

Reflections on Unit 2 - Part II

(see drawing at www.liveandlearnstuff.org/OCF2.pdf)

[There were so many things I wanted to include on the chart but just didn't have the room, so hopefully I'll be able to share them here in a way that makes sense.]

So, the big picture, so far, of Baha'u'llah's message is:

- (1) reality is spiritual (He gives us a unified, coherent world view)
- (2) He elucidates the laws that govern its operation
- (3) He shares the implications of that reality by redefining civilization (and giving us a greater context for history as a "process")

Then it behooves me to be immensely familiar with all of these, but especially to understand the process and where I am (and Baha'is are) in it. This I do, so I'm ready to introduce leaders and the general public to the Author of Writings proposing radical new approaches to life.

In "the process", perhaps the abandonment of Divine authority (¶2) is a necessary pre-requisite for maturity, similar to the function of adolescence in preparing us for the next stage. If you refer to Ian Semple's five processes of obedience [see my post on Unit 1, Part II 7/25/05], adolescence seems to be "step 1" itself "The first step is to accept oneself as the ultimate source of authority", it brings you out of the world of "blind obedience" (childhood). It reminds me of my own example in becoming a mother. When I decided to leave my job for the full time work of raising my daughter (and later daughter's"), it was with the full confidence that I could do anything in the world I chose to do, but that I was choosing to be a stay-at-home mother. My parents had many concerns because, raising me as a strong, self-confident feminist, they saw me "giving up myself" to raise kids. I think that grew out of my mother's sense of not feeling she could do anything in the world, that she was simply "supposed to be" (blind obedience) a stay-at-home mom. The behavior/actions look the same (as "blind obedience" can "look" like obedience), but it's not - it is different - they come from different "intentions". We can see the benefit of the "poles" of search [¶6], all eroding "certainty" [¶7] -- it feeds the break from blind obedience.

We're told that the "body" of humanity is being unified, and that Baha'is are the vehicle for infusing the spirit into that body. We see again the analogy of adolescence as that period when our bodies go through intense physical changes.

Perhaps the increased receptivity (¶1) to reality as defined by Baha'u'llah's Revelation is due to having taken adolescence to the extreme, tiring of it (as felt through the failures of materialism), and yearning to grow beyond it (hence the anxiety and discontent - spiritual emptiness).

Again this document has caused me to "re-stumble upon" some great sources of insight and guidance, and particularly relevant to this Unit, for me, is Doug Martin's talk "Humanity's Coming Encounter With Baha'u'llah" (1992) <http://bahai-library.com/talks/encounter.html> .

"The key to this understanding [the real implications of the work which Baha'u'llah has done] is the Covenant. The coming-of-age of the human race has made possible, Baha'u'llah says, an entirely new relationship between God and man. As the peoples of the world gradually turn to God and begin to conform their lives to the pattern of human society contained in His Revelation for this day, "a new race of men" will result. The unification of human consciousness will produce a people free of the limitations that created

and perpetuated the problems now facing the planet.

This process is irresistible, and its manifestations can be seen in every aspect of contemporary history. It provides the context in which Baha'u'llah's creation of the Baha'i community assumes its proper significance. For Baha'u'llah has not merely outlined a theory of social evolution; nor has He contented Himself with the creation of a model. The Baha'i community, with all its limitations and shortcomings, is itself the nucleus of the emerging "race of men". To the degree that we understand this dimension of the Revelation, to that extent will we be able, in the words of the House of Justice, to "celebrate the achievements of the Covenant, and proclaim its aims and unifying power".

"O people of Baha," Baha'u'llah urges, "be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed..." The Baha'i community, even at its present embryonic stage of development, possesses features that are unique, features that will one day characterize the humanity of our planet's future." (pg. 7)

I've listed these features on the chart I made, they are the flags powering the ark. Doug Martin tells us they are the "endowments of Baha'u'llah's Covenant" and "We manifest them to the extent that we ourselves are within the covenant."

Some additional thoughts on a couple of these features that I found particularly interesting: "...the emerging human race must be imbued with an entirely new system of values, a new ethos. It must be guided by an inner ethical orientation relevant to the challenges of the next stage in human development. ... Yet, the evidences of just such a fundamental change are already apparent in the ethos which Baha'u'llah has fused into the worldwide Baha'u'llah community, not as an imposed code, but as a pattern of spontaneous moral response."

"...if it is to assume responsibility for its own destiny, the human race must achieve collective consciousness. It must be able to think and decide collectively. The Administrative Order conceived by Baha'u'llah endows the community of His followers with this unique faculty. It exists nowhere else in our world, and is a feature of the Cause that has evoked particularly warm appreciation from our collaborators and well-wishers. From the grassroots level in the most remote corners of the globe, up to the central organ of decision-making which the community has raised up on the slopes of Mount Carmel, a unified pattern of consultation provides an early glimmer of what Baha'u'llah intended when He spoke of God cherishing in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as 'one soul in one body'."

"The greatest gift of God to mankind, Baha'u'llah says, is reason. Whatever force and faith may have achieved in the earlier stages in the advancement of civilization, rationality is the key to humanity's future."

