

## **An Introduction to Baha'u'llah's Worldview**

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During the forty years of his revelation (1852-1892), Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, wrote numerous books and letters. These writings constitute the heart of the Baha'i worldview. His writings were not intended to be a mere another addition to the vast stock of already existing collection of religious writings. Instead, Bahá'u'lláh introduces them as the underlying unity of all sacred literature, one that unveils the essential and fundamental unity of all the prophets of God and their spiritual message. As such, the writings of Bahá'u'lláh represent not only a new narrative, but also a new spiritual hermeneutics or a novel way of reading the past sacred texts. The discourse of Bahá'u'lláh is an all-encompassing discourse of universal love and unity. It is based upon the assumption that the ultimate goal of all divine revelations is the enhancement of concord and communication among all human beings and the promotion of an ever-advancing historical march towards a global culture of peace, justice, and unity in diversity.

Thus, according to this same message, if religion were a cause of enmity and discord in society, it would be better to be without it. While Bahá'u'lláh radically rejects any form of religious intolerance and fanaticism, he strongly affirms that the true message of all religions is one of love and unity of all human beings. Recovery of this common truth of all religions is defined by Bahá'u'lláh as the most critical cultural imperative of the present age, an age which is both pregnant with the most exciting possibilities for realization of human dignity, and yet afflicted with the most dangerous cultural and spiritual confusion and anarchy ever found in human history.

In this short introduction I will not attempt to discuss any specific selected reading, nor analyze any particular aspect of their substantive message. Instead I will try to convey to the reader a general idea of the fundamental elements of the worldview that is offered by the Bahá'í writings and a basic sense of the relevance of the Bahá'í vision to the contemporary needs and challenges of humanity.

### **The Purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation**

In his various writings, Bahá'u'lláh is very explicit about the ultimate purpose of his self-disclosure. This end imparts continuity and harmony to the vast output of his pen that approximates a hundred volumes. To see this underlying unity let us glimpse at Bahá'u'lláh's self-described first experience of revelation, as well as the last and final expression of his will, *the Book of Covenant*.

In the latter text, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly declares his intention of manifesting his message to humanity. It is the elimination of the culture of enmity and violence and replacing it with a spiritual message of love and the oneness of humankind that defines the crowning purpose of his revelation. The following statements from the *Book of Covenant* are representative of the overall point of the text:

The aim of this Wronged One in sustaining woes and tribulations, in revealing the Holy Verses and in demonstrating proofs hath been naught but to quench the flame of hate and enmity, that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquility...

O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension...

Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is a decree of God in this Most Great Revelation...

Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Bahá may be guided by the blessed words: 'Say: all things are of God.' (Writings 324-26)

Yet the affirmation of a culture of peace and communication among all human beings is present in even Bahá'u'lláh's first experience of revelation, which took place while he was imprisoned in Tehran dungeon. He recounts:

One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: "Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen..." (Writings 366)

This first experience of revelation that occurred in the year 1852 contains within itself all the fundamental principles of Bahá'u'lláh's worldview whose details were gradually disclosed during 40 years of his future writings. An adequate discussion of this statement is not possible here. Yet three points need to be emphasized. First the statement "Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and Thy Pen," represents a radical rejection of any culture of violence and coercion. Bahá'u'lláh is here abrogating the idea of rendering the cause of God victorious by the use of the sword and violence.

Thus from the inception of his revelation it is only through the reality of his being and his words that the Cause of God can be assisted. All violent notions of the holy war, all forms of religious intolerance and coercion, and all kinds of violent forms of human relationships were rejected by this new interpretation of the concept of assistance and victory. Bahá'u'lláh himself has told us of the diverse reflections of this principle of the removal of the sword. Thus he discusses the necessity of universal disarmament and universal peace among all nations as one of the manifestations of this same principle of the removal of the sword. (Writings 371) Discussing the same principle, he writes:

Beware lest ye shed the blood of any one. Unsheathe the sword of your tongue from the scabbard of utterance, for therewith ye can conquer the citadels of men's hearts. We have abolished the law to wage holy war against each other. God's mercy hath, verily, encompassed all created things, if ye do but understand." (Writings 368)

