economic realm. In a vital social organism, the individual would have not merely the inalienable right to vote and receive the protection of the courts, but also the inalienable right of economic livelihood – not insulting charity but fundamental human right. The political structure today is a sieve through which runs away in loss the noblest aspirations and the most effective motives and qualities of mankind. Nothing can redeem the fact that modern government originated as an agency for the conduct of war rather than for the maintenance of peace.

This new and higher human status, moreover, does not depend upon the success of socialism and far less upon the success of communism. Both these social theories fail to correspond to the standard of human reality. They are, at bottom, an effort to organize materials and processes and not an effort to unify human beings. The emphasis is entirely upon the mechanism instead of upon the nature of man. Their complete application might produce the semblance of external order, but this would be at the expense of the human spirit. Only after we have uncovered the spiritual principles of human association can we evolve a social order corresponding to the divine reality.

Both world government and regenerated local community are possibilities in human evolution the realization of which depends upon the existence of a new scale of personal motives and a new range of social understanding. The ultimate goal of a world economy therefore has a third objective, correlated to the two objectives already outlined. The third objective is the need of spiritual education – the reinforcement of man’s passive idealism to the point where people consciously strive together for mutual ends, and are no longer socially indifferent waiting for “good times” to come of itself or to be received as a gift from a few bankers, manufacturers and statesmen.

The profit motive will not sustain a balanced, enduring civilization. Far stronger, far truer – in fact, far more humanly natural – is the motive of self-expression and fulfilment found in children and surviving in the few artists, artisans and spiritually conscious men and women who refuse to be moulded by the external forces prevailing in their environment. The inadequacy of the profit motive appears when we imagine the result if it were extended to family life. Every family is a cooperative economy attempting to maintain itself in a competitive community. The dissolution of the family marks the end of an age.

At present, education is limited to the aim of assuring personal survival in a competitive society, and the effect of this mental and moral strangulation is to leave the essential core of personality – its understanding of fundamental purpose and its motives – to the overwhelming influence of an already perverted society. As the expression of a collective social mentality, education can and must deal with the basic human values.

Spiritual education has little connection with the systems of education developed by churches for partisan ends. It is education of the whole being for useful life in a united society which derives its laws and principles from the universal law of love. It is education conscious of the modes of social evolution and hence subduing the means of life to its true purpose and outcome. One single generation raised by spiritual education above the false guides who rationalize class, race, national and religious prejudices can give humanity a definite foothold in the new age of cooperation and unity.

These three objectives – world government, a regenerated community and spiritual education – are interdependent. Neither can exist without the other two. All three are latent in human society at the present time. They are emerging to the degree that the highest type of people in all countries recognize one or more of them as the most worthy values for idealism and effort. The sheer inertia of past evolution, however, still carries the race in other directions. By comparing the numbers and resources devoted to the promotion of these three ideals, with the numbers and resources available for the promotion of all vested interests dependent on a competitive order, we appreciate anew the depth of the crisis in which we are plunged.

What is needed above all at this time is a valid source of conviction that, whatever the immediate future may be, bright or dark, the reinforcement of universal truth stands behind the movement toward world order and peace, and that the opposition is in essence negative and will ultimately be overthrown. Conscious faith alone can turn the scale between evolution and revolution, between order and chaos.

Principles of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh is the source of this conscious faith. His teachings transform political and economic problems into occasions for human virtue and love. A summary of the teachings will emphasize the following essential truths.

