

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh

Notes on recent secondary literature, and material from the Bahá'í World Centre.

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What follows is a very useful Memorandum from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. It includes an earlier memorandum "World Government and the Universal House" which was an important source for Wendi Momen's paper trying to answer the question "How close are we to the Lesser Peace?"¹ and was the principal reason for initiating the request to the Research Department. It's almost a dozen years since that first European Bahá'í Conference on Law and International Order and another five since this Research Department memo which is formally published here.² It seems then an opportune place to introduce this memorandum, which itself so helpfully points to published material on the theme of world order evolution, by making a few notes on other Bahá'í material about World Order available since the turn of the twentieth century.

World Order represents a very broad terrain. In the process of writing an elaborate defence of their religion, Schaefer, Gollmer and Towfiqh³ spent considerable time discussing the nature of the Bahá'í World Order. Gollmer is a political scientist whose work has recently been reviewed⁴. Unfortunately his thesis on Bahá'í political thought remains unpublished⁵. Schaefer, a jurist, is an important intellectual in the present Bahá'í community of scholars, who has had an interest since his university days concerning the features of the Bahá'í World Order system. Recently his landmark thesis was reprinted making it much more widely available⁶. Subsequently he has looked at some of the theological and ethical

¹ Wendi Momen, 'How Close Are We to the Lesser Peace?' in *Law and International Order: Proceedings of the First European Bahá'í Conference on Law and International Order* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), 103-150.

² The memorandum includes a letter dated 27 April 1995 which has already been widely discussed and circulated on the Internet. See also fn.44.

³ Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfiqh, and Ulrich Gollmer, *Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Bahá'í Apologetics*, (trans. Geraldine Schuckelt, Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2000)

⁴ Arash Abizadeh, '[Politics beyond War: Ulrich Gollmer's Contribution to Bahá'í Political Thought](#)', *World Order*, 2004, 35(3), 19-23

⁵ Ulrich Gollmer, *Gottesreich und Weltgestaltung. Grundlegung einer politischen Theologie im Bahá'í tum*. Unpublished thesis. See also the recent dissertation in ecclesiastical law by Emanuel Vahid Towfiqh, *Die rechtliche Verfassung von Religionsgemeinschaften. Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel der Bahai* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, Series: Jus Ecclesiasticum 80) and book reviews of the same by Reinmar Wolff, *JuristenZeitung*, February 2007, 62(4) 184-185, Jörn Thielmann, '[Die rechtliche Verfassung von Religionsgemeinschaften. Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel der Bahai](#)', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 2007, 138. An additional recent study from Europe is Farshad Mohammad-Avvali, *Globales Recht oder plurales Recht? Der rechtstheoretische Diskurs zum Rechtspluralismus unter Berücksichtigung der Position der Bahá'í Lehre im Kontext der Globalisierung* (München: GRIN Verlag, 2007, Series: Lektüreseminar: Grundlagen der aktuellen Rechtstheorie und Rechtsphilosophie)

⁶ Udo Schaefer, *Grundlagen der Gemeindeordnung der Bahá'í* (Hofheim: Bahai Verlag, 2003, Series: Studien Zum Bahá'ítum 3)

underpinnings⁷ of this world order as well as interesting discussions of its legal and constitutional basis⁸.

Making the Crooked Straight inspired a whole issue of *World Order* magazine⁹ devoted to reviewing its implications especially notable the article by Roshan Danesh¹⁰ which joins another well thought out paper on the constitutional dimensions of a putative Bahá'í world order¹¹ essential reading for any serious reader of Bahá'í thought on the topic of world order and how to approach its gradual unfoldment rather than to prematurely crystallise it. *World Order* magazine has also produced interesting issues on post nationalism¹² and the international criminal court¹³ and germane discussions on global electoral process¹⁴

A number of the leading publishers of Bahá'í material have contributed new collections of material in the area of world order studies. These include a collection of articles from the Bahá'í Politics and International Law Special Interest Group of the Association of Bahá'í Studies, English-Speaking Europe¹⁵, and practitioners and academics in the fields of law, governance, conflict resolution economics linguistics and international relations have assembled a provocative collection of Bahá'í perspectives on peace and conflict resolution¹⁶. The North American Association for Bahá'í Studies

⁷ Udo Schaefer, *Beyond the Clash of Religions: The emergence of a new paradigm*, (trans. Geraldine Schuckelt, 3rd ed. Hofheim: Bahá'í Verlag, 2005. See also his *Bahá'í Ethics in Light of Scripture Volume 1-Doctrinal Fundamentals* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2007) especially Chapter 9 'Liberty and its Limits' 313-330.

⁸ Udo Schaefer, 'An Introduction to Bahá'í Law: Doctrinal Foundations, Principles and Structures', *Journal of Law and Religion*, 2002-2003, 18(2), 307-372. See also the response by Roshan Danesh, 'Imagining Bahá'í Law: Commentary on Udo Schaefer, 'An Introduction to Bahá'í Law'', *Bahá'í Studies Review*, 2007, 14, in press.

⁹ *World Order*, 2004, 35(3). Special issue: Roundtable discussions of 'Making the Crooked Straight': Scholarship and Building a World Community.

¹⁰ Roshan Danesh, 'The Politics of Delay – Social Meanings and the historical Treatment of Bahá'í Law', *World Order*, 2004, 35(3), 33-45

¹¹ Roshan Danesh, 'Internationalism and Divine Law: A Bahá'í Perspective', *Journal of Law and Religion*, 2003-2004, 19(2), 209-242. See also fn. 31.

¹² *World Order*, 2003, 34(4). Special issue: Postnationalism. Challenging and redefining our views of national identity and citizenship.

¹³ *World Order*, 2002-2003, 34(2). Special issue: The International Criminal Court. Building block for a global community.

¹⁴ Arash Abizadeh, 'Democratic Elections without Campaigns? Normative Foundations of National Bahá'í Elections', *World Order*, 2005, 37(1), 7-49 and also Arash Abizadeh, 'Informational Constraint and Focal Point Convergence: Theoretical Implications of Plurality-Rule Elections for the New Institutionalism.' *Rationality and Society*, 2001, 13(1), 99-136.

¹⁵ Babak Bahador & Nazila Ghanea (eds.), *Processes of the Lesser Peace* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2002, Series: George Ronald Bahá'í Studies Series) particularly Jeffrey Huffines, 'Bahá'í Proposals for the Reformation of World Order', 1-45; Daniel Wheatley, 'Global Governance: Has a Paradigm shift in World Government Theory Brought the Lesser Peace Closer?', 227-249. See also the book review by William P Collins, *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2004, 14(1-2), 97-103.

¹⁶ Charles O. Lerche (ed.), *Healing the Body Politic: Bahá'í Perspectives on Peace and Conflict Resolution* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2004, Series: George Ronald Bahá'í Studies Series). See especially Graham Hassall, 'Contemporary Governance and Conflict Resolution: A Bahá'í Reading', 84-116; Olivia Lopez, 'Reforming the United Nations: Issues and Opinions', 177-211; Ariane Sabet, 'Bahá'u'llah's Concept of Collective Security in Historical and Theoretical Perspective', 212-254.

has used its periodical to publish papers of continuing interest and relevance to a growing understanding of Bahá'í notions of world order¹⁷

Elsewhere in North America, Bahá'í publishers have also contributed to this body of work. Kalimat press assembled a diverse group of reflections and scholarly papers on global issues¹⁸ while Brian Lepard, a specialist in human rights published his vision for a global ethic¹⁹ which tries to establish the core values which would underpin a globally federated world order congruent with Bahá'í principles and mankind's faith traditions, written in a style appealing to the general public. Similarly John Hatcher, in the has updated his model of the ascending society in the bookstore friendly Baha'i Publishing series which effectively recaps the main features of the Bahai world order models²⁰. Hong Kong based Juxta electronically published an excellent collection of papers on human rights, a key component of a just world order²¹ which has proved popular enough to recently issue in a print version.