In short, the first instance of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation is an affirmation of the principle of the unity of humankind. This point helps us understand another enigmatic point with regard to that same first experience of revelation. In various writings of Bahá'u'lláh, this first experience of revelation is described as an encounter with the Maid of Heaven. This representation of the ultimate truth of all prophets of God, the Remembrance and Revelation of God, as a feminine figure is in perfect harmony with the substantive message of that same experience. Since the new Revelation offers a new culture of unity, peace, love, and communication, it is no surprise that the very form of that experience is a radical rejection of the culture of patriarchy. The feminine figure that has usually been

defined as a symbol of evil desires and corrupt motives is here represented as the supreme ethical and spiritual value in the realm of creation. This reinterpretation of the feminine symbol emphasizes the equality of men and women, the sacred character of all human beings, and the necessity of replacing the culture of aggression and violence with one of communication and love. Patriarchal culture has encouraged not only the violence between the sexes, but it has also contributed to a culture and identity of aggression in all different dimensions of human cultural dynamics. That is why the principle of the equality of men and women becomes a central teaching of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Describing Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings or parts become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary. (Promulgation 375)

Finally, it needs to be noted that the very first instance of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation is a rejection of the superstitious traditional culture of magic and miracle. Thus the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh will be rendered victorious not by the appearance of strange miraculous events defying the order of nature, but instead by the very being of the prophet and his words and teachings. Such an approach to standard and method of search after spiritual truth is harmonious with a new approach to nature which perceives the normal flow of natural events as a mighty expression of divine power and might, rendering all being truly miraculous. It also accords with a vision of spiritual orientation which finds the promotion of peace and unity the supreme purpose of all divine revelations.

### **The Three Foundational Principles of Bahá'u'lláh's Message**

The message of Bahá'u'lláh is a transcendental spiritual syllogism. This syllogism is defined by three fundamental principles or propositions. The order of the appearance of these three principles is not random. Such order reflects the inner unity of the vision of Bahá'u'lláh. These three principles correspond to the chronology of his life and writings. As he himself has testified, his writings first addressed the mystics and spoke in a mystical language. These first works constitute the first stage of his revelation (1852-1860), which took place during much of his exile in Baghdad. Some of the principal works of this stage are *the Hidden Words*, *the Four Valleys*, *The Ode of the Dove*, and *the Seven Valleys*. In the second stage of his revelation (1860-1867), during the last years of his stay in Baghdad and continuing during his banishment to Istanbul, and Ardrianople, Bahá'u'lláh spoke in terms of issues that relate to sacred scriptures. Here the divines and the learned of various religious persuasions were the direct addressees of his writings. Chief among these works are *the Book of Certitude* and *the New Wondrous Book*. Finally, the third and the last stage of his revelation (1867-1892), which took place during the last year of his stay in Ardianople and the remaining years of his imprisonment in 'Akká, is characterized by the predominant expression of his social and political teachings, addressing the kings and leaders of the world as well as the entire humanity.

These three stages of revelation correspond with the three foundational principles of his revelation. The vision of Bahá'u'lláh is precisely defined through the harmonious unity of these three propositions. The first principle, emphasized in the first and the mystic writings of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is the spiritual interpretation of reality. According to the writings of Bahá'u'lláh all reality are ultimately diverse manifestations of divine names and attributes. All beings therefore are sublime mirrors in which the divine revelation is manifest. This radical affirmation of the sacredness of all beings and the cosmic solidarity and unity of all things is based upon the idea that the ultimate truth of all beings is the very divine revelation that is enshrined within their inmost heart. History is a spiritual journey towards the realization and unfoldment of this all-encompassing inherent divine revelation in the lives of human beings. In his *Hidden Words* we read:

O Son of Man!

Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not, wherefore fearest thou thy perishing? Thou art My light and My light shall never be extinguished, why dost thou dread extinction? Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not; thou art My robe and My robe shall never be outworn. Abide then in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the realm of Glory. (Writings 41)

The principle of the spiritual nature of all beings differentiates the viewpoint of Bahá'u'lláh from all materialistic worldviews and all social theories that divest sociocultural order from spiritual values and moral orientation. Thus according to Bahá'u'lláh one of the most important foundations of social order is the commitment of society to moral and spiritual values. Such spiritual orientation is exemplified in the teachings of the prophets of God which bring love and unity to the hearts of the people. Although Bahá'u'lláh's first principle affirms the imperative of respect for religion, the second constitutive principle of his worldview differentiates his vision from all traditional approaches to religion and spiritual values. This second principle is the principle of historical consciousness or the historicity of life. This dynamic conception is particularly relevant to the realm of human culture and society. Social reality is a perpetually advancing and dynamic phenomenon. Such dynamism applies not only to the realm of human cultural institutions but also to the realm of the revelation of divine word itself. This all-encompassing and radical affirmation of historical consciousness in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is usually called the principle of progressive revelation. Culture and society are defined by perpetual change and transformation. Therefore the *revelation* of the eternal Will of God becomes something historical and dynamic as well. Bahá'u'lláh, therefore, sees in all diverse religions one and the same eternal truth. That creative divine Will reflects itself in the form of new laws and doctrines, in different ages, in accordance with the level of the development of humanity and their specific needs at that particular stage of advancement. Thus for Bahá'u'lláh all prophets of God are one and the same eternal reality who appear in different ages as diverse and historically-specific human persons with different laws as required by the requirements of the material and spiritual development of society in that stage of human development. Thus not only religious teaching and spiritual orientation are necessary for a just and loving social order, these teachings must be renewed in different ages in accordance with

the dynamics of culture and society. Consequently, the second principle calls for a radical critique of the cult of traditionalism, the necessity of the independent investigation of truth, and an affirmation of the harmony of religion with science and reason. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which the subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements. (Gleanings 213)

Although historical consciousness is present in the philosophical systems of a number of philosophers, like Hegel and Marx, Bahá'u'lláh's principle is qualitatively different. First, this historical dynamics never ends in an ultimate state of the end of history. Thus, for Bahá'u'lláh, even the truth of his own revelation is relative to the present stage of development of humanity, and therefore his revelation is not the last divine revelation. Divine revelation, on the contrary is eternal and everlasting. Secondly, Bahá'u'lláh applies this historical logic not only to the realm of human culture, but also to the realm of the revelation of divine word as well.

The unity of the first and second principles potentially implies the third principle of the worldview of Bahá'u'lláh. The two first principles together declare the necessity of the renewal of spiritual order at this stage of the development of humanity in ways that accord with the fundamental challenge of historical development in this age. The third principle of Bahá'u'lláh's worldview is the principle of the oneness of humankind. According to this vision, an effective and just solution to diverse problems of humanity at this stage of its development requires the adoption of a global consciousness that is based upon the fundamental premise of the essential unity of the entire human race. This global approach is not simply a cult of brotherly love or a utopian fantasy. Instead, Bahá'u'lláh defines the true nature of humans in terms of this universal orientation to the service of the entire human race, calls for fundamental transformations at the level of international institutional structure and culture, and invites humanity to end unjust inequalities based upon the principle of citizenship. All human beings, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims, are citizens of the one earth. The principle of the oneness of mankind is the pivot around which all teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve. For example he writes:

That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens. (Tablets 167)

The three principles of Bahá'u'lláh's worldview are not separable from each other. Thus his principle of the unity of mankind is not a mere utilitarian theory of human equality. On the contrary, it is the logical reflection of the essential unity of human beings as the sacred mirrors of divine attributes. It is a social teaching that is rooted in, and justified by, a deeply mystical consciousness. Yet it is not a mere traditional mystical awareness. Not only Bahá'u'lláh's view affirms a radical critique of traditionalism, it finds mystical awareness inseparable from an explicit commitment to a new global order that is based upon the twin values of justice and unity.

These three principles together construct the structure of a new spiritual culture that is viewed by the Bahá'ís as necessary for dealing with the challenges confronting humanity in this stage of its development. Thus spiritual interpretation of being, historical consciousness, and a global approach to the world, define the outlines of the vision of Bahá'u'lláh.

