

# The Path of God

## Declaration Towards a Global Ethic and the Bahá'í Faith

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### Introduction

The question “What is religion?” can be answered in many ways. As the title of this paper indicates, religion is seen here as a path, as a way, as a special way of life, i.e., the “good life”. It will be shown that the concept of religion as a path is embodied in all religions and is almost the only concept that describes all of the world religions today. Even Buddhism, which does not have a conceptual understanding of God, is above all described as “The Eightfold Path.”

The philosophical discipline describing the good life is Ethics, which follows the concepts of Aristotle who begins his treatise on ethics with the words: “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”<sup>1</sup>

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, in 1943, when describing the “three embryonic Bahá'í educational institutions in the North American continent,” mentions “courses on Bahá'í ethics” and “lectures on Comparative Religion.” (GPB 340) Combining these two lines of inquiry, this paper attempts to describe the ethical implications of the “Path of God” in the search for the unifying principle of the major world religions. Such a study of comparative religion could be

the point of departure on the path towards the unity of all religions, which is a major principle of the Bahá'í Faith.

The recent "Declaration Towards a Global Ethic"<sup>2</sup> indicates Ethic, as described above, may in this time and evolutionary setting be seen as a unifying principle of all religions. This Declaration (henceforth abbreviated DGE) is based on the conviction that the basis for such a global ethic already exists in the teaching of all religions, as follows:

*We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions and that these form the basis of a global ethic. (DGE 14)*

In the Bahá'í Faith, 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly expressed that the basis of ethics, that is, morals and conduct, is the teaching of the Religions of God:

*... the fundamental principles of the Religion of God, which are morals and conduct ... (SAQ 53)*

He further reminds us that religion is not belief and customs, but rather God's teachings, which constitute the very life of humankind:

*Religion, moreover, is not a series of beliefs, a set of customs; religion is the teachings of the Lord God, teachings, which constitute the very life of humankind, which urge high thoughts upon the mind, refine the character, and lay the groundwork for man's everlasting honour. (SWAB 53)*

In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh not only said that man is like a mine of hidden treasures, which has to be discovered through education, but also encourages the learned and worldly-wise men of this age to discover these values and bring true liberty and undisturbed peace to humankind.

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

*If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and*

*love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure. (GWB 259)*

The first meeting of the Parliament of Religions convening in Chicago in 1893, a year after the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, can well be described as a meeting “*of learned and worldly-wise men of this age.*” Hundred years later in 1993 the Parliament of Religions convened in Chicago again, and these learned men and women of many religions accepted the “Declaration Towards a Global Ethic,” which was signed by members of the assembled religious groups. Representatives of the Bahá'í Faith participated in the hosting committee of the meeting, and they were alphabetically the first to sign the declaration.

Shoghi Effendi, in his book *God Passes By*, described the original meeting of the Parliament of Religions and stated that, in this very meeting, the first mention of the Bahá'í Faith in America was made. He referred to the Rev. George A. Ford of Syria, who had mentioned Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>3</sup> One year later, the Bahá'í Faith was establishing a strong foothold in the city of Chicago, the city of that very Parliament. This is how the Shoghi Effendi describes this event:

It was on September 23, 1893, a little over a year after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, that, in a paper written by Rev. Henry H. Jessup, D.D., Director of Presbyterian Missionary Operations in North Syria, and read by Rev. George A. Ford of Syria, at the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, in connection with the Columbian Exposition, commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, it was announced that “a famous Persian Sage,” “the Bábí Saint,” had died recently in 'Akká, and that two years previous to His ascension “a Cambridge scholar” had visited Him, to whom He had expressed “sentiments so noble, so Christ-like” that the author of the paper, in his “closing words,” wished to share them with his audience. (GPB 256)

Shoghi Effendi continues to describe that soon after this announcement the Bahá'í Faith found its first believers in Chicago:

Less than a year later, in February 1894, a Syrian doctor, named Ibrahim Khayru'llah<sup>4</sup>, who, while residing in Cairo, had been converted by Haji Abdu'l-Karim-i-Tihirani to the Faith, had received a Tablet from Bahá'u'lláh, had communicated with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and reached New York in December 1892, established his residence in Chicago, and began to teach actively and systematically the Cause he had espoused. (GPB 256)

Can it not be said that the Parliament of Religion convening in Chicago, unknowingly followed direction, given by Bahá'u'lláh to humankind, which makes it incumbent on everyone to consort with *followers of all religions*, i.e., with each other, *in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship*?

*It is incumbent upon every man, in this Day, to hold fast unto whatsoever will promote the interests, and exalt the station, of all nations and just governments. Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. We have erewhile declared – and Our Word is the truth – “Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.” (GWB 94)*

In this paper the global ethic will be compared with the Bahá'í Faith. This comparison was suggested by the commentary of the German theologian Hans Küng, who prepared the text of the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic' in 1993 for the Parliament of the World's Religions. Hans Küng, a Catholic theologian, was one of a group of progressive theologians at the Vatican Council II in 1962.<sup>5</sup>

The relationship of the Bahá'í Faith with the idea of a global ethic is expressed in the following statement:

The central theme of Bahá'u'lláh's message is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come for humanity's unification into one global society.

While reaffirming the core ethical principles common to all religions, Bahá'u'lláh also revealed new laws and teachings to lay the foundations of a global

civilization. “A new life,” Bahá’u’lláh declared, “is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth.”<sup>6</sup>

As much as possible, the continuous development of the world’s religions and the growing understanding of the Bahá’í Faith must be taken into account. The hope is expressed that this development will lead towards an increasing familiarity between the religions and will eventually lead towards the unity of all religions, understood in a new way. Any attempt thus far at religious unity, even at the level of agreement within the various branches of existing religions, has been an unreachable goal. Therefore a new vision of unity is imperative.

Global ethic is described by Küng as “a fundamental consensus concerning binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes.” Küng further insists “There can be no better global order without a global ethic” and states that “global ethic means neither a global ideology, nor a single unified global religion transcending all existing religions, nor a mixture of all religions.” (DGE 14)

The Bahá’í Faith talks about the unity of all religion in a different way, neither proposing a unified global ideology or religion, nor a mixture of all religions, but putting forward a new appreciation for the underlying unity of all religions, as will be described below. Once this underlying unity of all religions is understood, a new concept of unity will have to develop. This unity of the religions cannot be clearly envisioned today, but can best be described as “Unity in Diversity”.

The Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, seemed to indicate that a genuine appreciation of the new concept of unity is not reached at this point but is being instilled in the adherents of the Bahá’í Faith.

Far from wishing to add to the number of the religious systems, whose conflicting loyalties have for so many generations disturbed the peace of mankind, this Faith is instilling into each of its adherents a new love for, and a genuine appreciation of the unity underlying, the various religions represented within its pale. (WOB 196)

It can be expected that it will take time before this understanding is spread out into the followers of other

religions. This means that this understanding of unity will take time to become functional as a uniting principle, acceptable to all religions. Consequently, only after this understanding becomes accepted can real unity follow, and it is not possible today to describe the form it will take.

It could be stated that this appreciation of the underlying unity of various religions was expressed in the “Declaration Towards a Global Ethic” as a unity in the area of ethics. As a matter of fact, it is the contention of this paper to demonstrate that the area of ethics is the point from where such an appreciation can best be launched. In other words, the unity of religion is inaugurated by the unity of the ethical principles of all religions, i.e., by a global ethic. This foundational unity between all religions is best described as a unity in diversity, as the ethical elements of all religions are not uniform, but are diverse. Yet, these principles are confluent with each other; they form a bridge between the diverse religions. The term confluence has been described with the dictionary as “a meeting or joining of two or more things, or the place where two or more things meet or join.”

Could it not be said, that true followers of all religions are more alike to each other in their ethical behavior, when compared to superficial and external followers of their own religion? In other words, the difference between the adherents of any single religion could well be greater than the difference between the followers of all religions who take the ethical principles of their religion seriously and follow the “straight path.”

The need for a joining of religions becomes especially obvious when considering today’s opposing forces, such as atheism, materialism, fanaticism and the widespread ethic of hedonism, which are all threatening the religions, especially and practically in their ethical principles,.