Outside of the Bahá'í publishing system, a number of authors have been able to publish perspectives on social evolution²², terrorism and secession²³, international law²⁴, education²⁵, interreligious dialogue²⁶, world theology²⁷

¹⁷ Brian Lepard, 'Protecting the Human Family: Humanitarian Intervention, International Law, and Bahá'í Principles', *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2003, 13(1-4), 33-53. Wendy Heller, 'The Religious Foundations of Civil Society Part 1', *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2000, 10(1-2), 27-69. Wendy Heller, 'The Religious Foundations of Civil Society Part 2', *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2000, 10(3-4), 25-56. Sohrab Abizadeh, 'Will Globalization Lead to A World Commonwealth?', *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2005, 15(1-4), 41-71.

¹⁸ Michael Fitzgerald (ed.) *Earth Circles: Bahá'í Perspectives on Global Issues* (Los Angeles, Kalimat Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Brian D. Lepard. *Hope for a Global Ethic: Shared Principles in Religious Scriptures* (Wilmette, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2006). See also, more generally his *Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention A Fresh Legal Approach Based on Fundamental Ethical Principles in International Law and World Religions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002) and the book review by Dwight N. Bashir in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2004, 14(1-2), 91-96.

²⁰ John S. Hatcher, *The Ascent of Society: The Social Imperative in Personal Salvation*, (Wilmette, Illinois, Baha'i Publishing, 2007).

²¹ Tahirih Tahririha Danesh (ed). *Bahá'í-Inspired Perspectives on Human Rights* (Hong Kong:Juxta Publications, 2001/2007). See also the dissertation by Hale Enayati, *Die Garantie der individuellen Religionsfreiheit im Völkerrecht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Stellung der Bahá'í*, (Berlin: Weißensee-Verlag, 2002, Series: Berliner Beiträge zum Völkerrecht, Bd.1).

²² John Woodall, 'Humanity's Coming of Age: The Bahá'í Faith and World Order' in *Toward a Global Civilization? The Contribution of Religions* (Patricia Mische & Melissa Merklung (eds), New York/Wien:Peter Lang, 2001).

²³ Merchant AK, 'Rise of terrorism & secessionism in South Asia: Bahá'í viewpoint', *Journal of Dharma*, 25, no.3-4 (2000), 376-382 reprinted also Merchant, AK, 'Rise of Terrorism and Secessionism in South Asia- A Bahai Viewpoint' in *Rise of Terrorism and Secessionism in Eurasia*, (VD Chopra (ed), New Delhi:Gyan Publishing House, 2003), 89-95.

²⁴ Danesh Sarooshi, 'International Law and Peace between the Nations: The Contribution of the Bahá'í Faith', in *Law and Religion Current Legal Issues* (Richard O'Dair & Andrew Lewis (eds), vol 4, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²⁵ Marie Gervais, 'The Bahá'í curriculum for peace education' *Journal of Peace Education*, 2004 1(2), 205-224; Zena Sorabjee, 'Education for a global society: Bahá'í view' in *Education for a Global Society : Interfaith Dimensions* (Marmar Mukhopadhyay (ed),. Delhi:Shipra, 2003), 53-63 and Merchant, AK 'Inter-faith education for an ever-advancing global society' *idem*, 64-85.

²⁶ Merchant AK, 'Social Harmony and World Peace: A Bahá'í Perspective' in *Interfaith Dialogues: Different Perspectives* (Dharam Singh (ed), Patiala: Publication Bureau Punjabi University, 2002), 137-151.

social identity²⁸ and sociology of linguistics²⁹. Globalization is a phenomena which has not only been of interest to Bahá'ís³⁰, but was the theme of a conference on Globalization and the Bahá'í Faith held at the University of Copenhagen and which has produced a diverse collection of views and perspectives: 'the first comprehensive treatment of the Bahá'í religion viewed in the light of globalization'³¹.

Another source of valuable essays is those published in the annual survey of activities and reporting's in the series *The Bahai World*. These include the evolution of consciousness³², world order and global governance³³, human obligations and responsibilities in constructing a world civilization,³⁴ law and religion³⁵ and most recently an essay questioning Western liberal democracy as an inevitable pattern for the future³⁶. This issue of the Online Journal of Bahá'í studies has an important study by Nalinie Mooten of I-R theory, cosmopolitanism and the Bahá'í Faith³⁷.

There has been several book length, highly original contributions that have deepened and broadened the corpus of Bahá'í material in this field. In particular Michael Karlberg's study of the opposing cultures of contest and mutualism³⁸, Mark Perry's review of the history of racist culture and the requirements of moving to a future of racial oneness³⁹, and Huschmand

²⁷ Juan RI Cole, 'World theology and the Bahá'í Faith' in *The Comity and Grace of Method: Essays in Honor of Edmund R. Perry* (Thomas Ryba, George Bond and Herman Tull, (eds), Evanston, Ill:Northwestern University Press, 2004), 391-414.

²⁸ Siew Sim Chin, 'I Am a Human Being, and I Belong to the World: Narrating the Intersection of Spirituality and Social Identity' *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2006, 4(1), 27-42.

²⁹ Gregory Meyjes, 'Language and world order in Bahá'í perspective' in *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion* (Tope Omoniyi and Joshua A. Fishman (eds), Amsterdam: J.Benjamins, 2006, Series: Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture 20), 26-41.

³⁰ Suheil Bushrui. *The Ethics of Globalization: A Bahá'í Perspective* (Paris:Librairie Bahá'íe. 2004). Greg Dahl, *One world, one people: how globalization is shaping our future* (Wilmette:Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2007).

³¹ Annika Hvithamar, Margit Warburg & Morten Warmind (eds.), *Bahá'í and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005, Series: Renner Studies on New Religions 7). Of interest here Zaid Lundberg, 'Global Claims, Global Aims: An Analysis of Shoghi Effendi's 'The World Order of Baha'u'llah'', 119-140; Wendi Momen, 'Globalisation and Decentralisation: The Concept of Subsidiarity in the Baha'i Faith', 175-193. See a review: Jobeen Eslahpazir, '[Baha'i and Globalisation](#)', *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 138 (2007).

³² Robert Atkinson, 'Culture and the Evolution of Consciousness' in *The Bahá'í World 2000-2001* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), 145-173.

³³ Paul Vreeland, 'World Order and Global Governance: A Bahá'í Perspective' in *The Bahai World 2001-2002* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2003), 157-187.

³⁴ Hoda Mahmoudi, 'Obligation and responsibility in Constructing a World Civilization' in *The Bahá'í World 2002-2003*. (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2004), 147-177.

³⁵ Roshan Danesh, 'Beyond Integration and Separation: The Dynamic Nature of Bahá'í Law'; in *The Bahá'í World 1999-2000* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2001), 223-264.

³⁶ Michael Karlberg, 'Western Liberal Democracy as New World Order?' in *The Bahá'í World 2005-2006* (Haifa, World Centre Publications, 2007), 133-156.

³⁷ Nalinie Mooten, '[The Bahá'í Contribution to Cosmopolitan International Relations Theory](#)', *OJBS: Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2007, 1(1), 4-70.

³⁸ Michael Karlberg, *Beyond the Culture of Contest: From Adversarialism to Mutualism in an Age of Interdependence* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2004). See also Michael Karlberg, 'The Paradox of Protest in a Culture of Contest', *Peace & Change*, 2003, 28(3), 329-351.

³⁹ Mark Perry, *The Last War Racism, Spirituality and the Future of Civilization* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2005)

Sabet's analysis of the forces forming world identity⁴⁰ are warmly recommended. Equally useful are Guy Sinclair's detailed study of the constitution of the Universal House of Justice⁴¹ and Ali Nakhjavani's focussed collection of notes⁴² on the World Order of Baha'u'llah both projects relying heavily on the scope and range of the World Order of Baha'u'llah as explicated by Shoghi Effendi. We can also add Foad Katirai's excellent monograph on the Bahá'í proposals for global governance including a convocation of world leaders⁴³. In press is Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing's 'Collective Security Within Reach' which promises detailed proposals for Security Council reform⁴⁴

The Head of the Bahá'í Community, the Universal House of Justice has also remained active in promoting peace and world order with two influential documents; an open letter to the "world's religious leaders"⁴⁵ asking them to take steps to put out the fires of religious fanaticism and hatred, identifying that as a real threat to the world's present order and a document aimed primarily internally at their own community, and designed to remind them that in the Bahá'í view the emergence of a global socio-political order had to be grounded in a fundamental moral and attitudinal re-orientation to mankind's religions which re-visioned them as one common faith⁴⁶.