### **Bahá'u'lláh's Approach to Truth**

The foundation of the principle of the unity of humankind is the mystical awareness of the unity of God, the unity of his prophets, and the unity of his creation. Likewise, the journey towards the realization of the oneness of human race begins with the principle of the independent investigation of truth. Bahá'u'lláh defines independent search after truth a primordial human duty and the most efficient means for the realization of human unity. In his *Hidden Words* he defines his first counsel, his methodological principle, the imperative of the search after truth:

O Son of Spirit!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting. (Writings 4)

In modern Western philosophy it was Descartes who defined the pursuit of truth as a process of methodical doubt. Thus nothing should be accepted unless it is beyond doubt. One has to doubt in every idea to be able to arrive at what is distinct and certain, the truth. However, the Cartesian subject engaging in this methodical doubt is primarily a discursive reason, a logical machine. Bahá'u'lláh offered a very different picture of the process of truth attainment. For Bahá'u'lláh, systematic doubt concerning all traditional ideas and assumptions, all ordinary beliefs and assumptions, is a necessary condition of arriving at truth. Yet this detachment is not a mere logical operation. Instead one has to engage in moral detachment from all but God. The subject of this systematic doubt is not a mere discursive reason, it is the unity of all human potentialities, reason, love, and moral will. Therefore, it is the station of the heart, the reason that is inspired by spiritual love and committed to universal moral principles, that represents the true agent of knowledge. Therefore, the act of systematic doubt takes the form of the "purification of heart". Such purification makes humans recipients of divine knowledge and truth. By such detachment one becomes a pure mirror in whom the divine attribute of sovereignty becomes manifest. Servitude, in other words, becomes the road to, and the substance of, divinity.

Bahá'u'lláh's teaching of the independent investigation of truth calls for a thorough re-examination of all traditions. Unlike both pre-modern and post-modern glorification of

the past traditions as the sole source of truth and values, the Bahá'í view finds traditions an object that must be reexamined in terms of universal moral principles. All traditions have many beautiful elements that must be celebrated in the Bahá'í vision of culture as a system of communicative unity in diversity. Yet all past traditions have been plagued by intolerance, patriarchy, racism, violence, unequal rights of various groups, and hedonistic selfish orientations. All these elements of various traditions must be rejected as incompatible with the universal imperative of the equality and dignity of all human beings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá celebrates the diversity of cultures and traditions and yet he rejects those differences that call for alienation and enmity among human beings:

Differences are of two kinds. One is the cause of annihilation and is like the antipathy existing among warring nations and conflicting tribes who seek each other's destruction, uprooting one another's families, depriving one another of rest and comfort and unleashing carnage. The other kind which is a token of diversity is the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most Glorious Lord. Consider the flowers of a garden: though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions, and dispositions embelisheth the world of humanity. (Selections 291)

Bahá'u'lláh's doctrine of independent investigation of truth is therefore an affirmation of the culture of rationality. Yet Bahá'u'lláh's approach to rationality is qualitatively different from modernity's cult of rationalism. Modernity's conception of reason was predominantly an instrumental and material reason, one that was defined precisely in contrast to revelation and spiritual values. Therefore, the project of modernity suffered from its one-dimensional rationality: investigation of truth was applied to the realm of technical reason, yet it was excluded from the realm of spiritual reason. The result was a materialistic culture that found itself increasingly trapped within the limitations of various nationalistic, ethnic, religious, and cultural systems of prejudice and alienation. Refusing to apply independent investigation of truth to the realm of spiritual orientation, humanity finds itself divided between and within the clash of atheistic and fundamentalist cultural orientation. Technical rationality combined with this spiritual and moral irrationality engenders violence and destruction, and excludes communication and universal love.

Unlike the modernist instrumental definition of rationality, Bahá'u'lláh defines the future of humanity as the realization of the maturation of humanity. This coming of age of the world is defined by Bahá'u'lláh as the realization of the age of rationality. Yet this 'aql' (reason) is not a mere technical reason. On the contrary, it is a reason that contains within itself the spirit of selfless sacrifice and altruism. Thus the will to power will be replaced by the will to love, and the thirst for domination by the ardent and humble desire to serve humanity. That is why Shoghi Effendi's translation of Bahá'u'lláh's statement renders the term 'aql' as "wisdom":

One of the signs of the maturity of the world is that no one will accept to bear the weight of kingship. Kingship will remain with none willing to bear alone its weight. That day will be the day whereon wisdom ('aql) will be manifest among mankind. (Promised Day 71)

In his *the Most Holy Book*, discussing the signs of this same process of maturity and rationality, Bahá'u'lláh states that a democratic and global adoption of one universal auxiliary language by the people of the world is another sign of such rationalization. We can see that reason in Bahá'u'lláh's view is at once technical, moral, communicative, and spiritual.