Perhaps the "mental tests" that Peter Khan warned us about in Sept. 1995 [http://bahai-library.com/?file=khan_nature_challenge_tests] are the adverse winds that keep us from utilizing (or developing) these "sails" effectively. [That's another great document to re-read]

And he invokes the "arrowhead" metaphor again, "But, as the work of the Covenant, the community of Baha'u'llah represents nothing less than the arrowhead of the evolution of consciousness. One thinks of similar fundamental changes at earlier stages in the evolutionary process. How feeble, how insignificant was the first manifestation of sensate life on this planet. And yet it was the future and everything else had meaning because of it. It was where evolution was going; the trees and mountains, however beautiful and imposing, represented where evolution had come from."

He sums up with, “ The answers are as many as the questions. Essentially, however, our challenge is to begin energetically to interpret Baha'u'llah's mission in the vocabulary and concerns of those around us. ... But a growing majority of those to whom our message is addressed will be people who want to understand, however skeptical, critical or reluctant they may appear.”

Earlier, he had said, “As we ourselves come to understand this resource [Baha'ullah's world view] more clearly, we will be able to communicate its message to society in general, a society whose search for such a vision will become ever more urgent. The expectation is not that Baha'u'llah's vision will become readily adopted. The expectation is that it will begin to engage serious minds everywhere and, in popular forms of expression, the attention of the general public. Once this process begins, the eventual outcome is as certain as tomorrow's sun.” and “Merely to mention this prevailing climate is to make it clear how vital it is that we Baha'is not "get in the way", so to speak, but rather help our fellow human beings to find their own relationship with Baha'u'llah and the prescriptions He has brought. He is the Physician of the soul, not we. He knows human nature as intimately as He knew the palm of His own hand. He knows the pattern of habits and attitudes that constitutes true human development, and He understands the inner disciplines and social restraints that conduce to this development.”

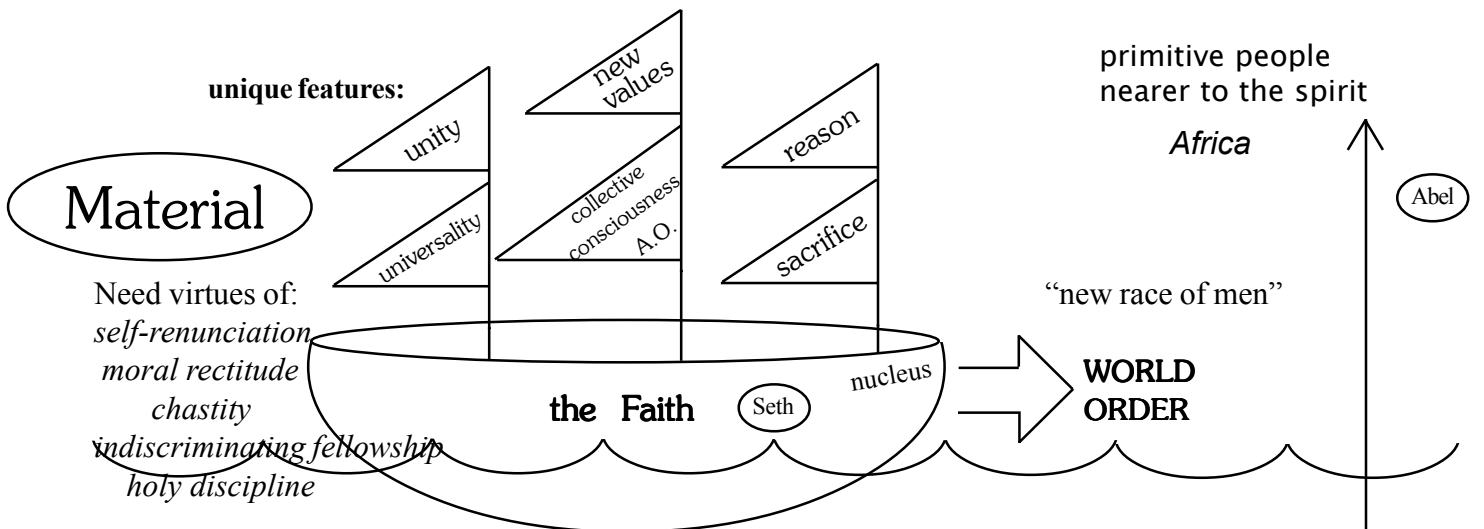
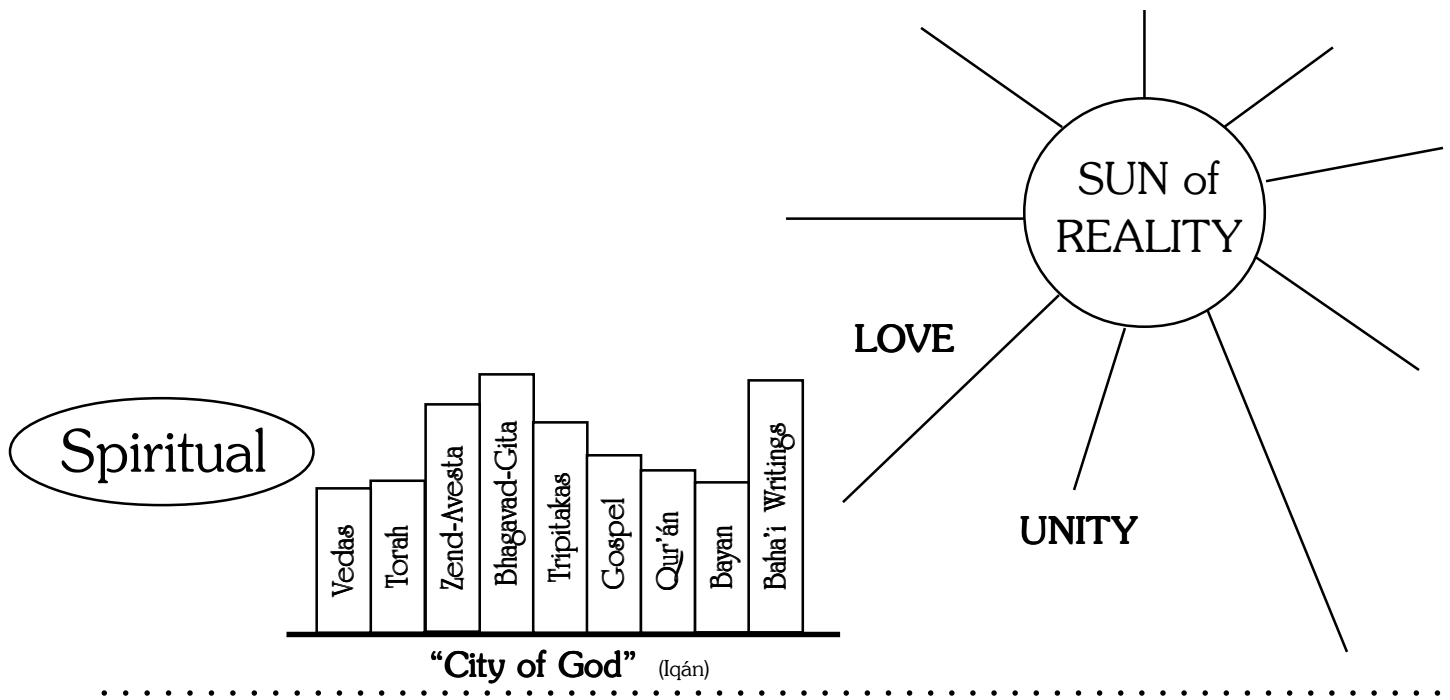
Mr. Martin ends with the following caution/challenge: “ So far, our efforts in the field of public information have not been able to escape a certain connotation of exclusivity that inevitably arises from our parallel efforts at teaching. Given the history of religion, any effort to present a new Faith raises a preoccupation with the issue of "conversion". To discuss a community and its goals similarly tends to focus attention on membership. We should not be surprised if, in the minds of others, a certain sense of "us and them" intrudes.