Externally, national Bahá'í communities represent themselves to the body of mankind, through their external affairs agency, the Bahá'í International Community. This agency has a long tradition promoting world order in international fora most especially at the agencies of the UN system. In this period the BIC issued several documents essential to understanding the Bahá'í vision of a global world order. These include freedom of religion⁴⁷, UN institutional reform⁴⁸ and overcoming corruption in human institutions⁴⁹

Until recently the Bahá'í view of its world order has been remarkably unified and self consistent, with the general scheme widely accepted for

⁴⁰ Huschmand Sabet, *From Global Crash to World Identity* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2000).

⁴¹ Guy Sinclair, *Study Guide to the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice* (Oxford:George Ronald, 2005).

⁴² Ali Nakhjavani, *Towards World Order* (Acuto:Casa Editrice Bahá'í, 2005).

⁴³ Foad Katirai, *Global Governance and the Lesser Peace* (Oxford:George Ronald, 2001).

⁴⁴ Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing, *Collective Security within Reach* (Oxford:George Ronald, 2007).

⁴⁵ The Universal House of Justice, *Letter to the Worlds Religious Leaders*. April 2002. See the version 'A Challenge to the Worlds Religious Leaders: a Statement by The Universal House of Justice', *World Order*, 2002, 33(4), 9-16.

⁴⁶ The Universal House of Justice. *One Common Faith* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2005)

⁴⁷ Bahá'í International Community, *Freedom to Believe: Upholding the Standard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Bahá'í International Community's Statement on the Freedom of Religion or Belief October 2005* BIC Document #05-1001.

⁴⁸ Bahá'í International Community, *The Search for Values in an Age of Transition A Statement of the Bahá'í International Community on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations New York, USA October 2005*. BIC Document #05-1002.

⁴⁹ Bahá'í International Community, *Overcoming Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity in Public Institutions: A Bahá'í Perspective. Prepared by the Bahá'í International Community and presented at the intergovernmental Global Forum on Fighting Corruption II. The Hague, Netherlands 28-31 May 2001*. BIC Document #01-0528.

more than a century. Recent challenges narrowing the scope and functions of the Bahá'í world order and indeed its desirability or theological feasibility have not been received enthusiastically⁵⁰, largely because they are marred by problems of selective assembly of materials, highly idiosyncratic readings and a general failure to satisfactorily engage the existing consensus of Bahá'í scholars. In religious communities preferred world orders are often juxtaposed against catastrophes and apocalypses. There have been a few such recent studies in this area as well⁵¹

In concluding our brief survey, students of the Bahá'í world order can enjoy a reissue of an important compilation, available twenty years ago which assembles in one volume key texts from the Bahá'í central figures and authorities⁵² on the theme of peace and a new volume from Craig Loehle on the spiritual power inherent in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and its ability to recreate human society.⁵³ Recently published also is a study of the common ground offered by the world's scriptures as the foundation for a new world order⁵⁴. Electronic publishing and text digitization capabilities have lead to rejuvenating long out of print titles using print on demand technology. Examples of this include a compilation which was influential at the time of the First World War, recently re-issued.⁵⁵ and which still contains very useful sources for research on the Bahá'í approach to World Order, and the recent reprint of an early but idiosyncratic attempt at re-organising Bahá'í thought into a humanistic utopia⁵⁶ by a former secretary of the Bahá'í leader Abdu'l-Baha.

⁵⁰ Sen McGlinn, *Church and State: A Postmodern Political Theology Book One* (Leiden: Sen McGlinn, 2005, Series: Studies in the Babi and Bahá'í Religions 19). *ibid*, 'Theocratic assumptions in Bahá'í literature' in *Reason & Revelation: New Directions in Bahá'í Thought* (Seena Fazel & John Danesh (eds), Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2002, 39-80, Series: Studies in the Babi and Bahá'í Religions 13). *ibid*, 'Bahá'í Meets Globalization: A new Synergy?' in *Bahá'í and Globalisation*, 269-286. *ibid*, 'A Difficult Case: Beyer's Categories and the Bahá'í Faith', *Social Compass*, 2003, 50(2), 247-255; See also Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, 'Review of Sen McGlinn, *Church and State: A Postmodern Political Theology Book One*', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2007, 39(1), 158-159, and the forthcoming thesis by Tajan Tober, *Staat und religiöse Ordnung in der Bahá'í Theologie. Ein Beitrag zum politischen Denken der Bahá'í* which critically analyzes McGlinn's presuppositions, conclusions and methodology.

⁵¹ William Collins, '[Apocalypse and Millennium: Catastrophe, Progress, and the Lesser Peace](#)', *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, 2002, 12(1-4), 1-29; Stephen Lambden, 'Catastrophe, armageddon and millenium: Some aspects of the Babi-Bahá'í exegesis of apocalyptic symbolism', *Bahá'í Studies Review*, 1999-2000, 9, 81-99. See also Stephen Lambden, 'The Messianic Roots of Babi-Bahá'í Globalism' in *Bahá'í and Globalisation*, 17-34. David Piff & Margit Warburg, 'Millennial Catastrophism in Popular Bahá'í Lore' in *New Religions in a PostModern World* (Mikael Rothstein & Reender Kranenborg (eds), Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 2003, Series: Renner Studies on New Religions 6), 123-136.

⁵² Anne G. Atkinson, Betty J. Fisher, Richard A. Hill, Anne Marie Scheffer (eds), *Peace--more than an end to war: selections from the writings of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice*. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2007)

⁵³ Craig Loehle, *Blueprint for a New World: Using the Power of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald 2007)

⁵⁴ Allen McKiel, *Beyond Tolerance: Religion and Global Community*. (Heltonville, Indiana: Special Ideas, 2007).

⁵⁵ Anon. *Compilation Of The Holy Utterances Of Baha 'O' llah And Abdul Baha: Concerning The Most Great Peace, War And Duty Of The Bahais Toward Their Government*, [1918]. Reprinted. (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2007).

⁵⁶ Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *The New Humanity: A Compendium of the Ideals of Universal Civilization*. New York: JH Sears and Company/New History Foundation 2nd printing, 1929. Reprinted (Montana: Kessinger Publishing n.d [2007])

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 5 May 2002

From: Research Department

Request for Materials about the World Order of Baha'u'llah

In his email message of 19 December 2001, Mr. requests a copy of a Research Department memorandum dated 10 September 1990, entitled "World Government and the Universal House of Justice", which was cited in the Proceedings of the First European Bahá'í Conference on Law and International Order, De Poort, The Netherlands, 8-11 June 1995. In addition, he seeks copies of "any subsequent memoranda or papers which bear upon any aspect of the World Order of Baha'u'llah".

We attach for Mr. copies of the following materials:

The memorandum dated 10 September 1990 prepared by the Research Department entitled "World Government and the Universal House of Justice", and a compilation entitled "Extracts from Letters Written by and on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice on Evolution Towards World Order", which was originally prepared in conjunction with the memorandum. The compilation was revised in 1995.

- A letter dated 27 April 1995 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer in response to questions on such subjects as theocracy, church and state, and related matters. An extract from a letter dated 14 January 1996 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual on global governance.
- A 1999 statement prepared at the instruction of the Universal House of Justice entitled "Peace Among the Nations".

In addition, Mr. might find it helpful to refer to the following items: a letter dated 19 April 2001 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer in response to a question about the unity of nations and the Lesser Peace, and a memorandum of the same date prepared by the Research Department with the heading "Attainment of the Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace". As these materials were subsequently shared with all National Spiritual Assemblies, it is suggested that Mr. request copies of these documents from his National Assembly.