We can better understand the significance of the independent investigation of truth in relation to Bahá'u'lláh's principle of the unity of mankind when we pay attention to the dilemma of the pre-modern, modern and post-modern conceptions of truth and value. The rationalistic philosophy of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century revolted against old traditions. It took side with reason against superstitious old beliefs and assumptions. Eighteenth century philosophy of the Enlightenment claimed that it could discover the truth and moral good by the exercise of reason. Human reason unassisted by revelation and spiritual values could defy all traditions and construct a society based upon rational and universal moral principles. These philosophers spoke of the inalienable natural rights of humans and called for democratic and egalitarian social institutions to safeguard those natural rights. But this rationalistic cult was defeated by the very exercise of reason. The fact was that the philosophers of the Enlightenment never had abandoned spiritual reason. Although they thought that they were rejecting any kind of metaphysical and spiritual foundation for their concept of human rights, they were indeed basing their philosophy on unconscious premises of a spiritual interpretation of life. The entire project was an unconscious moral theory.

However, in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, this unconscious moral premise became increasingly conscious. Bentham already rejected the idea of human rights as a metaphysical nonsense that cannot be justified by reason. Kant showed that our conception of truth is determined by the type of being that we are. The world as we know it is constructed by the categories of knowledge that are in turn determined by our unique nature. Nietzsche called truth and values an error which is necessitated by our will to power. However, it was in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the project of rationalism and modernity was directly and systematically defeated. Like Kantian theory, postmodernism, and its ally cultural relativism, found truth and values inseparable from human identity. Yet modernism already had deprived man from any spiritual and transcendental identity. Divesting humans of any sacred reference, postmodernism found in humans nothing but their specific cultural tradition. Humans were reduced to linguistic, ethnic and cultural traditions, and therefore, truth and values were entirely dependent on, and determined by, specific traditions. Celebrating diversity in the context of a cultural relativism, all values and truth become relative to one's tradition. Good or bad are defined by particular traditions and have no real meaning outside of a culture. Therefore, postmodernism rejects the possibility of universal moral values, inalienable human rights, or the necessity of reexamining traditional ideas in terms of universal rational moral principles. Thus 18<sup>th</sup> century rationalistic revolt against tradition is now

replaced by a postmodernist veneration of tradition. The post-modern and pre-modern are finding themselves uneasy alliances.

Bahá'u'lláh's concept of the oneness of humankind is not a relativistic moral statement. This principle is proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh as an eternal truth that is rooted in the very nature of human beings. Although the realization of this eternal truth is historically specific and gradual, its validity is not based upon any arbitrary cultural assumption. All traditions must be re-examined in the light of this supreme moral principle, and all cultures must move towards the realization of this communicative culture of love and unity. Modernity's rationalism was based upon a one-sided reason. Thus technical reason must be harmonized with communicative and spiritual reason. In such situation reason's search for truth and values discovers the inherent dignity and sacredness of all humans and affirms the inalienable rights of all human beings. The postmodern diversity itself becomes justified in terms of this egalitarian ethics. Yet it is not a diversity for the sake of diversity, a diversity of alienation, and a diversity that is fatal to diversity. Rather, it is a diversity of communication that is based upon the universal principle of the unity of mankind, and thus it is a unity in diversity.

As 'Abdu'l-Bahá has noted, the very diversity of traditions a sign of the true nature of human beings: transcendence from any specific material or cultural qualification. This diversity is itself a proof of the spiritual nature of humans, which renders them free and capable of transcending all kinds of particularistic viewpoints. Truth and values are indeed defined by the type of being that we are. But we are the supreme mirror of divine attributes, the image of God on earth. Our truth is the sign of divine revelation that is enshrined within our heart. By discovering our truth we at once discover our solidarity with all humans and all beings. All beings are mirrors of the divine. Thus Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual reason leads to the affirmation of the oneness of humankind and not a theory of moral nihilism and relativism. Commitment to the principle of independent investigation of truth is thus a commitment to a culture that brings together the positive elements of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern orientations without being identical with any of them.