1. There is an organic cycle in human evolution, marked by the duration of the life of a religion, approximately one thousand years. A social cycle begins with the appearance of a prophetic founder of religion, whose influence and teaching renews the inner life of man and releases a new wave of progress. Each cycle destroys the outworn beliefs and institutions of the former cycle and creates a civilization based on beliefs in closer conformity with actual human needs. This civilization in turn decays, with the passing of time, as human doctrines are substituted for the reality taught by the prophet, and must give way to a fresh conception of God.
2. In the past the influence of each founder of religion has been limited to one race or region by reason of the physical separation of the races and nations. The present cycle has worldwide influence and meaning. It upholds faith in the spiritual oneness of humanity and will accomplish the creation of an organic world order. As Bahá'u'lláh is the spiritual proof of the coming of a universal cycle, so the rise of science is its intellectual proof and evidence. The rise of science has made the definite cleavage between the age of competition and the age of cooperation. Science has drawn man up from his physical helplessness in nature, multiplied his powers and at the same time given man an entirely new degree of moral responsibility. If the old tribal morality persists, science will be a destroyer. Its forces can only be controlled by a united humanity striving for the general welfare and well being.
3. Sectarian churches will be abandoned and replaced by a spiritual centre in each community devoted to meditation and prayer, without a professional clergy. Religious ideas and practises not in conformity with science are superstitions and will not survive. Not ritual and creed but the inspiration of the prophet's life and message is the foundation of religion. As science progresses, men will not fail to recognise that humanity has ever depended on the vision of love and brotherhood revealed by the prophets from age to age, and that they have the unique office of inspiring a higher capacity for life through conscious knowledge of the will of God. The prophet is the focal point of human evolution.

4. As the local community is dependent upon the national community, so the nation is dependent upon the community of nations. The theory of national sovereignty has been overthrown by the fact of economic interdependence; it should be discarded in political practise. Statesmen are responsible to the Creator for the protection of the people. They must take steps to create a world body on which alone complete sovereignty can be conferred. More essential than the fact that metals and products are distributed throughout the world, beyond the control of any one nation, is the fact that humanity is one organism and must have one law and one executive control. All morality is fulfilled in loyalty to mankind through the orderly processes of world government.
5. The law of the struggle for existence does not exist for man when he becomes conscious of his mental and spiritual powers. It is replaced by the higher law of cooperation.

Under this higher law the individual will enjoy a far larger status than that of passive political citizenship. His organic rights will include universal education and the means of livelihood. Local communities will be organized so as to give this status effect. Public administration will pass from partisan politics, which betray the people, to those who can regard office as a sacred trusteeship in which they can serve divine principles of justice and brotherhood. Income taxes are to be paid to the local community rather than the national state, which will give the community a secure material basis and enable it to provide the necessary agencies for the welfare and protection of the people. The national treasury is to receive its income from local communities rather than from individuals. The emphasis is thrown back upon the local community, where the issues of life are first raised and are first to be met.

The present national state, during the era of war, developed many agencies and instruments which will be unnecessary when an international state is established. The international state will enact statutes making for world order and progress.

6. Economic stability depends upon moral solidarity and the realization that wealth is the means and not the end of life, rather than upon the working out of any elaborate socialistic or communistic plan. The essential point is the rise of a new mind, a new spirit of cooperation and mutual help, not universal subservience to a formal system, the effect of which would be to remove all individual moral responsibility. Under conditions of cooperation and peace, the tragedy of unemployment could be transformed into the opportunity for leisure for cultural progress and personal development. Employees are to receive not only wages but also a fixed share of the profit of industry, as partners in the firm. The foundation of industry is agriculture, and first concern must be given those who live and work upon the land. Industry will become simpler as men attain a balance between being and doing.

Bahá'u'lláh also reveals a method or system of inheritances by which the handing down of great fortunes can be made to serve the community as a whole, without depriving the individual of a just measure of liberty. By this method, an inheritance is divided into proportionate parts for the

surviving relatives, and significantly enough, teachers who have contributed to the decedent's character and development are given a share of the estate.

Another principle emphatically laid down is that loyalty to representative and just government is a requisite of the religious attitude toward society. No justification is given the view that ecclesiastical doctrines and policies can claim a higher loyalty than that rendered the civil state. Faith in God may not be controlled by the state; the state may not require the individual to betray his spiritual conviction; but apart from this, matters of public policy are wholly under government control.

7. Neither democracy nor aristocracy alone supply the correct basis for society. Democracy is helpless against internal dissension; aristocracy survives by foreign aggression. A combination of both principles is necessary – the administration of affairs by the elite of mankind, elected by universal suffrage and controlled by a world constitution embodying principles having moral reality.
8. The spiritual basis of humanity consists in universal education – combining in every individual both economic and cultural values, coordinating mind and emotion, and quickening the powers of the soul through knowledge of the tenets of true religion. “The source of all knowledge,” as Bahá'u'lláh has said, “is knowledge of God.”