With respect to Mr.'s request for papers that address "any aspect of the World Order of Baha'u'llah", the Research Department regrets that, given the limitation of resources, it is not possible, at this time, to undertake a comprehensive search of the literature of the Faith on this broad theme. We note, however, that there are a number of recent statements by the Bahá'í International Community with such titles as *Prosperity of Humankind*, *Turning Point for all Nations*, and *Who is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century*, which impinge on his area of interest. Likewise, the volumes of *The Bahá'í World* contain essays on

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various aspects of world order, as do the issues of journals published by the Associations for Bahá'í Studies. Finally, Mr. might be interested in perusing Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization, Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 2000). Part III of this work analyses the relationship between the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the establishment of the World Order.

Attachments 5

1. See, for example, Wendy M. Heller, "Covenant and the Foundations of Civil Society" in *The Bahá'í World 1995-96* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1997), pp. 185-222; Martha Schweitz and Bill Barnes, "Dimensions of Unity in an Emerging Global Order" in *The Bahá'í World 1998-99* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2000), pp. 193-228.

MEMORANDUM

To The Universal House of Justice
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Date: 10 September 1990

From: Research Department

WORLD GOVERNMENT AND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The Research Department has studied the questions raised by Mr and Mr in their letter postmarked 10 July 1990 to the Universal House of Justice. Messrs and are law students who are preparing a research paper relating the concept of sovereignty in international law to the Bahá'í World Order. As a background to their questions, they refer to the following statements:

The remark attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 455, in which the Master indicates that the Universal House of Justice "is endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state" .

Shoghi Effendi's comments about the non-political character of the Faith and his assertion that, no matter how "advanced their institutions," the Bahá'ís will not "violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution" nor "allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries." See "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 65-66.

The reference in "The Promise of World Peace" (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1985), p. 15, to the means by which a World Parliament will be constituted, namely, its members will be elected by the people of each country and confirmed by their respective governments.

Mr and Mr note that a future world government will consist of an international executive, legislature, and a supreme tribunal, and they pose a number of questions that pertain to the relationship between the institutions of the world government and the future role of the Universal House of Justice. We provide the following comment.

Before addressing the specific questions raised by Mr and Mr , it is useful to consider, in broad terms, the nature of the evolution of systems of world government, the unfoldment of the Bahá'í Administrative Order into the World Order of Baha'u'llah, and the ultimate convergence of these two evolutionary trends into the Bahá'í World Commonwealth in the Golden Age of the Faith.

Stages in the development of world government

The letters of Shoghi Effendi outline two stages in the development of world government. The first stage in this evolution is the emergence of "a world superstate" which will be associated with the establishment of the Lesser Peace. See "The Goal of a New World Order" in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters". The "World Parliament" referred to in "The Promise of World Peace" is an institution associated with this "superstate". In relation to the Lesser Peace, it is interesting to note that Shoghi Effendi, in a letter dated 14 March 1939 written on his behalf, indicated that it "will come about through the political efforts of the states and nations of the world, and independently of any direct Bahá'í plan or effort".

A second, more distant, stage in the evolution of a system of world government, i.e. the "world commonwealth", is described in "The Unfoldment of World Civilization", in the book "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", The "world legislature" mentioned on p. 203 of this book is a term applied to the institution which performs the legislative function in the Bahá'í World Commonwealth. This same term can also be applied to the "World Parliament" associated with the Lesser Peace that was mentioned in the paragraph above. The following extract from "The Promised Day Is Come" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 123, explicitly links not only the two stages in the evolving world government but also allies them with the "New World Order" of Baha'u'llah.

To the general character, the implications and features of this world commonwealth, destined to emerge, sooner or later, out of the carnage, agony, and havoc of this great world convulsion, I have already referred in my previous communications. Suffice it to say that this consummation will, by its very nature, be a gradual process, and must, as Baha'u'llah has Himself anticipated, lead at first to the establishment of that Lesser Peace which the nations of the earth, as yet unconscious of His Revelation and yet unwittingly enforcing the general principles which He has enunciated, will themselves establish. This momentous and historic step, involving the reconstruction of mankind, as the result of the universal recognition of its oneness and wholeness, will bring in its wake the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowledgment of the claims, of the Faith of Baha'u'llah - the essential condition to that ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations which must signalize the emergence of His New World Order.

Development of the World Order of Baha'u'llah

The development of Baha'u'llah's New World Order, as outlined in the writings' of Shoghi Effendi, is an evolutionary process. In "The Unfoldment of World Civilization", the World Order of Baha'u'llah is described as "evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith". The Administrative Order precedes the emergence of the New World Order. For example, it is referred to as, among other things, "the precursor, the nucleus and pattern" of "that Order" and as the "sole framework" of the "Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future".

Shoghi Effendi also identifies a number of stages in the evolution of the Faith. For instance, in "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 15, he refers to

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... the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Bahá'í state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Bahá'í Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Baha'u'llah.

Further, in "Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 155, Shoghi Effendi refers to the anticipated impetus to the development of the Faith provided by the World Crusade and he designates the point in time when the Faith will begin to assume responsibility for "religious and civil matters". The Guardian states:

This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Baha'u'llah through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition - stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves in - to the stage of establishment, the stage at which 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 years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth - the Kingdom of Baha'u'llah - mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abha Kingdom.

Finally, in relation to the future of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi indicates that it is

... destined to attain, in the fullness of time, the status of a world-embracing Commonwealth, which would be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great Peace announced by its Author.

("The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", p. 196)

And, the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 23 December 1985 written on its behalf to an individual believer states that

... the interests of the entire world ... and those of the Faith are destined to merge in the Most Great Peace.

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Compilation

The Research Department has been able to find few references that pertain specifically to the questions raised by Mr and Mr, To assist them in their study we attach a compilation of extracts from letters written by and on behalf of the Universal House of Justice. These letters amplify aspects of the evolution toward World Order and comment on the relationship between the Bahá'í institutions and the new institutions referred to in the Guardian's letters. A number of important general points emerge from consideration of these extracts, for example:

1. As mentioned earlier, the letters of Shoghi Effendi describe successive stages in the evolution of the institutions of the Faith and their relationship to the world at large. At the time of the establishment of the Bahá'í Commonwealth, of which the Universal House of Justice is the "supreme organ", the House of Justice indicates that "the religious and secular aspects are clearly merged into one set of institutions, i.e., the institutions of the World Order of Bahau'llah". See extract I.
2. The future "governmental functions" of the Houses of Justice have not been clearly defined. See extract 2.
3. The nature of the relationship between the evolving World Order of Baha'u'llah and the institutions of a "slowly awakening world" will require further elucidation by the Universal House of Justice. Extracts 3 and 4 contain statements written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi concerning the International Executive, the Universal Court of Arbitration and the International Tribunal.
4. The process of evolution toward the Bahá'í World Commonwealth is a long and gradual one. See extracts 5 and 6.
5. While the Writings of the Faith contain many passages with "guidance for the changing conditions under which the followers of Baha'u'llah will be labouring during the passing centuries, ... it is not possible to see in advance the details of how they will be applied". See extract 7.

Question 1: Relationship between the international legislature and the Universal House of Justice

In a letter dated 27 May 1966, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 90, the House of Justice is described as both the "highest legislative body of the Faith" and as the "supreme organ" of the Bahá'í Commonwealth. The Universal House of Justice has indicated that this system of government coincides with the "Bahá'í system". See extract 4 of attachment. Further the House of Justice confirms that at the time of the establishment of the Bahá'í Commonwealth the "religious and secular aspects are clearly merged into one set of institutions, i.e., the institutions of the World Order of Baha'u'llah." See extract 1.

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Question 2: Enforcement of the laws of the Universal House of Justice on the peoples of the world

With regard to the question about the manner in which the laws of the Universal House of Justice will be enforced on the peoples of the world, this needs to be understood within the context of the gradual evolution of the Faith and the emergence of the world commonwealth. From the extract from "Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957", p. 155, already cited, it is clear that the "Bahá'í state" will function, "in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances in the Kitab-i-Aqdas".