Bahá’u’lláh sees *the Faith of God* expressed in all of God’s Religions, which He here calls “*Faith of God and His Religion*”:

*The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and*

*promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men.* (TB 168)

Again, what could be a better beginning for “*the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men*” than an agreement over a common and global ethic, especially if we understand ethics not only as the moral guidelines for a just and correct life but as a way, or a path towards a good, happy and fulfilled life? In a similar way the Wikipedia notes about ethics that besides its moral aspect, “a central aspect of ethics is the good life, the life worth living.” In the following sections of this paper this aspect of ethics and the distinctive and special contribution of the Bahá’í Faith in this area will be explored.

## Religion, the Path of God

When talking about the world’s religions, the question has to be raised: What is Religion? Is it the administration and the ministers of churches, is it their dogmas and creeds, is it the Holy Scriptures, or is it their liturgy and rituals? What in the whole range of experiences, customs and consideration that are connected with religion is the crucial issue that describes and defines what people call religion? We all know that religion deals with God, or the “numinous”, even though there is at least one religion, Buddhism that does not talk about God.

There is one concept that is usually overlooked which seems to be common to all religions. It is the word “Path” or the synonym “Way”, words which are combined in the English word “Pathway.” This word describes a central concept of religion, which is not a philosophical, moral or legal aspect, but describes what religion actually does: it gives any human individual, any human group or organization: from the village to the state, to all of humankind – a path, a way for a good life, a life worth living, a life that is valuable and leads to God.

Religions derive this way of life from their specific sources, that is, from the revelation and the example of their founder Prophets, but all agree that the emphasis is on the path, rather than the accompanying circumstances, rules, regulations and definitions. Buddhism as a religion occupies a special place among all the religions because it is only concerned with the

path and does not talk much about anything else that is usually connected with the idea of religion. It does not even have an idea or description of God, but still is clearly accepted as a major world religion.

When describing religion as a path, something different is expressed than the usual understanding of religion as church membership or adherence to certain beliefs like creed, dogmas or church laws. The path is not a concept of sociology, law or order, it is not an idea usually used in theology, but it could be best described as the actual living religion in an ethical way. In other words, ethic is describing conceptually the path a religious person, group or church is supposed to take. In this paper, therefore, the words path or way are used in the context of ethic, or ethical prescriptions and encouragements or behavior towards the religious life. When talking about ethic in the Global Ethic document, ethic is described as common values, standards or attitudes, which lead to a specific way of life, a specific path making life meaningful, good and worth living for the individual and communities.

### The Path of God in Religious Scriptures

How do the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh describe religion? For a believer in the reality of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation of God, Their writings are believed to be the Word of God made manifest by the Prophet. In the verse below, revealed by the Báb, first God speaks about what He has done for the Báb and then God defines His religion, which the Báb is to present to the world as none other than *this glorious and exalted Path*. Even for an unbeliever or historian, this verse expresses the idea the Báb had about His religion.

*I have called Thee into being, have nurtured Thee, protected Thee, loved Thee, raised Thee up and have graciously chosen Thee to be the manifestation of Mine Own Self, that Thou mayest recite My verses as ordained by Me, and may summon whomsoever I have created unto My Religion which is none other than this glorious and exalted Path. (SWB 158)*



Bahá'u'lláh has affirmed similarly that the sole purpose of religion as manifested by the Prophets of God is to guide mankind to the Path of God, or the straight Path of Truth:

*The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. (GWB 156-157)*

Jesus had described Himself as the way, or the path unto the Father, when He said: (John 14:6)

*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Bahá'u'lláh uses similar words in describing Himself:

*I, verily, am the Path of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth; well is it with them that hasten thereunto! (SLH 3)*

As will be explained next, this is said in a tradition that includes all major religions which are defined with the same word, the Path or the Way of God.

## Religion as Path, or Way of God

A few examples from some of the world's religions are cited below to clarify that the terms "Path" or "Way" are apt; in fact, they are often the preferred terms in which the world's different religious Scriptures describe their reality. These terms are not only common expressions; they seem to be the fundamental and most universal descriptions of religion in all of these Holy Writings.

### Zoroaster

(Zend-Avesta, Avesta — Yasna) has several mentions of the path and "*the path of Good Thought*," of "*Righteousness*," or "*Blessedness*," which talks about:

*... making straight the paths for the Religion of the future Deliverer*

This path is the best, is shining, and all glorious:

*Grant to us both the desire of, and the knowledge of that straightest path, the straightest because of Righteousness, and of (Heaven) the best life of the Saints, shining, all glorious.*

### *Lord Krishna*

He recommends the fair path leading to heaven:

*O Indian Prince! of him whose feet are set On that fair path which leads to heavenly birth! (Hindu, Bhagavad Gita)*

There are many places in the Hindu Scriptures where the path of God is mentioned like the following:

*Agni, lead us on to wealth (beatitude) by a good path, thou, O God, who knowest all things! Keep far from us crooked evil, and we shall offer thee the fullest praise! (Upanishads vol. 1, Vagasaneyi-Samhita-Upanishad 18)*

### *Lord Buddha*

The Religion of Lord Buddha (The Word, The Eightfold Path) consists almost exclusively in describing the Path, not talking about God or other issues:

*It is the Noble Eightfold Path, the way that leads to the extinction of suffering.*

### *Moses, the servant of God*

From the Books of Moses (Exodus 18:19-20)

*Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.*

Abraham in the book of Genesis (18:19) speaking of way of the Lord:

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

King David in the book of Psalms (16:11)

*Thou makest me to know the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy, in Thy right hand bliss for evermore.*

The Prophet Isaiah (48:17):

*I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go*

*Lord Jesus, the Christ*

In the Gospels of Luke (3:3-4) John the Baptist prepares the way of the Lord which is the straight path:

*And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

In the Gospel according to John (14:6) Jesus calls Himself the Way:

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

*Islam, Lord Muhammad*

In the opening chapter of the Qur'an the "Path of God" is mentioned and there are very few Suras where the path or way of God is not mentioned. Here the Opening of the Qur'an:

*IN the name of the merciful and compassionate God. Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds, the merciful, the compassionate, the ruler of the Day of*

*Judgment! Thee we serve and Thee we ask for aid. Guide us in the right path, the path of those Thou art gracious to; not of those Thou art wroth with; nor of those who err. (Sura 1)*

In Sura 6 — Cattle, Muhammad describes His Faith as the straight path, the same path Abraham has followed:

*Say: As for me, my Lord hath guided me into a straight path; a true religion, the creed of Abraham, the sound in faith; for he was not of those who join gods with God.*

Even other religious persuasions and moral authorities are using this term in describing their religions.

*Sikh:* (Shri Guru Granth Sahib, Section 6 - Raag Maajh)

*Those, within whom the Truth dwells, obtain the True Name; they speak only the Truth. They walk on the Lord's Path, and inspire others to walk on the Lord's Path as well.*

*Tao:* (Chuangtse (Lin Yutang tr.))

*If each man keeps his own virtue, the world will avoid deviation from the true path.*

The idea of religion as Path of God comes closer than any other term to what Shoghi Effendi calls the unity underlying the various religions:

*...this Faith is instilling into each of its adherents a new love for, and a genuine appreciation of the unity underlying, the various religions represented within its pale. (WOB 196)*

The unity of all religions is the avowed goal of the Bahá'í Faith. The way to this unity is the appreciation of the path of God, which all religions profess to present. Consequently, in this paper the conclusion is made that talking about unity of religion is talking about the one Path of God.

## Ethics as the Practice of the Good Life

Ethics or moral philosophy is described as the attempt to formulate codes and principles of moral behavior. The history of ethics starts with the Sophists of the Greek world in the fifth century BC. Plato, in opposition to the sophists, describes in his dialogues the teachings of Socrates in regard to the question “why should I be moral,” developing the philosophy “that the good life consists in the harmony of the soul with each part of the soul — reason, spirit, appetite — performing its proper function”<sup>7</sup> From this point of departure he describes the traditional virtues.

Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* develops a general theory of virtues. There are two important issues we will emphasize, one being the fact that virtues are learned and that one becomes virtuous by practicing virtues. In the words of Aristotle:

The virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happen in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g., men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre, so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.<sup>8</sup>

The things we learn — and that applies to virtues, which have to be learned — we learn by doing them. Being virtuous or leading an ethical life is learned, and it is learned by practicing it, by making choices and following good judgment. The other issue stressed by Aristotle is the fact that virtues are the middle between excess and defect, i.e., they are practiced in moderation.

or the man who strays a little from the path, either towards the more or towards the less, is not blamed ...