### **The Unity of Mankind and the Problem of Globalization**

Bahá'u'lláh uses dynamic and living metaphors for describing the reality of society. Sometimes he uses the metaphor of a living tree to describe the unity of the people. For example he writes:

O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.  
(Gleanings 218)

But it is the human body that becomes a choice metaphor for describing his organic theory of society. Addressing the members of all parliament, he writes:

Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their

personal desires, and have erred grievously... That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. (Gleanings 254-55)

Here Bahá'u'lláh is affirming an organic theory of society. However, unlike traditional theories of organic state, which consider nation-state as the highest organic unit of society, Bahá'u'lláh has applied the organic metaphor to the entire world. Thus in the Bahá'í worldview, realization of the unity of mankind is not a mere utopian fantasy but a fundamental social imperative that corresponds to the objective reality of an emerging global society. In that same passage, Bahá'u'lláh describes a significant gap between the objective direction of the world civilization and the cultural systems of various forms of prejudice and particularism. The result is an organic reality that is devoid of harmony and afflicted with pain and illness. Cultural, political, and economic institutions of the world must adjust themselves to the reality of a global human civilization based upon the fundamental principle of the sacredness of all human beings.

The viewpoint of Bahá'u'lláh offers new and provocative positions with regard to various dilemmas of contemporary political theory. One obvious dilemma is the problem of globalization. Advocates and opponents of globalization point to various benefits and harms of the globalization process. In fact to some extent this debate is a debate on the advantages and disadvantages of capitalist social and cultural relations. However, Bahá'u'lláh's conception of the unity of humankind transcends the limitations of the ideas and categories of both positions. Globalization as described by Bahá'u'lláh is the institutional process of the global realization of the sacred character of all human beings and their essential unity. As such, the first imperative of globalization in Bahá'í view is the creation of global political and economic structures and institutions that safeguard the fundamental equal rights of all people and nations in a world that will be free from the present conceptions of exclusionary national citizenship. Thus international economic and cultural interactions, which are encouraged by this model, will also be accompanied by global institutional structures that guarantee the free movement of not only capital but also labor, creates global infrastructures, and offers justice and basic equal opportunity to all children of the world regardless of their accidental place of birth. In such model, competition is constrained by moral, spiritual and institutional measures that aim at the harmony and prosperity of the entire human race. Present globalization is global competition unaccompanied by the integrative forms of global structures. We live in a new state of nature, one in which nations follow their selfish interests without the presence of a mitigating civil and political society. True globalization, therefore, is the oneness of mankind.

Similarly, the Bahá'í view can explain the enigmatic rise and triumph of the culture of postmodernism in our world. Postmodernism is in fact committed to justice and equality of human beings. That is why it defends diversity at all costs. Yet it is also an extreme theory of moral relativism which destroys the possibility of any moral value, even the value of diversity itself. Sociologists have offered various explanations for the rise of postmodernism. But Bahá'u'lláh's viewpoint can offer a very different explanation. According to Bahá'u'lláh, humanity has been moving towards increasing degrees of unity

in diversity throughout the human history. Nationalistic unity has been the crowning achievement of the modern ages. Yet, according to the Bahá'í view, we are now in a stage of transition from nationalistic particularism to global universalism. In this viewpoint the unity of humankind, based upon the sacred and equal rights of all human beings, is an inevitable outcome of the concrete structural movements of the world civilization at this stage of its development. Such state of transition creates both moral anarchy and universalistic sentiments. The emergence of a new spiritual world order implies the interaction, communication, and battle of various traditions and cultures within an uneven global context. Postmodernism is therefore the precise outcome of this stage of transition. Such global interaction of traditions has led to the universalistic sentiment of support for diversity. Yet because humanity has not yet accepted the new integrative culture of the unity of mankind, postmodern sentiment for diversity is trapped within a localistic and particularistic worship of alienated traditions. The result is an ironic moral and cultural relativism that is destructive of all values, including those of tolerance, communication and diversity of all traditions.

Bahá'u'lláh's message thus affirms the dawning of a new age in the development of human history. This globalism is the globalism of unity in diversity, a diversity of communication and not of estrangement, a diversity that is rooted in fundamental commitment to the equal rights of all human beings as an objective universal moral principle. The objectivity of this system of communicative morality is presented in terms of a spiritual interpretation of life that is both dynamic and global in its outlook.