With respect to how the laws of the Universal House of Justice will be enforced, information on this subject is fragmentary. It is interesting to note that 'Abdu'l-Baha, in His Will and Testament (see "Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 14-15), refers to the fact that the Universal House of Justice enacts the laws and the government enforces them. He states:

This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

Further, Shoghi Effendi, in a letter dated 18 April 1941 written on his behalf in response to a question about the "government" referred to in the above excerpt, provided the following clarification:

By "Government" ... is meant the executive body which will enforce the laws when the Bahá'í Faith has reached the point when it is recognized and accepted entirely by any particular nation.

And, the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 9 March 1977 written on its behalf to an individual believer in response to a question about the rights of the minority of non-Bahá'í citizens in a Bahá'í state indicated:

As to your question concerning the rights of the minority of non-Bahá'í citizens in a Bahá'í state, it is clear from the writings of our Faith that under a Bahá'í system the rights of the minorities of any type must always be respected and upheld. Just as Bahá'ís today show obedience and loyalty to the government but refuse to bow to the majority if they are asked to deny their Faith, so in the future, when the majority is represented by the Faith the Bahá'ís will not force the minority to become followers of Baha'u'llah but they will expect the minority to be similarly obedient and loyal.

The ultimate safeguard in the Faith of Baha'u'llah to ensure that this principle and all its other fundamental tenets are not violated is the Universal House of Justice, which, as its Constitution clearly stipulates, is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the integrity of the teachings and of safeguarding their inviolability.

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Question 3: Sacred order and secular order

Mr and Mr make reference to the historical Western model of the division between church and state. They enquire whether or not it is valid, in the Bahá'í model, to draw a distinction between a sacred order (the Bahá'í Commonwealth) and a secular order (the political institutions of the world). From the foregoing discussions, it is apparent that the sacred and secular begin to merge with the emergence of the Bahá'í state and that, by the time of the establishment of the world commonwealth, the "religious and secular aspects are clearly merged into one set of institutions".

The historical division between church and state which characterizes the Western model of government provides a means for preserving a clear distinction between the religious and political powers in society and for curbing any unwarranted interference of the church in the affairs of the state. Such provisions were particularly relevant to the relations between church and state during the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. It is suggested that, as part of their research, Mr and Mr might give some attention to a consideration of the uniqueness of the Bahá'í system and the provisions it contains for avoiding the problems and difficulties associated with other religious and governmental systems. In this regard they may well be familiar with the material contained in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", pp. 18-22 and pp. 152-54.

Attachment

27 April 1995

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your email of 19 February 1995 addressed to the Research Department was referred to the Universal House of Justice. In it you quote two phrases which appear in a book you have recently read, and which seem from the context to be citations from Shoghi Effendi. These phrases are "Bahá'í theocracy" and "humanity will emerge from that immature civilization in which church and state are separate". You ask whether these references can be authenticated and dated. We have been instructed to send you the following reply.

A reference to "Bahá'í theocracy" is to be found in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual Bahá'í on 30 September 1949. This reads as follows:

He thinks your question is well put: what the Guardian was referring to was the theocratic systems, such as the Catholic Church and the Caliphate, which are not divinely given as systems, but man-made, and yet, being partly derived from the teachings of Christ and Muhammad are in a sense theocracies. The Bahá'í theocracy, on the contrary, is both divinely ordained as a system and, of course, based on the teachings of the Prophet Himself.

The other passage does not comprise words of Shoghi Effendi, although its purport was approved by him. As you yourself have since discovered, it can be found in *The Bahá'í World*, volume VI, on page 199, in a statement entitled "Concerning Membership in Non-Bahá'í Religious Organizations", about which the Guardian's secretary had written on his behalf on 11 December 1935: "The Guardian has carefully read the copy of the statement you had recently prepared concerning non-membership in non-Bahá'í religious organizations, and is pleased to realize that your comments and explanations are in full conformity with his views on the subject."

The complete paragraph in which the words appear is as follows:

In the light of these words,¹ it seems fully evident that the way to approach this instruction is in realizing the Faith of Baha'u'llah as an ever-growing organism destined to become something new and greater than any of the revealed religions

¹. Reference to a letter of 15 June 1935 from Shoghi Effendi, published in the United States *Bahá'í News*, no. 95, October 1935, p. 2, and in *Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Bahá'ís of North America, 1932-1946* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1947), pp. 4-5.

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of the past. Whereas former Faiths inspired hearts and illumined souls, they eventuated in formal religions with an ecclesiastical organization, creeds, rituals and churches, while the Faith of Baha'u'llah, likewise renewing man's spiritual life, will gradually produce the institutions of an ordered society, fulfilling not merely the function of the churches of the past but also the function of the civil state. By this manifestation of the Divine Will in a higher degree than in former ages, humanity will emerge from that immature civilization in which church and state are separate and competitive institutions, and partake of a true civilization in which spiritual and social principles are at last reconciled as two aspects of one and the same Truth.

You also ask how these statements could be reconciled with Shoghi Effendi's comment on page 149 of *Bahá'í Administration*, which appears to anticipate "a future that is sure to witness the formal and complete separation of Church and State", and with the following words in his letter of 21 March 1932 addressed to the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada:

Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries.

A careful reading of the letter dated 6 December 1928 in which the Guardian's comment about the separation of Church and State occurs would suggest that, rather than enunciating a general principle, Shoghi Effendi is simply reviewing "the quickening forces of internal reform" that had "recently transpired throughout the Near and Middle East", and enumerating a number of factors that impinge on the development of the Faith in those parts of the world.'

As for the statement made by Shoghi Effendi in his letter of 21 March 1932, the well-established principles of the Faith concerning the relationship of the Bahá'í institutions to those of the country in which the Bahá'ís reside make it unthinkable that they would ever purpose to violate a country's constitution or so to meddle in its political machinery as to attempt to take over the powers of government. This is an integral element of the Bahá'í principle of abstention from involvement in politics. However, this does not by any means imply that the country itself may not, by constitutional means, decide to adopt Bahá'í laws and practices and modify its constitution or method of government accordingly. The relationship between the principle of abstention from involvement in politics and the emergence of the Bahá'í State is commented on later in this letter. In the meantime we can quote the following extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian in response to queries from individual believers, which indicate that the relationship is an evolving one:

Regarding the question raised in your letter, Shoghi Effendi believes that for the present the Movement, whether in the East or the West, should be dissociated entirely from politics. This was the explicit injunction of 'Abdu'l-Baha Eventually, however, as you have rightly conceived it, the Movement will, as soon

² *The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 66.

³ *Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 147.

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as it is fully developed and recognized, embrace both religious and political issues. In fact Baha'u'llah clearly states that affairs of state as well as religious questions are to be referred to the Houses of Justice into which the Assemblies of the Bahá'ís will eventually evolve.

(30 November 1930)

The Bahá'ís will be called upon to assume the reins of government when they will come to constitute the majority of the population in a given country, and even then their participation in political affairs is bound to be limited in scope unless they obtain a similar majority in some other countries as well.

(19 November 1939)

The Bahá'ís must remain non-partisan in all political affairs. In the distant future, however, when the majority of a country have become Bahá'ís then it will lead to the establishment of a Bahá'í State.

(19 April 1941)

A proper understanding of all the above passages, and of their implications, requires an acceptance of two fundamental principles for the exegesis of Bahá'í Texts.

The first, which derives from the Covenant, is the principle that the writings of 'Abdul-Baha and the Guardian are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and intimately linked with the Teachings of Baha'u'llah Himself. This principle is clearly expounded in two paragraphs from a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer on 19 March 1946:

Whatever the Master has said is based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah. He was the perfect Interpreter, had lived with Him all His life; therefore what He says has the same standing, even if a text of Baha'u'llah is not available

We must take the teachings as a great, balanced whole, not seek out and oppose to each other two strong statements that have different meanings; somewhere in between, there are links uniting the two. That is what makes our Faith so flexible and well balanced. For instance there are calamities for testing and for punishment - there are also accidents, plain cause and effect!