How far, therefore, and how a man must stray before he becomes blameworthy, it is not easy to state in words ...

But so much at least is plain that the middle state is praiseworthy ... While the excesses and defects are blameworthy.<sup>9</sup>

More specifically, Bahá'u'lláh places moral behavior and wisdom in the heart and in the innate powers of believer

*Nay, from their hearts and the springs of their innate powers hath gushed out unceasingly the inmost essence of human learning and wisdom.* (GWB 263)

Consequently, He states in the Arabic Hidden Words:

*1. 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.*

In this context it must be understood that the seat of moral behavior — of the virtues, is referred as being in the heart; that they are learned and need to be practiced in order to give to the heart an everlasting and imperishable quality.

In the Christian tradition of Ethics, Thomas Aquinas has become the foremost representative in this area of thought. He tried to solve the problem, which still occupies ethicists today, how a secular understanding of man and of ethical behavior can be harmonized with the idea that ethical behavior means following the commands of God. This dilemma could be formulated in the following way: Is the “good” good because it is good, or is it good because God commands it?

This is a reformulation of the Euthyphro dilemma, as found in Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, in which Socrates asks Euthyphro: “Is the pious (τὸ ὅσιον) loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?”<sup>10</sup>

The second part of this question can be interpreted as arbitrariness on the side of God, the first implies that God has to follow a moral rule, i.e., God is not omnipotent. In Christian Ethics, both are true as God is the creator who established human nature with the ability to recognize the good life as commanded by God through human reason and understanding.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gives a practical understanding for this difference and for the need to base morals in the area of religion:

*This transformation of morals, this improvement of conduct and of words, are they possible otherwise than through the love of God? No, in the name of God.*

*If, by the help of science and knowledge, we wished to introduce these morals and customs, truly it would take a thousand years, and then they would not be spread throughout the masses. (SAQ 304)*

In the above quoted verses of Bahá’u’lláh, He places the ability of man to recognize learning and wisdom in the powers of the human heart. As pointed out in last year’s presentation, the human heart is able to distinguish between positive and negative emotions in its “little brain” and can be the instrument of the soul of man to express this difference of values, which can be monitored by the variation of heart rhythms. In a paper on “Psycho-physiological Correlates of Spiritual Experience” the training in positive emotions is described and the following conclusion is made.

We believe that heart rhythm coherence training holds promise as a practical and potent approach to empower individuals to improve the quality of their lives. By enabling the intentional self-generation and reinforcement of physiological states that are correlated with increased love, care, compassion, inner harmony, vitality and flow, in essence this intervention helps individuals create an internal environment that is conducive to fostering spiritual experience.

Some might indeed describe the end result as being able to live more “from the heart.” in alignment with their deepest core values, or with greater connection to spirit.<sup>11</sup>

How these findings correlate with the Bahá’í Faith was explained in last year’s presentation. Here it suffices to state that the metaphorical understanding of heart in poetry and religion is based on the nature of the human heart as an

instrument of the soul and is much more realistic when the findings of modern neurocardiology are considered.

Recent work in the relatively new field of Neurocardiology has firmly established that the heart is a sensory organ and a sophisticated information encoding and processing center. Its circuitry enables it to learn, remember, and make functional decisions independent of the cranial brain.<sup>12</sup>

This corresponds well with the Bahá'í understanding that the human heart needs to be pure, kind and radiant, and that in man is the innate spiritual power of human wisdom and correct action.

## Küng's Questions to the Scholars of the Various Religions

At the opening of the Exhibit on the World's Religions at Santa Clara University, March 31, 2005, Hans Küng said:

There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions.

The First World War was a war between empires and nations; the Second World War was a war between ideologies, which can be called religions (if we call Nazism and Communism a religion); the Cold War was continuing this war between ideologies; today's War against Terrorists is clearly a war that has a fanatical religious underpinning.

Bahá'u'lláh clearly distinguishes between the Path of God and the path of error, and He explains what happened to religion when religious leaders diverted the old religions from this Path of God. Bahá'u'lláh accuses them outright of issuing *new commands* that are leading into error giving as the motivation for this behavior their *pride and haughtiness*.

*Though they recognize in their hearts the Law of God to be one and the same, yet from every direction they issue a new command, and in every season proclaim a fresh decree.*



*No two are found to agree on one and the same law, for they seek not God but their own desire, and tread no path but the path of error.*

*In leadership they have recognized the ultimate object of their endeavour, and account pride and haughtiness as the highest attainments of their heart's desire. (KI 29)*

Speaking to Napoleon III of France, Bahá'u'lláh reminded him that His Path is the same path presented by Christ; it is the *Straight Path*, which was revealed by all Manifestations. As a matter of fact, Bahá'u'lláh simply advises Napoleon to follow in the path of Christ, to follow the religion he already confesses. He admonishes him to arise and follow the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, and in so doing Napoleon would also follow Christ in this Straight Path. He warns the emperor that otherwise his people will rebel against him, which actually happened.

*Commotions shall seize all the people in that land, unless thou arisest to help this Cause, and followest Him Who is the Spirit of God (Jesus Christ) in this, the Straight Path. (PB 20)*

In the following section the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic will be compared with the principles of the Bahá'í religion; this comparison was suggested by the commentary of the German theologian Hans Küng, who prepared the text of the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic' in 1993 for the Parliament of the World's Religions:

*It will now be an enjoyable task for the scholars of the various religions to work out the project for a global ethic further in the light of their own religions and to bring out three things:*

*How strongly the 'Declaration Towards a Global Ethic' is rooted in their own tradition;*

*How far their own tradition corresponds with other ethical traditions;*

*How far their own tradition has a distinctive, specific, special contribution to make to the ethic.<sup>13</sup>*

The first two questions can easily be answered from the Bahá’í Faith, since this Faith claims that all religions (including the Bahá’í Faith) are “stages in the eternal history and constant evolution of one religion, Divine and indivisible, of which it itself forms but an integral part.” (Shoghi Effendi WOB 114) Consequently, a Global Ethic, which is deduced from the ethical principles of all prior religions, will be equally rooted in the Bahá’í Faith, which understands itself as the most recent stage in the evolution of the understanding of God’s changeless Religion.

There are multiple references to the Islamic and Christian religion, as well as to the Zoroastrian and other religions in the Bahá’í Writings, stressing the unity of religions and the meaning of religion seen as a successive process of the one progressive Revelation of God.

The comparison between principles presented in the Global Ethic and in the Bahá’í Scriptures presented below will exemplify this correspondence.

**Principles Shared by the Global Ethic and the Bahá’í Faith**

This comparison can only be selective, but it demonstrates the corresponding spirit and could be extended to a much more comprehensive exemplification, which is here not possible considering the limits of this paper. The statements from the Global Ethic are selected from that part of the Declaration of the Parliament of Religions, which was verbally presented in the last plenary session and accepted there. (DGE 12-15)

| From the Declaration<br>Towards a Global Ethic | From the Bahá’í Writings <sup>14</sup>   |
|--|--|
| We consider humankind our family               | <i>Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature.</i> (FWU 100) |
| We must strive to be kind and generous         | <i>Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart</i> (HW A 1)   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <i>To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. (HW P 49)</i>  |
| We must treat others as we wish others to treat us   | <i>And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself (ESW 29)</i>  |
| We respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception. | Its [the Bahá'í Faith's] watchword is unity in diversity (WOB 42)   |
| We commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence, and respect for life   | <i>Violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned. (KA 238)</i>   |
| To a culture of solidarity and just economic order   | The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated (WOB 2040) |
| To a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women   | <i>Yet another of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of men and women and their equal sharing in all rights. (SWA 249)</i>  |

The following points of comparison better fit the third of Kűng's questions, i.e., "How far their own tradition has a distinctive, specific, special contribution to make to the ethic." It will be demonstrated that there is a distinct difference, not so much in the statements themselves, but in the context in which these assertions are placed, indicating that the Bahá'í Faith has revealed a new worldview, a new "Weltanschauung," which does not change or abolish, but rather enhances and renews the traditional worldview of the previous religions.

The progress of Divine Revelation can be recognized in this new context; as a matter of fact, this makes the Bahá'í Faith truly a Faith for our time, a new Faith that corresponds to the new understanding of the world and the new findings and discoveries of science, as has been pointed out in previous contributions by this author.