The basic social principle confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh is the law of consultation. He has declared that the solution of all problems depends on the sincere meeting for discussion of all parties to the question, and their willingness to abide by the decisions so made. The spark of clashing opinion, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said, reveals the truth. At present the “truth” of practically any situation is obscured by prejudices and vested interests. From the human point of view, truth must include all parties. The new social organism cannot be anticipated in detail. It must evolve.

9. At this time of transition between the old age of competition and the new age of cooperation, the very life of humanity is in peril. It is a major stage in human history, a turning-point in the evolution of mankind. Between spiritual ignorance, nationalistic ambition, class strife, economic fear and greed, tremendous forces are arrayed for another and fatal international war. Only a divinely sent, providential power, an influence like that of Christ, can avert the supreme catastrophe. The world is in dire need of the conviction of kinship and solidarity, of mutual cooperation and interdependence, of common principles and a definite program combining the validity of religion with the aim and purpose of social science.

The bitter experiences of the past nineteen years throw a revealing light upon the statements made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to public audiences in Europe and America during 1911 and 1912. The following quotations will serve to illustrate the character and scope of his outlook, and indicate the manner in which he appealed to humanity rather than to institutional values.

The Religion of God

“The body politic today is in need of a physician. It is similar to a human body afflicted with severe ailments. A doctor diagnoses the case and prescribes treatment. He does not prescribe, however, until he has made the diagnosis. The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing, no agreement among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body politic today. Without these there can be no progress or prosperity attained. Therefore the friends of God must adhere to the power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men. Science cannot cure the illness of the body politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in human hearts. Neither can patriotism nor racial allegiance effect a remedy. It must be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and spiritual bestowals which have descended from God in this day for that purpose. This is an exigency of the times and the divine remedy has been provided. The spiritual teachings of the religion of God alone can create this love, unity and accord in human hearts.” (June 8, 1912, at 309 West 78th St., New York City.)

The Body Politic

“Although the body politic is one family, yet because of lack of harmonious relations some members are comfortable and some in direct misery, some members are satisfied and some members are hungry, some members are clothed in most costly garments and some families are in need of food and shelter. Why? Because this family (of mankind) lacks the necessary reciprocity and symmetry. This household is not well arranged. This household is not living under a perfect law. All the laws which are legislated do not insure happiness. They do not provide comfort, Therefore a law must be given to this family by means of which all the members will enjoy well being and happiness.” (September, 1912, at a meeting of Socialists, Montreal.)

Socialism and Communism

“The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan with utmost wisdom and power so that neither the capitalist may suffer from economic losses nor the labourers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly protected; also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the labor problem will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place. “The owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their

employees and give a certain fair percentage of their products to their workingmen 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 heart in the work.” (Spoken in 1912 at the home of a government official, reported in *Star of the West*, vol. 13, page 231.)

“Lycurgus, king of Sparta, who lived long before the day of Christ, conceived the idea of absolute equality in government. He proclaimed laws by which all the people of Sparta were classified into certain divisions...Lycurgus, in order to establish this forever as a law, brought nine thousand grandes together, told them he was going upon a long journey and wished this form of government to remain effective until his return. They swore an oath to protect and preserve his law. He then left his kingdom, went into voluntary exile, and never returned. No man ever made such a sacrifice to insure equality among his fellowmen. A few years passed and the whole system of government he had founded collapsed, although established upon such a wise and just basis.

“Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise. Bahá’u’lláh has revealed principles and laws which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities.” (July 1, 1912, at 309 West 78th St., New York City.)

Material and Spiritual Civilization

“In the western world material civilization has attained the highest point of development but divine civilization was founded in the land of the East. The East must acquire material civilization from the West and the West must receive spiritual civilization from the East. This will establish a mutual bond. When these two come together, the world of humanity will present a glorious aspect and extraordinary progress will be achieved.” (June 2, 1912, at Church of the Ascension, New York City.)

“While thousands are considering these questions, we have more essential purposes. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá’í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized...Economic questions are most interesting, but the power which moves, controls and attracts the hearts of men is the love of God.” (July 23, 1912, at Hotel Victoria, Boston.)