Baha'u'llah has given us a Revelation designed to raise mankind to heights never before attained. It is little wonder that the minds of individual believers, no matter how perceptive, have difficulty in comprehending its range. It is the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian which elucidate this vast Revelation and make clear the manner in which different statements relate to one another and what is implied by the Revealed Word. Without the bright light of the • Covenant, this Faith, like all those before it, would be torn to pieces by the conflicting opinions of scholars applying limited human reasoning to divinely revealed truths.

The second fundamental principle which enables us to understand the pattern towards which Baha'u'llah wishes human society to evolve is the principle of organic growth which requires that detailed developments, and the understanding of detailed developments, become available only with the passage of time and with the help of the guidance given by that Central Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn. In this regard one can use the simile of a tree. If

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a farmer plants a tree, he cannot state at that moment what its exact height will be, the number of its branches or the exact time of its blossoming. He can, however, give a general impression of its size and pattern of growth and can state with confidence which fruit it will bear. The same is true of the evolution of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. For example, we find the following illuminating explanation in a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís in America on 23 February 1924:⁴

And as we make an effort to demonstrate that love to the world may we also clear our minds of any lingering trace of unhappy misunderstandings that might obscure our clear conception of the exact purpose and methods of this new world order, so challenging and complex, yet so consummate and wise. We are called upon by our beloved Master in His Will and Testament not only to adopt it unreservedly, but to unveil its merit to all the world. To attempt to estimate its full value, and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications. But one word of warning must be uttered in this connection. Let us be on our guard lest we measure too strictly the Divine Plan with the standard of men. I am not prepared to state that it agrees in principle or in method with the prevailing notions now uppermost in men's minds, nor that it should conform with those imperfect, precarious, and expedient measures feverishly resorted to by agitated humanity. Are we to doubt that the ways of God are not necessarily the ways of man? Is not faith but another word for implicit obedience, whole-hearted allegiance, uncompromising adherence to that which we believe is the revealed and express will of God, however perplexing it might first appear, however at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the crude theories, the idle imaginings, the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age? If we are to falter or hesitate, if our love for Him should fail to direct us and keep us within His path, if we desert Divine and emphatic principles, what hope can we any more cherish for healing the ills and sicknesses of this world?

Pending the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, whose function it is to lay more definitely the broad lines that must guide the future activities and administration of the Movement, it is clearly our duty to strive to obtain as clear a view as possible of the manner in which to conduct the affairs of the Cause, and then arise with single-mindedness and determination to adopt and maintain it in all our activities and labours.

At this time we have the benefit of many subsequent interpretations by Shoghi Effendi and also the initial guidance of the Universal House of Justice, which will continue to elucidate aspects of this mighty system as it unfolds. In striving to attain a "clearer and fuller understanding" of the World Order of Baha'u'llah, we need to contemplate the operation of the Bahá'í principles of governance and social responsibility as they persist through changing sets of conditions, from the present time when the Bahá'í community constitutes a small number of people living in a variety of overwhelmingly non-Bahá'í societies, to the far different situation

4 *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 62.

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in future centuries when the Bahá'ís are becoming, and eventually have become, the vast majority of the people.

The Administrative Order is certainly the nucleus and pattern of the World Order of Baha'u'llah, but it is in embryonic form, and must undergo major evolutionary developments in the course of time. Certain passages in the writings on this subject establish matters of principle, certain ones describe the ultimate goal of the Most Great Peace, and certain of them relate to stages of development on the way to the attainment of that goal. For example, in this familiar passage in His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha states:⁵

This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

In response to a question about the "government" in the above passage, Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf, on 18 April 1941, the following clarification:

By "Government" ... is meant the executive body which will enforce the laws when the Bahá'í Faith has reached the point when it is recognized and accepted entirely by any particular nation.

The same relationship between legislature and executive is expressed in the well-known passage in "The Unfoldment of World Civilization"⁶, showing how one principle is applied over successive periods.

A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth.

In relation to other international institutions, the Guardian has given the following guidance:

Touching the point raised in the Secretary's letter regarding the nature and scope of the Universal Court of Arbitration, this and other similar matters will have to be explained and elucidated by the Universal House of Justice, to which, according to the Master's explicit Instructions, all important fundamental questions must be referred.⁷

In his letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada written on 27 February 1929,⁸ Shoghi Effendi stated:

⁵ *Will and Testament of 'Abdu 'l-Baha* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 14-15.

⁶ *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 203.

⁷ *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 47.

⁸ cf. *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 6-7.

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Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power. And as the Bahá'í Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth all the rights, the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future superstate.

Complementing these words are the Guardian's repeated and forceful requirement that Bahá'ís strictly abstain from involvement in politics. This requirement has far-reaching implications for the method by which Baha'u'llah's Administrative Order will evolve into His World Order. We can consider, for example, the well-known passage in his letter of 21 March 1932 to the Bahá'ís in the United States and Canada⁹

Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programmes of parties and factions Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Baha'u'llah, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men

... Let them beware lest, in their eagerness to further the aims of their beloved Cause, they should be led unwittingly to bargain with their Faith, to compromise with their essential principles, or to sacrifice, in return for any material advantage which their institutions may derive, the integrity of their spiritual ideals.

As one studies these words, one begins to understand the processes at work in the gradual unfoldment and establishment of the Bahá'í System.

Clearly the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth is a "political" enterprise, and the Teachings of the Faith are filled with "political" principles - using the word in the sense of the science of government and of the organization of human society. At the same time the Bahá'í world community repeatedly and emphatically denies being a "political" organization, and Bahá'ís are required, on pain of deprivation of their administrative rights, to refrain from becoming involved in "political" matters and from taking sides in "political" disputes. In other words, the Bahá'ís are following a completely different path from that usually followed by those who wish to reform society. They eschew political methods towards the achievement of their aims, and concentrate on revitalizing the hearts, minds and behaviour of people and on presenting a working model as evidence of the reality and practicality of the way of life they propound.

The Bahá'í Administrative Order is the "nucleus and pattern" of the divinely intended future political system of the world, and undoubtedly non-Bahá'í governments will benefit from

9 The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 64-65.

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learning how this system works and from adopting its procedures and principles in overcoming the problems they face. Nevertheless, this Administration is primarily the framework and structure designed to be a channel for the flow of the spirit of the Cause and for the application of its Teachings. As the Guardian wrote: ¹⁰

It is surely for those to whose hands so priceless a heritage has been committed to prayerfully watch lest the tool should supersede the Faith itself, lest undue concern for the minute details arising from the administration of the Cause obscure the vision of its promoters, lest partiality, ambition, and worldliness tend in the course of time to becloud the radiance, stain the purity, and impair the effectiveness of the Faith of Baha'u'llah,

The gradual process of the evolution of the Bahá'í Administrative Order into the World Order of Baha'u'llah has been described by Shoghi Effendi in many of his writings, as in the following excerpt from his letter of 30 April 1953 to the All-America Intercontinental Teaching Conference: ¹¹

This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Baha'u'llah through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition - stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves - to the stage of establishment, the stage at which 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 years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth - the Kingdom of Baha'u'llah - mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abha Kingdom.

In answer to those who raise objections to this vision of a worldwide commonwealth inspired by a Divine Revelation, fearing for the freedom of minority groups or of the individual under such a system, we can explain the Bahá'í principle of upholding the rights of minorities and fostering their interests. We can also point to the fact that no person is ever compelled to accept the Faith of Baha'u'llah and moreover, unlike the situation in certain other religions, each person has complete freedom to withdraw from the Faith if he decides that he no longer believes in its Founder or accepts His Teachings. In light of these facts alone it is evident that the growth of the Bahá'í communities to the size where a non-Bahá'í state would adopt the Faith as the State Religion, let alone to the point at which the State would accept the Law of

¹⁰ *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 10.

¹¹ *Messages to the Bahá'í World, 1950-1957* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 155.

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God as its own law and the National House of Justice as its legislature, must be a supremely voluntary and democratic process.