Although, there is no way to demonstrate the distinctive, specific, and special contributions of the Bahá'í Faith in their entirety, some aspects will be accentuated here, giving the reader an example and a paradigm for the fact of the Unity of all Religions, in which the Bahá'í Faith participates. This will demonstrate, as well, the progress the one Divine Religion of God is making from one Revelation to the next, as described in the Bahá'í principle of Progressive Revelation.

In the following four statements selected from the Declaration, it is pointed out that only in the context of the Bahá'í Revelation can they properly be understood and actualized. In other words, only when these statements are interpreted or understood through the Bahá'í writings can they make sense in today's world and bring forth the intended fruit

## **Principles of the Global Ethic Improved upon by the Bahá'í Faith**

There are other principles declared in the Global Ethic that are in the Bahá'í Faith as well, but seen in a different context and therefore enhanced, when compared with the statements of the Global Ethic, four of these principles will be outlined here, and it will be shown how they are enhanced and put in a more realistic context in the Bahá'í Faith. Some of the reasons why the Global Ethic statements could not do that is indicated as well.

### **The World is in Agony**

The "Declaration Towards a Global Ethic" makes an initial statement about the fundamental condition of today's world by stating:

The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of this pain may be made clear.

Following this, the declaration describes the agony and the suffering that are common today, mentioning unemployment, poverty, hunger and destruction of families. The declaration talks about corruption, racial and ethnic conflicts, abuse of drugs, crime and anarchy. Additionally they mention the near collapse of the ecosystem of the world. They further deplore the fact that the leaders and members of religions “incite aggression, fanaticism, hate and xenophobia – even inspire and legitimate violent and bloody conflicts.” Expressing their feelings of disgust, the members of the Parliament of Religions “condemn these blights and declare that they need not be.”

The same understanding about the situation of today’s world is expressed in the Bahá’í Writings. One prayer of Bahá’u’lláh will be quoted to demonstrate that the agony is well perceived, but the answer to this situation is different and on another level of reality, the spiritual or religious level. Only the first two sections of this prayer will be quoted here and analyzed sentence by sentence.

*Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God!*

*Darkness hath fallen upon every land, and the forces of mischief have encompassed all the nations. Through them, however, I perceive the splendors of Thy wisdom, and discern the brightness of the light of Thy providence.*

*They that are shut out as by a veil from Thee have imagined that they have the power to put out Thy light, and to quench Thy fire, and to still the winds of Thy grace. Nay, and to this Thy might beareth me witness! Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us. (PM 14)*

As in many prayers, in the first sentence God is praised and His name lauded. This beginning does not prepare us for the next sentence, in which the topic of the whole prayer is announced. In one short and pregnant sentence Bahá'u'lláh describes the situation of the world today. In many other places He has described it in more detail; here it is a straightforward sentence that brings the situation of today's world in the focus of our view, when He says:

*Darkness hath fallen upon every land, and the forces of mischief have encompassed all the nations.*

The whole contrast between light and darkness, as developed throughout the history of religion is here pointed out, beginning with the book of Genesis (1:3-4) where it is said:

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

This light of creation is applied to Christ in the Gospel of John (1:4-5):

*In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

And later: (8:12)

*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

In this context we have to understand the surprising next sentence of the prayer of Bahá'u'lláh:

*Through them, however, I perceive the splendors of Thy wisdom, and discern the brightness of the light of Thy providence.*

We perceive through this darkness, through this absence of the light – light of Creation and of the Manifestation – the Splendor of God's Wisdom and the Light of God's Providence. How can we understand that? It does not make sense in any

ordinary way. How can the darkness of the world make us see the light of God's providence?

Yet, this is not new. A similar understanding is clearly expressed in the letter of the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

In the cross of Christ the power and the wisdom of God becomes evident, just like Bahá'u'lláh stated in the prayer below.

*Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us.*

The darkness of the world opposes the Manifestation, and the victory of the Manifestation over the darkness, through cross and suffering, can only be understood when this very suffering, this very tribulation and ordeal is seen as bringing the victory of the Light of God through the Resurrection to the world.

In a similar way, the victory of the Manifestation over the darkness of the world is expressed in the hymn "Exulted," being sung in the Easter Night celebration in the Catholic Church, where the victory of Christ over death in His resurrection is celebrated with these words:

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor, radiant in the brightness of your King! Christ has conquered! Glory fills you! Darkness vanishes forever!

These statements and affirmations are only understandable when we accept a new worldview, a new Heaven and Earth, presented in every Manifestation of God to this World, as expressed in the following section of the prayer:

*They that are shut out as by a veil from Thee have imagined that they have the power to put out Thy light,*

*and to quench Thy fire, and to still the winds of Thy grace. Nay, and to this Thy might beareth me witness!*

The understanding of the enemies of the Faith of God has been proven as nothing other than imagination and idle hope. The light is always victorious over darkness, as all known religions explain, from Zoroaster to Bahá'u'lláh. This victory is, as Paul has said, a stumbling block and foolishness for unbelievers. On the other hand, as it was written in a letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi: "with the aid of Bahá'u'lláh ... we can turn our stumbling blocks into stepping stones ..." (LG 602). The life and the teachings of the Manifestations of God demonstrate this truth, as Bahá'u'lláh stated in this prayer:

*Had not every tribulation been made the bearer of Thy wisdom, and every ordeal the vehicle of Thy providence, no one would have dared oppose us, though the powers of earth and heaven were to be leagued against us. (PM 14)*

We might speculate that in a world that is progressing and heading towards a goal, changes from darkness to light, from evil to good must happen. Considering that darkness is only the absence of light and evil the absence of good, a process of evolution will necessary imply that there will be darkness in order that there be improvement, and there will be evil in order to accentuate and bring forth the good.

'Abdu'l-Bahá gives a long discourse about good and evil and concludes:

*The epitome of this discourse is that it is possible that one thing in relation to another may be evil, and at the same time within the limits of its proper being it may not be evil. Then it is proved that there is no evil in existence; all that God created He created good. This evil is nothingness; so death is the absence of life. When man no longer receives life, he dies. Darkness is the absence of light: when there is no light, there is darkness. Light is an existing thing, but darkness is nonexistent. Wealth is an existing thing, but poverty is nonexistent.*



*Then it is evident that all evils return to nonexistence.  
Good exists; evil is nonexistent. (SAQ 264)*

In light of this understanding it is clear that the evil, which is lack of good, has a function in development of good in the providence of God and can lead to a better understanding of God's wisdom.

## World Transformation

The Declaration towards a Global Ethic expresses its promise of world transformation by affirming that reflection, mediation, prayer and positive thinking will result in a conversion of the heart:

Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of the individuals is changed. We pledge to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking, for a conversion of the heart. Together we can move mountains! (DGE 36)

One, actually the most essential element necessary for this transformation, is not mentioned here; it is the power of God's Revelation. It is interesting to note that the Declaration avoids here and in other places the reference to God and especially to His different Manifestations. The Catholic theologian Küng could not have missed this essential element, but probably left it out deliberately to avoid getting involved in the interreligious argument regarding which of the different Prophets truly revealed the Words of God.

This politically necessary omission again seems to indicate that only the Unity of all Manifestations can explain the Unity of all Religions, and all attempts to avoid this issue are detrimental, not only to one or the other but to all religions of God. Consider; if only one religion is true, then all of them have to be doubted, at least by some or most of the other religions. Only the Bahá'í belief that there is only one Religion, as revealed by God, and that consequently there is only one Revelation to humanity in a historical sequence through the many Prophets, can solve the dilemma of the multiplicity of religions.

The statement of the Declaration that “together we can move mountains” certainly reflects the Biblical Word, implying that this togetherness must be based on the belief in a Manifestation. In the Words of Jesus, in whom the Father is manifest, we find:

*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (Matthew 17:20)*

Reading the following statement of Bahá'u'lláh, it is clear in the context of the Bahá'í Faith that with “these exalted words” the Revelation of God, as presented by all Prophets of the different religions are intended, with special reference to the Revelation of this day, that is the Word of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

*Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men's hearts, and hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God's holy Book. (GWB 95-96)*

While reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking are certainly elements in this transformation, it is stated here that they are not by themselves effective, they are only bringing about the transformation when based on the Word of God, as revealed in every Manifestation.

## Moderation and Political Power

The next issue to be dealt with in this comparison is twofold. The Declaration recommends two things: the first is to use a sense of moderation and modesty when it says: “We must value a sense of moderation and modesty.”