To realize this is to understand why we must now make an heroic effort to shed all of our parochial views. It has been essential to establish the credentials of the Faith as an independent religious system. But the Cause of Baha'u'llah goes far beyond anything that humanity understands by the word "religion". If the ecclesiastical systems of our world are religion, then the Cause is not; if it is religion, then they really are not. It does a disservice to the mission of Baha'u'llah, to the World Order which He has come to establish, to focus our public message in religious categories.

As the Prophet of global civilization, Baha'u'llah addresses all of humankind. The principles in His writings, the vision of civilization He propounds, His prescriptions for the moral reformation of society and human nature are a universal legacy, without conditions, without prior commitment. The new Covenant between God and man which He proclaims is not an organization nor an ideology, but a universal reality operating within every soul and between all souls. It is readily accessible to independent investigation and discovery, "the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity". It is reality. Ultimately it will engage the minds and spirits of all people, because the nature of reality is to do so.”

A few other items that I couldn't fit on the chart:

	<i>fundamental basis; does not change nor alter</i>
Spiritual	faith knowledge certitude justice piety righteousness trustworthiness love of God benevolence purity detachment humility meekness patience constancy
Law of God <small>(A.B., SAQ)</small>	mercy to the poor defends the oppressed gives to the wretched uplifts the fallen
	<i>modified and altered in each prophetic cycle in accordance with necessities of the times</i>
Material	fasting prayer forms of worship marriage and divorce abolition of slavery legal processes transactions indemnities for violence, theft, injuries



SEA of MATERIALISM

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| materialism | political corruption |
| nationalism | unbridled capitalism |
| secularism | lawlessness |
| racialism | gross immorality |
| ecclesiasticism | |

breakdown of family life; soaring crime; dysfunctional educational systems; SED "widened" the gap; cult of individualism that admits no restraints and elevates acquisition and personal advancement to major cultural values

**** will be destroyed ****

civilized people farther away
because materialism leaches out of human motivation spiritual impulses that distinguish the rational soul

cities = centers of intense materialism
skyscrapers = towers of Babel
NY, Chicago, San Francisco = "Triple Babylons" (S.E.)