As the Universal House of Justice wrote in its letter of 21 July 1968 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States:

It is not our purpose to impose Bahá'í teachings upon others by persuading the powers that be to enact laws enforcing Bahá'í principles, nor to join movements which have such legislation as their aim. The guidance that Bahá'í institutions offer to mankind does not comprise a series of specific answers to current problems, but rather the illumination of an entirely new way of life. Without this way of life the problems are insoluble; with it they will either not arise or, if they arise, can be resolved.

Two quotations from the writings of the Guardian bear particularly on these principles of the rights and prerogatives of minorities and of individuals. In *The Advent of Divine Justice* is a passage which is of fundamental significance for Bahá'í constitutional law¹²:

Unlike the nations and peoples of the earth, be they of the East or of the West, democratic or authoritarian, communist or capitalist, whether belonging to the Old World or the New, who either ignore, trample upon, or extirpate, the racial, religious, or political minorities within the sphere of their jurisdiction, every organized community enlisted under the banner of Baha'u'llah should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it.

As for the protection of the rights of individuals, there is the following translation of a forceful passage which appears in a letter from Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of Iran, written in July 1925, in relation to a situation involving a Covenant-breaker:

... the mere fact of disaffection, estrangement, or recantation of belief, can in no wise detract from, or otherwise impinge upon, the legitimate civil rights of individuals in a free society, be it to the most insignificant degree. Were the friends to follow other than this course, it would be tantamount to a reversion on their part, in this century of radiance and light, to the ways and standards of a former age: they would reignite in men's breasts the fire of bigotry and blind fanaticism, cut themselves off from the glorious bestowals of this promised Day of God, and impede the full flow of divine assistance in this wondrous age.

All Bahá'ís, and especially those who make a profound study of the Cause, need to grasp the differences between the Bahá'í concepts of governance and those of the past, and to abstain • from measuring Bahá'í institutions and methods against the faulty man-made institutions and methods hitherto current in the world. The Guardian graphically stressed these differences in his letter of 8 February 1934, known as "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah":¹³

¹² *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 35.

¹³ *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 152.

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The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both 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. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imamate or the Caliphate in Islam none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned.

Among the many complementary Teachings in the Faith which resolve the dilemmas of past societies are those of the unity of mankind on the one hand, and loyalty to the Covenant on the other. As already mentioned, no one in this Dispensation is compelled to be a Bahá'í, and the division of humankind into the "clean" and the "unclean", the "faithful" and the "infidels", is abolished. At the same time, anyone who does choose to be a Bahá'í accepts the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and, while free expression of opinion within the Bahá'í community is encouraged, this cannot ever be permitted to degenerate to the level of undermining the Covenant, for this would vitiate the very purpose of the Revelation itself.

One of the major concerns of the Universal House of Justice, as the Bahá'í Administrative Order unfolds, will be to ensure that it evolves in consonance with the spirit of the Bahá'í Revelation. While many beneficial aspects of human society at large can be safely incorporated into Bahá'í Administration, the House of Justice will guard against the corrupting influence of those non-Bahá'í political and social concepts and practices which are not in harmony with the divine standard.

The House of Justice appreciates your concern about such a fundamental issue, and asks us to assure you of its prayers in the Holy Shrines for the confirmation of your services to the Cause of God.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

For Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre
Board of Counsellors in Europe
National Assembly of the Netherlands

**EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY AND ON BEHALF OF
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE ON EVOLUTION TOWARDS
WORLD ORDER**

You have also asked whether the institutions of the Faith will in the future only concern themselves with the spiritual affairs of the community or whether they will also be engaged in matters of state and be identical with the civil government. We have been asked to state that a careful reading of the words of the beloved Guardian will reveal that what you describe are two future stages in the development of the Faith. Thus, he wrote: "Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power." ("The World Order of Baha'u'llah", pp. 6-7)

The statement quoted above envisages the development of the institutions of the Faith purely as agencies conducting the affairs of the community of the followers of Baha'u'llah. In "The Advent of Divine Justice" (p. 12), however, Shoghi Effendi goes beyond the stage when the Faith becomes the "State Religion". This stage, he explains, "... must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Bahá'í state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Bahá'í Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Baha'u'llah", This last stage is described in slightly different terms in the following words of Shoghi Effendi: "And as the Bahá'í Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future superstate." (Cf. "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 7) It is obvious that in these last stages the religious and secular aspects are clearly merged into one set of institutions, i.e., the institutions of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. This concept is further confirmed by Shoghi Effendi when he clearly states that the "Administrative Order" will in the future "assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind". ("The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 144) (9 March 1977 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) [1]

In answer to your question on future governmental functions of Houses of Justice, ... we have been directed to quote the following from two letters written on behalf of the Guardian to ' individual believers:

I This extract appears on p. 15 of the 1984 edition of "The Advent of Divine Justice".

The Bahá'ís will be called upon to assume the reins of government when they will come to constitute the majority of the population in a given country, and even then their participation in political affairs is bound to be limited in scope unless they obtain a similar majority in some other countries as well.

You asked regarding the status of the different governments when the House of Justice will be established: this is not fully explained in the teachings, and what is not definitely provided for, it is for the House of Justice to legislate upon once that body is formed.

The Universal House of Justice points out that as the World Order of Baha'u'llah unfolds, these points will become clearer to the believers, and at this time it does not wish to go beyond what Shoghi Effendi has already expounded in his letters.

(8 January 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) [2]

Your last question concerns the relationship of the evolving World Order of Baha'u'llah to the institutions of a slowly awakening world. The following three extracts from letters written on behalf of the Guardian to individual believers should prove helpful to your study of this subject.

As regards the International Executive referred to by the Guardian in his "Goal of a New World Order", it should be noted that this statement refers by no means to the Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, but simply to that world government which will herald the advent and lead to the final establishment of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. The formation of this International Executive, which corresponds to the executive head or board in present-day national governments, is but a step leading to the Bahá'í world government of the future, and hence should not be identified with either the institution of the Guardianship or that of the International House of Justice. (March 17, 1934)

The Universal Court of Arbitration and the International Tribunal are the same. When the Bahá'í State will be established they will be merged in the Universal House of Justice. (17 June 1933)

You asked regarding the status of the different governments when the House of Justice will be established: this is not fully explained in the teachings, and what is not definitely provided for, it is for the House of Justice to legislate upon once that body is formed. (12 January 1933)

(5 July 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) [3]

... the five questions which arose concerning the world legislature, the world executive, and the world tribunal during your study of the letters of the beloved Guardian collected and published under the title of "The World Order of Baha'u'llah" have been conveyed to us.

Regarding the five questions you have asked, it is clear from the text on pages 203-204 of "The World Order of Baha'u'llah" that the system the Guardian is describing is the Bahá'í system under which "the causes of religious strife will be permanently removed", and "whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation." In support of his theme, Shoghi Effendi quotes 'Abdul-Baha's statement "that all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the Shadow of this Divine Banner ...".

As to the relationships of these three bodies, on page 7 of "The World Order of Baha'u'llah" the Guardian has referred to the Universal House of Justice as "the supreme organ of the Bahá'í Commonwealth".

We have so far also noted in Shoghi Effendi's writings two other elucidations which we share with you.

Touching the point raised in the Secretary's letter regarding the nature and scope of the Universal Court of Arbitration, this and other similar matters will have to be explained and elucidated by the Universal House of Justice, to which, according to the Master's explicit Instructions, all important and fundamental questions must be referred. ("Bahá'í Administration", p. 47).

The Universal Court of Arbitration and the International Tribunal are the same. When the Bahá'í State will be established they will be merged in the Universal House of Justice. (Letter to an individual believer, dated June 17, 1933, written on the Guardian's behalf by his secretary).

The Universal House of Justice at this time does not wish to go beyond the general guidelines found in the Writings. When the time is ripe, however, it will have to provide further necessary elucidations.