The second is, that the Declaration recommends using economic and political power in order to implant the global ethic into this world, when it says: “We must utilize economic and political power for service to humanity.” (p. 29)

Here again, the Bahá'í Faith has a more integral answer. While affirming the first part, it disagrees with the use of power in the sense of political or economic power.

Bahá'u'lláh recommends moderation in many places such as the application to the progress of civilization. He sees civilization as being both a source of evil or of good, depending if the virtue of moderation is used in developing civilization: *"If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation"*. (GWB 342)

Not only is moderation recommended here, but it is clarified as well that moderation actually makes the difference between good and evil action, quite similar to the statement of Aristotle mentioned above.

When talking on 30 May 1912 in a Theosophical Lodge on Broadway and Seventy-Ninth Street in New York, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated clearly that political and economic power cannot be used to achieve unity and world peace, which would include a binding agreement on a global ethic. He indicates that such powers can never succeed. While this writer cannot assure the reader that these are the actual words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá given in an authorized translation, they clearly are consonant with other statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

*Therefore, a power is needed to carry out and execute what is known and admitted to be the remedy for human conditions — namely, the unification of mankind.*

*Furthermore, it is evident that this cannot be realized through material process and means. The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power since the policies of governments and nations are various. That is to say, any effort toward unification through these material means would benefit one and injure another because of unequal and individual interests. Some may believe this great*

*remedy can be found in dogmatic insistence upon imitations and interpretations. This would likewise be without foundation and result.*

*Therefore, it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power, divine bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord. Nothing else is possible; nothing can be conceived of. But through spiritual means and the divine power it is possible and practicable. (PUP 157)*

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá seems to say here is that the unification must come first, before peace and acceptance of a global ethic is possible, and that this unification presupposes a spiritual power unifying the world. In other words unification of the world is only possible on the spiritual basis of the unification of the religions of the world. The Declaration also realizes that any real change comes from insight, and from the power of meditation and prayer, or positive thinking as it is called. This aspect will be followed up below.

### Conversion of the Heart

The Declaration acknowledges the need for transformation and asserts that such a transformation must come from a conversion of the heart:

*We pledge to work for such transformation ... for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking, for a conversion of the heart. (p. 36)*

As mentioned before, the Declaration does not refer to the Divine influence exerted through the Manifestation, or Prophet, in order to avoid the issue of who is and who is not a "real" Manifestation of God. Considering the present state of affairs this seems to be a necessary precaution in order to avoid the old argument between religions, questioning which the true religion is and which is not. This very argument has caused many wars and disagreements in the past.

Only the Bahá'í solution, to acknowledge all world religions as being founded by God for their time, can solve this problem. Therefore the Bahá'í Scriptures have no hesitation in asserting that the influence of God is needed to achieve the proposed transformation

*Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men's hearts.* (GWB 95)

The Declaration only mentions the activities on the side of man, like prayer, meditation and positive thinking, but does not mention that this is futile unless it is based on a Revelation of God, as the Catholic theologian Küng well knew. Prayer and meditation does not originate in the human condition, and man cannot elevate himself towards the Divine. This power to address the Creator in prayer does not come from the creation. It is a gift, a token of God's grace to man. Bahá'u'lláh clearly expressed the impossibility of the “birds of the human heart” to achieve this task, i.e., to be able to reach God, when He said:

*How can I make mention of Thee, assured as I am that no tongue, however deep its wisdom, can befittingly magnify Thy name, nor can the bird of the human heart, however great its longing, ever hope to ascend into the heaven of Thy majesty and knowledge.* (GWB 3)

In the following passage taken from the beginning of the Seven Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh expressed in poetic language, and in reference to the Qur'án and the Imám 'Alí, the thought that the prayer is originated in the heart by the Fear of God and as a fruit of memory of the lost paradise, which is approached when one walks in the Path of God, i.e., follow the Revelation of the Manifestations.

*Of this hath the nightingale of oneness sung in the garden of Ghawthíyih [Sermon by Ali] He saith: “And there shall appear upon the tablet of thine heart a writing of the subtle mysteries of 'Fear God and God will give you knowledge'; [Qur'án 2:282] and the bird of thy soul shall recall the holy sanctuaries of preexistence and soar on the wings of longing in the heaven of 'walk the beaten paths of thy Lord', [Qur'án 16:71.] and gather*

*the fruits of communion in the gardens of 'Then feed on every kind of fruit.'* (SFV 3)

It is not unimportant to keep this in mind, because in the New Age Movement of today it is contended that man can, by his own power through mediation and spiritual development, reach an access to the Divine. This was most powerfully presented by Ken Wilber and can be called spiritual materialism, where the human power can by itself reach towards God, or what Wilber calls the "World Soul" or "God or Goddess." This basically materialistic understanding of the world, which is presented in transcendental psychology, is expressed by Wilber in the following sentence:

*And every I becomes a God, and every WE becomes God's sincerest worship, and every IT becomes God's temple.*<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in this view, it is not God Who is transcendent, but the human psyche can transcend this world by higher forms of reason and mediation. This thought was further developed in a previous paper by this writer.<sup>16</sup>

### God as Ultimate Reality

Here again the Declaration presents the truth very cautiously and avoids calling God by any name, but replaces this concept with the term "ultimate reality". Hans Küng explains that this was necessary in order to not offend the Buddhist Religion, which does not talk about God but acknowledges a transcendent reality towards which we strive.

*As religious and spiritual persons we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in word or silence.* (DGE 19)

It is interesting that the Bahá'í Faith can easily accept this formulation as the Bahá'í writings clearly state that the essence of God is unknowable and inaccessible:

*God in His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable.* (ESW 118)

There are many statements explaining this fact and consequently the term “ultimate reality,” for what is usually called God, fits this understanding. Again as before, the Bahá’í Faith insists that all assistance in delivering mankind from its state of grievous abasement comes from the Hand of Divine power and not from prayer and meditation alone as the Declaration seems to insinuate.

*We cherish the hope that the Hand of Divine power may lend its assistance to mankind, and deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.* (GWB 93)

## The Bahá’í Understanding of Religious Unity

The Bahá’í Faith asserts the unity of all religions and the unity of all the Prophets and Founders of the major world religions, calling them the Manifestations of God for their time. They renew the one religion of God by restating, updating and presenting again the fundamental verities of all of God’s religions, as well as changing, promoting and adjusting the moral rules to the time, considering the changes in the evolution of mankind. This is expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

*They establish a new religion and make new creatures of men; They change the general morals, promote new customs and rules, renew the cycle and the Law.* (SAQ 164)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá distinguishes between Founders of religions like Buddha and philosophers who renew the morals of their time like Confucius:

*Buddha also established a new religion, and Confucius renewed morals and ancient virtues, but their institutions have been entirely destroyed.* (SAQ 165)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the following passage (SWA 15.7) opens up the vision of unity in this world which has as its center the unity of religion. He describes the process of unification in the picture of the light of seven candles, saying “*Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world’s darkened horizon.*” Talking about these seven candles of light, the unity of religion takes the center place as the fourth candle, which can be compared to the

arrangement of the Seven Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh, where the Valley of Unity is the fourth of seven valley as well. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives this unity the place of a cornerstone, stating:

*The fourth candle is unity in religion, which is the cornerstone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor.* (SWA 15.7)

The first three candles present “unity in the political realm”, “unity of thought in world undertakings,” and “unity in freedom which will surely come to pass.”

The fifth candle after the unity of religion is “unity of nations,” which unity will be “causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland.” The sixth candle is “unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race,” and the final candle is described as “unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse.”

This arrangement indicates that unity of religion is the centerpiece or cornerstone of all unity, it does not give us a timeline, and describes these unifications rather as a process “*now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon.*”

He concludes with this statement indicating that

*Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.* (SWA 31-32)

In this verse He seemingly refers to the progress and the evolution of humanity, asserting that this progress will happen as prophesied by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew 6:10)

*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

The question arises: How does this relate to the contention made in this paper that the first step towards a unity of religion will be in the area of ethics, as anticipated by the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic? As it has been mentioned above, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while not mentioning ethics in this



enumeration of progressive unification of the world, has stated the following about the Founders of the world's religions, which is a statement of ethics, of making men new creatures and changing general morals by new customs and rules:

*They establish a new religion and make new creatures of men; They change the general morals, promote new customs and rules, renew the cycle and the Law. (SAQ 164)*

This change of morals has to be understood as a renewal and improvement in the area of ethics that every Manifestation has promoted. One could compare it as the growing of a tree from insignificant seeds to an ever growing, fully developed structure. In the same way has the ethic of the different religions been growing, has been adjusted to the development of man, and therefore all these ethical principles of different religions are building a complete structure that can today be described as a global ethic. This is the value of this Declaration for all religions, so that they can compare and agree upon these general principles and become increasingly united through these considerations.