The Supreme Tribunal

“At present Universal Peace is a matter of great importance, but unity of conscience is essential, so that the foundation of this matter may become secure, its establishment firm and its edifice strong...Although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing Universal Peace. But the Supreme Tribunal which His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And his plan is this: that

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 that these persons may be the elected ones of all the nations 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. 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 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.” (December 17, 1919, in a letter written to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, The Hague.)

The Oneness of Reality

“The source of perfect unity and love in the world of human existence is the bond and oneness of reality. When the divine and fundamental reality enters human hearts and lives, it conserves and protects all states and conditions of mankind, establishing that intrinsic oneness of the world of humanity which can only come into being through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is like unto the life in the human body, which blends all differences of parts and members in unity and agreement.

“Consider how numerous are these parts and members, but the oneness of the animating spirit of life unites them all in perfect combination. It establishes such a unity in the bodily organism that if any part is subjected to injury or becomes diseased all the other parts and functions sympathetically respond and suffer owing to the perfect oneness existing. Just as the human spirit of life is the cause of coordination among the various parts of the human organism, the Holy Spirit is the controlling cause of the unity and coordination of mankind. That is to say, the bond or oneness of humanity cannot be effectively established save through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the world of humanity is a composite body and the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of its life...

“Today the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Until it becomes effective, penetrating and interpenetrating hearts and spirits, and until perfect reasoning faith shall be implanted in the minds of men, it will be impossible for the social body to be inspired with security and confidence. Nay, on the contrary, enmity and strife will increase

day by day and the difference and divergences of nations will be woefully augmented. Continual additions to the armies and navies of the world will be made, and the fear and certainty of the great pandemic war – the war unparalleled in history – will be intensified.” (September 16, 1912, at 5338 Kenmore Avenue, Chicago.)

“The most important principle of divine philosophy is the oneness of the world of humanity, the unity of mankind, the bond conjoining East and West, the tie of love which binds human hearts...For thousands of years we have had bloodshed and strife. It is enough; it is sufficient. Now is the time to associate together in love and harmony.

“All the divine Manifestations have proclaimed the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. They have taught that men should love and mutually help each other in order that they might progress. Now if this conception of religion be true, its essential principle is the oneness of humanity. The fundamental truth of the Manifestations is peace. This underlies all religion, all justice. The divine purpose is that men should live in unity, concord and agreement and should love one another. Consider the virtues of the human world and realize that the oneness of humanity is the primary foundation of them all.” (April 19, 1912, at Columbia University, New York City.)

The Divine Prophets

“The holy Manifestations of God, the divine prophets, are the first teachers of the human race. They are universal educators and the fundamental principles they laid down are the causes and factors of the advancement of nations. Forms and imitations which creep in afterward are not conducive to that progress. On the contrary these are destroyers of human foundations established by the heavenly educators.

“Therefore there is need of turning back to the original foundation. The fundamental principles of the prophets are true and correct. The imitations and superstitions which have crept in are at wide variance with the original precepts and commands. His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has revoiced and re-established the quintessence of the teachings of all the prophets, setting aside the accessories and purifying religion from human interpretation.” (May 3, 1912, at Hotel Plaza, Chicago.)

“Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive. If it be without motion and non-progressive it is without the divine life: it is dead. The divine institutes are continuously active and evolutionary; therefore the revelation of them must be progressive and continuous.” (May 24, 1912, at Unitarian Conference, Boston.)

“The divine Manifestations since the day of Adam have striven to unite humanity so that all may be accounted as one soul. The function and purpose of a shepherd is to gather and not disperse his flock. The prophets of God have been divine shepherds of humanity. They have established a

bond of love and unity among mankind, made scattered peoples one nation and wandering tribes a mighty kingdom. They have laid the foundation of the oneness of God and summoned all to Universal. Peace. All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth, founded the same institutions and reflected the same light. Their appearances have been successive and correlated: each one has announced and extolled the one who was to follow and all laid the foundation of reality. They summoned and invited the people to love and made the human world a mirror of the World of God. Therefore the divine religions they established have one foundation; their teachings, proofs and evidences are one; in name and form they differ but in reality they agree and are the same.” (May 28, 1912, at Metropolitan Temple, New York City.)