(23 June 1971 from the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly) [4]

As you are no doubt aware, the Guardian indicated that the development of mankind from its present chaotic condition to the stage of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth would be a long and gradual one. The coming into existence of a World Authority and the initiation of the Lesser Peace constitute one major transformation in this process, and will be followed by other stages of the development of the Faith as outlined by Shoghi Effendi in his writings. Undoubtedly, as these developments are taking place, the counsel the institutions of the Faith can give to governments, the pattern of world administration offered by the Bahá'í 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.

(19 January 1983 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

[5]

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 13 December 1984 inquiring about the Lesser Peace and the Supreme Tribunal referred to in the writings of the Faith. We are asked to convey the following comments.

Baha'u'llah's principal mission in appearing at this time in human history is the realization of the oneness of mankind and the establishment of peace among the nations; therefore, all the forces which are focused on accomplishing these ends are influenced by His Revelation. We know, however, that peace will come in stages. First, there will come the Lesser Peace, when the unity of nations will be achieved, then gradually the Most Great Peace the spiritual as well as social and political unity of mankind, when the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, operating in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Most Holy Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, will have been established through the efforts of the Bahá'ís.

As to the Lesser Peace, Shoghi Effendi has explained that this will initially be a political unity arrived at by decision of the governments of various nations; it will not be established by direct action of the Bahá'í community. This does not mean, however, that the Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í Administrative Order, which we are told by the beloved Guardian is the pattern for future society, the Bahá'ís are constantly engaged in laying the groundwork for a permanent peace, the Most Great Peace being their ultimate goal.

The Lesser Peace itself will pass through stages; at the initial stage the governments will act entirely on their own without the conscious involvement of the Faith; later on, in God's good time, the Faith will have a direct influence on it in ways indicated by Shoghi Effendi in his "The Goal of a New World Order". In connection with the steps that will lead to this latter stage, the Universal House of Justice will certainly determine what has to be done, in accordance with the guidance in the Writings, such as the passage you quoted from "Tablets of Baha'u'llah", page 89. In the meantime, the Bahá'ís will undoubtedly continue to do all in their power to promote the establishment of peace.

(31 January 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

[6]

The process leading to the ultimate achievement in all its aspects of "the world-wide sovereignty of Baha'u'llah", the establishment in its fullness of His New World Order, will necessarily be a long one, and the world during that time will pass through many stages. The details of that process cannot now be discerned. Only through the passage of time and the enactments of the Universal House of Justice can such details be gradually unfolded before the eyes of the friends and of the world.

There are in the Sacred Texts and in the writings of Shoghi Effendi passages replete with guidance for the changing conditions under which the followers of Baha'u'llah will be labouring during the passing centuries, but it is not possible to see in advance the details of how they will be applied. The eternal verities, the laws and guiding principles of the Faith are, however, clearly revealed for all to see, and it will be in accordance with these, and through the power of the Covenant, which 'Abdul-Baha called "the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity", that the Cause will advance.

(26 November 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

[7]

Extract from a letter regarding global governance

Any activity on the part of Bahá'ís to influence the processes toward the Lesser Peace, such as the convocation of world leaders, should be undertaken with the understanding that the achievement of the Lesser Peace is dependent on the initiatives of non-Bahá'í leaders and not on the basis of any Bahá'í scheme. In this regard, the following reply was written on behalf of the beloved Guardian in a letter dated 14 March 1939 to an individual believer:

Your view that the Lesser Peace will come about through the political efforts of the states and nations of the world, and independently of any direct Bahá'í plan or effort, and the Most Great Peace be established through the instrumentality of the believers, and by the direct operation of the laws and principles revealed by Baha'u'llah and the functioning of the Universal House of Justice as the supreme organ of the Bahá'í superstate—your view on this subject is quite correct and in full accord with the pronouncements of the Guardian as embodied in "The Unfoldment of World Civilization". (See *The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), pp.161-206)

It is clear, then, that the friends must respect the prerogatives of political leaders in this matter and allow them the latitude to exercise the initiative that only they can effectively take towards the establishment of the Lesser Peace. It should be borne in mind in this regard that because of the political gravity of the decisions involved in the establishment of the Lesser Peace, and the differing political attitudes which it evokes, certain actions on the part of the Bahá'í community would embroil the friends in partisan politics. There is quite a difference between identifying the need for a convocation of world leaders, as does the Peace Statement, and initiating the political processes towards its realization. Even though the establishment of the Lesser Peace, of which the conference of leaders will be a related event, will come about independently of any Bahá'í plan or action, Bahá'ís should not be inert. Indeed, they may promote the concept of world peace with all that it implies without allowing their activities to assume a character that could be identified with the political processes which its realization will require.

It is not the wish of the House of Justice to dampen anyone's enthusiasm for assisting in developments towards peace, but it is critical that the friends understand the proprieties to be observed by the Bahá'í community in a matter of such vital importance. If, for example, the Bahá'ís attempt to take a leading role in organizing events associated with the anticipated convocation of world leaders, their motives could be misunderstood. The risk is that Bahá'ís might act in a manner which would put non-Bahá'ís in the awkward position of appearing to endorse a specifically Bahá'í vision or make them feel that they are seeking to impose the requirements of our religion upon others. One needs to be aware that we Bahá'ís can, in our zeal, easily overwhelm others and even, owing to the wariness that we might inadvertently engender, cause them to lose sight of the practical importance of establishing world peace.

(From a letter dated 14 January 1996 written to an individual on behalf of the Universal House of Justice)

PEACE AMONG THE NATIONS

World Peace, a hallmark of the emerging global civilization, will be realized as a tangible expression of the principle of the oneness of humankind. This assurance is given in the teachings of Baha'u'llah,

Such a peace will result from the culmination of two distinct but simultaneous and mutually reinforcing processes: one leading to the spiritual unity of the human race, referred to as the "Most Great Peace"; the other to the political unity of nations and known as the "Lesser Peace". The former is a distant goal, requiring a monumental change in human conduct that only religious faith can ensure; the other is more immediate and can already be detected on the political horizon. The one is directly related to the efforts of the Bahá'í community in promoting the pivotal principle of their Faith; the other is dependent on the actions of world political leaders and not on any Bahá'í plan or action.

The political unity of nations implies the achievement of a relationship among them that will enable them to resolve questions of international import through consultation rather than war and that will lead to the establishment of a world government. The attainment of peace in the political realm is discernible through the workings of a process that can be seen as having been definitely established in the twentieth century amid the terror and turmoil that have characterized so much of this period. It is noteworthy that the majority of the nations have come into being during this century and that they have opted for peaceful relations with one another by joining in the membership of the United Nations and through participation in regional organizations that facilitate their working together. Moreover, the process of political unification is gaining acceleration through the awakening of a consciousness of peace among the world's peoples that validates the work of the United Nations, and through advances in science and technology, which have already contracted and transformed the world into a single complex organism.

The horrific experiences of two world wars which gave birth at first to the League of Nations and then to the United Nations; the frequency with which world leaders, particularly in the decade of the nineties, have met and agreed on the resolution of global issues; the call for a global order that issued from the participation of these leaders in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations; the multiplication of organizations of civil society that focus attention on a variety of international concerns through the operation of an ever-expanding network of activities; the widespread debates on the need for global governance and numerous organized efforts towards world peace; the emergence of international tribunals; the rapid developments in communications technology that have made the planet borderless-these are among the voluminous evidences of a momentum toward peaceful international relations that has clearly become irreversible.

The Bahá'í writings indicate that peace among the nations will be established in the twentieth century; they do say, however, that a universal fermentation and horrendous social upheavals would mark the transition from a warlike world to a peaceful one, but they do not point to the occurrence of any specific cataclysmic event at the end of the century. Inevitably, the movement leading to world unity must encounter opposing tendencies rooted in stubborn habits of chauvinism and partisanship that refuse to yield to the expectations of a new age. The torturous suffering imposed by such conditions as poverty, war, violence, fanaticism, disease,

and degradation of the environment, to which masses of people are subjected, is a consequence of this opposition. Hence, before the peace of nations matures into a comprehensive reality, it must pass through difficult stages, not unlike those experienced by individual nations until their internal consolidation was achieved. But that the process toward peace is far advanced can hardly be denied.

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