There are differences in particular ethical statements between different religions, but it can be assumed that these differences are manmade. For example, in Islam it is generally allowed to disavow one's faith in order to save oneself, while in Christianity and in the Bahá'í Faith, this is not allowed, and the death of the believer as a martyr could sometimes be the outcome of this ethical principle.

### How will unification of religions come about?

The Declaration raises some warning signs about a possible unification of religions and states clearly what it could not be (emphasis in the original):

**By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology nor a single unified religion beyond all existing religion, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethic we mean a fundamental**

consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards and personal attitudes.

What kind of misunderstanding has to be excluded from this global ethic or in any unification of religion? The four possible principles are excluded as leading to a real unity in ethic understanding and even more significantly in religion.

### Triumphalism

The Declaration clearly states that any form of triumphalism does not lead to a unity of religion, when it said:

By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. (GE 21)

### Eclecticism

This is another form of attempted unification that picks and chooses parts from the different religions and attempts to form a unified religion, missing the essential of what religion is. This would be like picking the best from all religions and making a combination thereof (Supermarket or Smorgasbord of Religions).

### Collectivism

When unity is misunderstood as uniformity the result would be a system of collective control and uniformity of all religions in a global ideology. In the last century, several ideologies have tried this approach and the world is still suffering from these attempts. At the turn of the last century two books described this process. A. N. Wilson in *"God's Funeral"*<sup>17</sup> describes the increasing atheism during the last two centuries, and Mark Mazower in *"Dark Continent"*<sup>18</sup> describes Europe as a nightmarish laboratory for social and political engineering, explaining fascism and communism as the ideological struggle for Europe's future.

## Minimalism

This principle is best described by Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), founded in 1961 as a consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America. While the certain laudable attempt “to achieve free and responsible search for truth and meaning” is pursued, the result is a minimalistic acceptance of everything without guidance and without a discernable goal.

## The Unity of Religion in the Bahá’í Faith

Shoghi Effendi (WOB 57) responds to these attempts of unification in a lengthy passage, stating the following about the unity of religions:

Let no one, however, mistake my purpose. The Revelation, of which Bahá’u’lláh is the source and center, abrogates none of the religions that have preceded it, nor does it attempt, in the slightest degree, to distort their features or to belittle their value.

It disclaims any intention of dwarfing any of the Prophets of the past, or of whittling down the eternal verity of their teachings.

It can, in no wise, conflict with the spirit that animates their claims, nor does it seek to undermine the basis of any man's allegiance to their cause.

These sentences clearly explain how the Bahá’í Faith understands the unity of religion as not at all based on abrogating, dwarfing or undermining any of the existing religions of the world. The opposite is true. Shoghi Effendi declares here that it is the purpose of the Bahá’í Faith to enable the followers of all religions to understand their own religion more fully:

Its declared, its primary purpose is to enable every adherent of these Faiths to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he stands identified, and to acquire a clearer apprehension of its purpose.

This will exclude a superficial eclecticism, as well as any arrogant triumphalism:

It is neither eclectic in the presentation of its truths, nor arrogant in the affirmation of its claims.

This understanding is based on a new understanding of religion and of the fundamental unity of all religions and their historical evolution, claiming that Divine Revelation is progressive, not final.

Its teachings revolve around the fundamental principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is progressive, not final.

Summarizing this explanation he states the fundamental unity of all religions in origin, aim, function and purpose:

Unequivocally and without the least reservation it proclaims all established religions to be divine in origin, identical in their aims, complementary in their functions, continuous in their purpose, indispensable in their value to mankind.

Contrasting his understanding of religious unity with previous attempts described above, which have had devastating effects on society, the Guardian here indicates how this unity can come about, and describes that this is already seminally practiced in the Bahá'í Faith:

Far from wishing to add to the number of the religious systems, whose conflicting loyalties have for so many generations disturbed the peace of mankind, this Faith is instilling into each of its adherents a new love for, and a genuine appreciation of the unity underlying, the various religions represented within its pale. (WOB 196)

The unity of religion cannot come from any external, artificial, or political and diplomatic process: it has to come from a new understanding of what religion is, and of a vision that finds the underlying unity of all religious. Can it not be said that the first inkling of such a new vision can be observed in the attempts made by the Parliament of Religions, which was expressed in the Declaration Towards a Global Ethic?

## Towards a Bahá'í Ethic

In a prayer Bahá'u'lláh has given us an indication where this unity will lead humanity. After the initial praise of God, Bahá'u'lláh expresses that those *“who have recognized Thy [God's] reality” ... “can never hope to pass beyond the bounds, which ... have been fixed in their own hearts.”* He further explains that *“every created thing hath recognized its own impotence, and the power of Thy might, and hath confessed its own abasement and Thy great glory.”*

Having clarified here, as in many other places, the impotence of human reason to reach to God, He declares what access God has given humankind to *know Him* and to *worship Him*, by referring to God's Firstness and Lastness which is identical to His Revelation and Concealment. This understanding will then, as a gift to the believers, allow them to reveal this truth about God to all creatures by becoming manifest signs of God's grace, and by following the Path of God.

*I beseech Thee by Thy Lastness which is the same as Thy Firstness, and by Thy Revelation which is identical with Thy Concealment, to grant that they who are dear to Thee, and their children, and their kindred, may become the revealers of Thy purity amidst Thy creatures, and the manifestations of Thy sanctity amongst Thy servants.* (PM 229)

In another place Bahá'u'lláh has more clearly spoken about these four states of man and how they relate to God. What is here called Firstness and Lastness, Revelation and Concealment, is in the Four Valleys called Firstness and Lastness, Outwardness and Inwardness, as explained in a previous paper of this author.<sup>19</sup>

In the same Tablet of the Four Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh speaks about the four journeys in the Pathways of Love, describing the Path of God in this fourfold structure. A brief prayer of the Báb, which was highly recommended by Bahá'u'lláh, completes this structure as is being pointed out in the following picture. When we put these four fourfold statements together in this arrangement, the basic structure of life, especially of life as the Path of God, becomes transparent. This view can be regarded

as an attempt to formulate a Bahá'í Ethic based on the human essence as described in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

The below presented figure consists of three statements of the Bahá'í Writings and one collection of four basic Bahá'í concepts, which are here presented first as they appear in the Writings and are below combined in the figure of four quadrants.

The framework for this figure is taken from Bahá'u'lláh's descriptions in the Seven Valleys (SVFV 27) of "*these four states*" that are "*true of thyself*" and "*conferred upon thee*:"

*Inwardness – Outwardness*  
*Firstness – Lastness*

Four basic concepts of Bahá'í Life are in the top of each of the four squares:

*Prayer – Unity*  
*Service – Order*

Below this are the four statements from the Báb's "Remover of Difficulty" Prayer (SWB 216):

*Praised be God – He is God*  
*All Are His servants – All abide by His bidding*

The last are the four statements of Bahá'u'lláh's *Journeys in the Pathway of Love* (SVFV 25):

*Creature to True One – True One to True One*  
*True One to Creature – Creature to Creature*

## THE BÁB'S REMOVER PRAYER

### BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S FOUR STATES & PATHWAYS OF LOVE



This figure is based on four statements from the Bahá'í Scriptures, which are here unified and organized as a whole, in an attempt to better understand these statements in the context of each other. All of these statements have the same structure: they consist of four quadrants, each of them consisting of a pair of oppositional concepts that are united and set against another pair of oppositional concepts. In a sense this can be understood as an ontological principle of the created world, and examples of this structure can be found in Bahá'í Scripture in many places. It is understood by this writer as an expression of what Shoghi Effendi calls, in several places, the watchword of the Bahá'í Faith: "Its watchword is unity in diversity such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has explained" (WOB 42):

In the following, these four different quadrants will be explicated towards a Bahá'í Ethic. Several issues need to be clarified before the quadrants can be explored by themselves in their practical meaning towards the ethical behavior of people

in the Path of God. These guidelines apply, not only to Bahá'ís, but to people of all religions in their honest attempt to travel this Straight Path according to the directions of their Prophets or Manifestations.