The Divine Spirit of the Age

“That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race could neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day and period of newness and consummation...From every standpoint the world of humanity is undergoing a reformation. The laws of former governments and civilizations are in process of revision, scientific ideas and theories are developing and advancing to meet a new range of phenomena...This is the cycle of maturity and reformation in religion as well. Dogmatic imitations of ancestral beliefs are passing. They have been the axis around which religion revolved but now are no longer useful; on the contrary, in this day they have become the cause of human degradation and hindrance.

“Heavenly teachings applicable to the advancement in human conditions have been revealed in this merciful age. This reformation and renewal of the fundamental reality of religion constitute the true and outworking spirit of modernism, the unmistakable light of the world, the manifest effulgence of the Word of God, the divine remedy for all human ailments and the bounty of eternal life to all mankind.

“His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh, the Sun of Truth, has dawned from the horizon of the Orient, flooding all regions with the light and life which will never pass away. His teachings which embody the divine spirit of the age and are applicable to this period of maturity in the life of the human world are: The oneness of the world of humanity; the protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit; The foundation of all religion is one; Religion must be the cause of unity; Religion must accord with science and reason; Independent investigation of truth; Equality between men and women; The abandonment of prejudice; Universal Peace; Universal education; A universal language; Solution of the economic problem; An International Tribunal.

“Everyone who truly seeks and justly reflects will admit that the teachings of the present day emanating from mere human sources and authority are the cause of difficulty and disagreement amongst mankind, the very destroyers of humanity, whereas the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh are the very healing of the sick world, the remedy for every need and condition. In them may be found

the realization of every desire and aspiration, the cause of the happiness of the world of humanity, the stimulus and illumination of mentality, the impulse for advancement and uplift, the basis of unity for all nations, the fountain source of love amongst mankind, the center of agreement, the means of love and harmony, the one bond which will unite the East and the West.” (November 17, 1912, at Genealogical Hall, New York City.)

Immeasurable Upward Progress

“In this present cycle there will be an evolution in civilization unparalleled in the history of the world. The world of humanity has heretofore been in the stage of infancy; now it is approaching maturity. Just as the individual human organism, having attained the period of maturity, reaches its fullest degree of physical strength and ripened intellectual faculties, so that in one year of this ripened period there is witnessed an unprecedented measure of development, likewise the world of humanity in this cycle of its completeness and consummation will realize an immeasurable upward progress.” (April 21, 1912, 1219 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C.)

“According to an intrinsic law, all phenomena of being attain to a summit and degree of consummation, after which a new order and condition is established. As the instruments and science of war have reached the degree of thoroughness and proficiency, it is hoped that the transformation of the human world is at hand and that in the coming centuries all the energies and inventions of man will be utilized in promoting the interests of peace and brotherhood...

“The powers of earth cannot withstand the privilege and bestowals which God has ordained for this great and glorious century. Peace is a need and exigency of the time. Man can withstand anything except that which is divinely intended and indicated for the time and its requirements.

Now, praise be to God, in all countries of the world peace lovers are to be found and these principles are being spread among mankind, especially in this country. Praise be to God, this thought is prevailing and souls are continually arising as defenders of the oneness of humanity, endeavouring to assist and establish international peace. There is no doubt that this wonderful democracy will be able to realize it and the banner of international agreement will be unfurled here to spread onward and outward among all the nations of the world.” (May 13, 1912, at meeting of New York Peace Society, Hotel Astor.)

“May America become the distributing centre of spiritual enlightenment and all the world receive this heavenly blessing. For America has developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. While it is true that its people have attained a marvellous material civilization, I hope that spiritual forces will animate this great body and a corresponding spiritual civilization be established.” (April 16, 1912, at Hotel Ansonia, New York City.)

“Though these quotations are but a few fragments of the complete text, nevertheless they reveal the outline of a religious philosophy which penetrates to the soul of history and explains the

strange disorders tormenting the present age. In Bahá'u'lláh a spiritual Sun has arisen above the darkness of the world, a touchstone dividing the false and the true, compelling a final, struggle between the forces of materialism and those of reality. He evokes a new and universal loyalty which alone can sustain the burden of world administration and develop in men their latent higher powers. He reinforces the hope of peace and the desire for social justice, by the assurance that they emanate from the very order of human evolution. Enshrined in the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the principle of a worldwide social structure, an organism fitted to the present needs of humanity. His teachings universalize the teachings given by prophets in the past.