First: What are these quadrants, and what do the different statements in them mean in relation to each other, i.e., being differentiated from and united with each other?

Second: How do they relate to each other on an essential or ontological level?

And, third: How do they relate to the actual ethical behavior of the individual, to any organization, from family to nation to humanity, or to the world as a whole.

Since it is not very difficult to find more quadruple statements of the same structure in other Bahá'í writings, there must be a special meaning to this arrangement. This writer almost accidentally found the first of these statements after reading the books of Ken Wilber, who has a similar structure on the basis of his integral understanding of human nature and of the world. In a previous paper of this writer<sup>20</sup>, he described what this surprising correspondence might mean and how the Wilberian concept needs to be extended and improved when applied to concepts used in the Bahá'í Writings.

The four quadrants are formed by the framework of the statements of Bahá'u'lláh in the Seven Valleys (SVFV 27) and can be described as follows:

1. Inwardness and Firstness
2. Inwardness and Lastness
3. Outwardness and Firstness
4. Outwardness and Lastness

With Inwardness the Spiritual, the Hidden, the Concealed is expressed; with Outwardness its opposite, the Material, the Manifest and the Revealed is indicated. The opposition between hidden and manifest, or inward and outward, or concealed and revealed, is what in today's parlance is called the opposition between spiritual and material. What needs to be



repeated here is that both sides of these opposing concepts are seen not only as opposing each other but at the same time as forming a unity, which is expressed in the next paragraph where Bahá'u'lláh states that in the *sphere of that which is relative*, i.e., in the created world, these concepts are separated because of the *limitation of men*. On the other hand Bahá'u'lláh affirms that those who *have passed over the world of the relative and the limited have burned away these relativities*. They will then *swim in the sea of the spirit and soar in the holy air of light*. In this vision, in this realm, the *first is the last itself, and the last is but the first*.

*These statements are made in the sphere of that which is relative, because of the limitations of men. Otherwise, those personages who in a single step have passed over the world of the relative and the limited, and dwelt on the fair plane of the Absolute, and pitched their tent in the worlds of authority and command – have burned away these relativities with a single spark, and blotted out these words with a drop of dew. And they swim in the sea of the spirit, and soar in the holy air of light. Then what life have words, on such a plane, that “first” and “last” or other than these be seen or mentioned! In this realm, the first is the last itself, and the last is but the first. (SVFV 27)*

This can be understood as implying that in this world of the relative and limited, where unity is created from the unification of parts and where the parts are constituted through the whole which they form, the world has to be seen in these oppositions, while from a higher perspective, these oppositions fall together in an integrated unity. There is not only a unity in the opposing concepts, like first and last, as Bahá'u'lláh explains: because the same person is first to his son and last to his father, in the same way hidden and manifest has to be seen as belonging to both and at the same time to every individual person, animal, plant or thing.

The whole creation is also always both, spirit and matter, hidden and manifest, concealed and revealed, first and last, individual and collective. And yet, from a spiritual point of view, these oppositions are again forming a higher unity, and

therefore Bahá'u'lláh can say that first is the last and last is the first — or the often repeated phrase, that God is the most hidden of the hidden and the most manifest of the manifest. At the end of this statement in the Seven Valleys, Bahá'u'lláh reaches in the area of the mystical, and therefore He quotes from the Mathnaví of the great mystic, Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmi (1207-1273 A.D.) the following verse, combining this spiritual vision with love and the fire of ecstasy, which will burn all limitations and relativities of this world:

*In thy soul of love build thou a fire*

*And burn all thoughts and words entire. (SVFV 27)*

When later these quadrants are applied to the ethical behavior on the Path of God, this unity of the opposites must never be forgotten. Consequently it is explained by Bahá'u'lláh that prayer and service have the same value, even though, one, the prayer, belongs to the inward and hidden aspect of this world, while, the other, service clearly belongs to the manifest and material action of a person. And this is true of all the quadrants. None has a prerogative or priority in the relative world of ethical action; only in the unity of these aspects is the spiritual nature of the world manifest.

It is clear from many statements of the Writings that this is not only a practical and ethical principle, but it is a constituent and fundamental aspect of the created world, the world of limitation and relativity. If the four quadrants are explicated in the realm of ethics and are describing the Path of God, these three principles need always to be kept in mind.

## **The Four Quadrants, Possible Cornerstones of a Bahá'í Ethic**

In the following the four quadrants will be described separately, with their spiritual unity taken into account. This is a brief description of what could be an extensive outline towards the development of a future Bahá'í Ethic. Obviously, a more extensive outline is not possible in the frame of this paper. What is here presented is more of a description of basic principles that could be the basis of a Bahá'í Ethic if it stands

the test of time and consultation. Therefore it has to be regarded as containing tentative and prospective suggestions for further studies.

## Prayer

This is the title of the left upper quadrant which is framed by the concepts of inwardness or concealment and firstness or individuality. In this quadrant the focus is on the personal and individual life of man. It is what we would call the spiritual and the religious aspect of man. Usually, the concept of soul is placed in this area, but it needs to be expanded. Because soul is not restricted to this area, it is really establishing the unity of all of these four quadrants. The soul is in all of them and is a *single reality*, as Bahá'u'lláh clearly states:

*Say: Spirit, mind, soul, and the powers of sight and hearing are but one single reality which hath manifold expressions owing to the diversity of its instruments.*  
(SLH 155)

The soul is differentiated only by the instruments it uses. In other words, the soul of man must be in all four spheres, and cannot be restricted to one aspect of man.

In this quadrant we place the statement of the Báb's prayer "Praised be God" and it is related to the statement of the journeys on the pathway of love as being from the "Creature to the True One". From this inner aspect of the person, the prayer is directed to the True One in a very individual and personal process of elevating the heart in love to God. The statement of the fifth Arabic Hidden Word fits this intention:

### 5. O SON OF BEING!

*Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not,  
My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O  
servant.* (AHW)

This love is expressed in the praise of God, that is, the correct approach of the creature to the True One. Prayer in the love of God is not only a *fountain of living waters* for the one, who prays, attracting the love of God; it furthermore announces the message of the loving God in *every world of*

God's *worlds*. Prayer has not only global reach, but a truly cosmic significance, as stated in a prayer of Bahá'u'lláh:

*Make my prayer, O my Lord, a fountain of living waters whereby I may live as long as Thy sovereignty endureth, and may make mention of Thee in every world of Thy worlds. (PM 318)*

Prayer, while individual and personal, is not limited in its meaning to the individual, but its goal is to mention God *in every world of Thy worlds*, that is, in the whole creation of God. Therefore, it is not restricted to the individual, in the sense of excluding others. It must be connected with the other three quadrants as well; it goes out from the individual but encompasses all. It must include and will attract all of humanity and the entire world, affecting all four quadrants. By causing the *heart of every righteous man to throb* the prayer said *in the privacy his chamber* influences and elevates, “*these four states*” that are “*true of thyself*” and “*conferred upon thee*” (SVFV 27) i.e., all the four quadrants in the above picture. The following words of Bahá'u'lláh need to be understood in this context:

*Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. (GWB 295)*

## Unity

Unity is the next quadrant; it is related to inwardness and concealment like prayer, but it is formulated in the area of lastness or collective. Before going into details of this quadrant, it can easily be seen that it is closely connected with the previous quadrant, with prayer. The fact that there is no official congregational prayer in the Bahá'í Faith becomes clear from this distinction. The Prayer for the Dead is the only

exception to this rule, and it is related to a specific and manifest occasion. Otherwise Bahá'u'lláh has abrogated all official community prayers of prior religions. Prayer is restricted to the individual and does not belong in this quadrant. This does not exclude the fact that people can pray together; it only means that there is no distinctive different value to such prayers; it is not an official prayer any different than the individual prayer. When Bahá'ís pray together they pray to God as individuals, not as a church with official priests or leaders of this prayer.

While, as mentioned before, all quadrants have to be seen in a mystical unity, this quadrant is exclusively dedicated to the unity of humankind, to the unity of all Manifestations and ultimately to the Unity of God. Therefore it corresponds to the statement of the Báb's prayer *He is God* and to the journey on the Pathway of Love stating from the *True One to True One*, indicating that the unity of God can only be seen in the unity of the Manifestations.

Considering this from the point of view that all quadrants are unified on a higher spiritual and mystical level, we can state here as an ethical principle, that any prayer to God, which is not carried by the spirit of Unity of humanity and of all Manifestations, becomes defective and vice versa — that any consideration of unity, be it the unity of family, nation, or humanity, as well as the unity of all religions, can only be true when based on the individual prayer and included in the praise of God. This unity needs to be supported by individual service and carried forward through the institutions to keep it in order. Whenever a Bahá'í expresses the praise of God, all of the religions and all of mankind must be included in this elevation of the individual soul. Therefore, most Bahá'í prayers start with this praise of God.

## Service

Here we are in the area of Outwardness or that which is revealed and seen. The other frame of this quadrant is the aspect of firstness and of the individual. Certainly, service and work are material efforts, can be seen, can be rewarded materially and promote civilization.

Again considering the unity of all quadrants, work does not acquire the status of service if it is not directed towards unity, towards promotion of humanity and its civilization. This direction has to include the personal spiritual life of the servant; otherwise it would be only an external exercise. It is becoming evident how these quadrants support, promote and undergird each other.

In the “The Remover of Difficulties,” prayer of the Báb, this is clearly expressed by the statement: *All are His servants*. Service is His service. The journeys in the pathway of love bring another aspect into this consideration. When combined with prayer service, is described as *From the True One to the Creatures*. Generally, this is not how we think. We regard any service, any job, as our achievement, as our own effort and would not see it as something that comes from God to the creature. Let's consider what Bahá'u'lláh expresses in the following statement:

*The tie of servitude established between the worshiper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favor unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess.* (GWB 193)

What is this tie of servitude between the Creator and the creature? Primarily it is the duty prescribed to God's servant to extol His majesty and glory, in other words, to praise God, as this verse of Bahá'u'lláh clearly expresses:

*Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.* (GWB 4)

But must not this bond of servitude be extended to all service of man? Is not all of human work a service in praise of God? And does not the statement above clarify that service is not an *indication of any merit* for the servant? It is a token of the grace of God that alone makes it meritorious and valuable for man.

Service has to be seen as a token of God's grace, as a gift to allow us to ascend to a higher station of the self. The example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá certainly gives testimony to that kind of spiritual progress. Another consideration can help us understand this ethical principle. Today's unemployed would certainly see it as a gift if somebody gave them a job. So a person, who has not been given the gift of service from God, is like a beggar, a useless member of society who fails to reach the inmost value of being human.

## Order

This fourth quadrant is dominated by its outwardness and lastness or collectiveness. It is the order which has to make unity manifest in this material world. This is the reason why the administrative order of the Bahá'í Faith is not a worldly and unimportant aspect of life, but is equally important as prayer, spiritual unity and service. An administrative order must be based on all of these aspects of life; otherwise it will not function well. When electing the administrative institutions, prayer and knowledge of the community are required, so the election becomes an essential aspect of the Bahá'í life.

When we consider the many things the Guardian says about the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and especially his statement that we cannot know how it will look in the future, it becomes quite clear that only if all of these four quadrants are verified in society can this administrative order be fashioned. This is the ultimate goal of the new world order.

In such an order and civilization the "Remover of Difficulties" prayer of the Báb will be fulfilled because: *All abide by His bidding*, and this order and structure will be what the *creatures will give to the creatures* as expressed in that journeys on the pathway of love, creating a humanity that is unified, at peace and animated by the individual's prayers, by the spiritual unity of mankind and promoted by the service of all.

## Towards a Bahá'í Ethic

It is hoped that this combination and structure imminent in the Bahá'í Writings will not only allow us to look into the future of the Bahá'í commonwealth, but give us a guideline on the Path of God, make this the Straight Path, the True Path, and lead mankind to the Most Great Peace. Individually, it could be stated that we must learn to see all aspects of life as this Path of God; we cannot exclude or separate the material, the administrative, the unity of mankind and everyday service and prayer from this path.

Whenever someone believes they are “living the life” as a Bahá'ís, yet overlook this total integration of all aspects of the human being, they are in danger of going astray. Some signs of these errors are the following:

- Words, thoughts and even prayers that do not include all, but separate and exclude others.
- Scientific pursuits fall into this category if they overlook the organic structure of the Faith, if they are not executed in the service of the community, or if they disrupt the harmony between science and religion.
- Individual actions, which are not coordinated with the administrative order, even community action following other than these principles, will not promote the fourfold structure of the Path of God.
- Believers, who are not in touch with the ethical principles of the Faith and do not accept the guidance of their assemblies, place themselves outside of the community in some way. Not in every case will that behavior deprive them of their voting rights, but it could well deprive them of the spiritual connection with the Faith.

On the other hand the administrative organs of the Faith can never forget that the unity they need to promote is a unity in diversity, and everybody has to be respected and valued in their individual ability and nature. Only when both the individual and the community aspect of the Bahá'í Cause are respected



and find a living harmony, can the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh be realized in the future.

We have to be cautious not to be one-sided, we have to constantly redirect our efforts, and this is only possible if we continuously dive into the Ocean of His Words and make the Bahá'í Scripture the compass of all ethical striving.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethic*, translated by David Ross, Oxford University Press, 1998

<sup>2</sup> Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel, editors, *A Global Ethic, The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, Continuum, New York, 1993

<sup>3</sup> A more extensive description of this event can be found in H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, George Ronald, Oxford 1972, pp. 63-65

<sup>4</sup> About Khayru'llah see Robert H. Stockman, in *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Origins 1892-1900*, volume 1, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, 1985. In this book the life of Kheiralla (this is the transcription used in this book) and his teaching method is comprehensively describes, as well as the people he converted to the Bahá'í Faith.

<sup>5</sup> The Wikipedia has the following note on Hans Küng:

Born 1928 he studied theology and philosophy at the Pontifical Gregoriana University in Rome and was ordained in 1954 (this author studied at the same University philosophy, later he studied theology with Karl Rahner in Innsbruck, Austria).

He then continued his education in various European cities, including the Sorbonne in Paris.

In 1960 Küng was appointed professor of theology at the University Tübingen, Germany.

Just like his colleague Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) and Karl Rahner (1904-1984), in 1962 he was appointed *peritus* by Pope John XXIII, to the Second Vaticanum Council.

At Küng's instigation, the Catholic Faculty at Tübingen appointed Ratzinger as professor of dogmatic.

Later Hans Küng rejected the doctrine of papal infallibility, and was stripped of his license to teach Catholic theology in 1979, continuing teaching ecumenical theology.

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- <sup>6</sup> The Bahá'í Faith, the official website of the Bahá'ís of the United States: <http://bahai.us>
- <sup>7</sup> Ted Honderich, editor, *The Oxford Guide to Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, 2005 under 'history of moral philosophy'. In the section on 'ethics and aesthetics' the virtue ethics of Aristotle is described and compared with other systems of ethics.
- <sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethic*, translated by David Ross, Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford 1998, Kindle location 638
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., Kindle location 1391
- <sup>10</sup> Wikipedia under Euthyphro dilemma
- <sup>11</sup> This article was found at the [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org) website and it is a reprint from AAPB/Biofeedback Magazine, Winter 2001 page 13-17 [www.aapb.org](http://www.aapb.org)
- <sup>12</sup> Rollin McCray, Ph.D. and Doc Childre, *The Psychophysiology of Positive Emotions and Optimal Functioning*, *ibid* page 1
- <sup>13</sup> Hans Küng and Karl-Joseph Kuschel, editors, *A Global Ethic, The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, Continuum, New York, 1993, p 73
- <sup>14</sup> As is the custom in 'Irfán publications, the Writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are italicized, the Writings of Shoghi Effendi are not.
- <sup>15</sup> Ken Wilber; *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, The Spirit of Evolution*, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2000, Chapter: The Unpacking of God, page 550
- <sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Klebel, *Lights of Irfán*, Book Seven, 2006, "Law-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, Towards a Progressive Bahá'í Theology", pp. 143-148
- <sup>17</sup> W.W. Norton & Company, New York London 1999
- <sup>18</sup> Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1999
- <sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Klebel, *Lights of Irfán*, Book Six, 2005, "True of Thyself: The Mystical Writing's of Bahá'u'lláh and Ken Wilber's System of Integral Philosophy" pp. 87-120
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.