

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE BAHAI RELIGIOUS GROUP : An Ethnographic
Study of Baha'ism

by

VELMA F. ANDRADA

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Winnipeg, Manitoba

May, 1978

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE BAHA'I RELIGIOUS GROUP : AN ETHNOGRAPHIC
STUDY OF BAHA'ISM

BY

VELMA F. ANDRADA

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1978

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this dissertation, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this dissertation and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this dissertation.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the dissertation nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

Whenever I have confronted that which
was unfamiliar to me, I constantly sought
neither to praise nor to condemn but only
to understand.

SPINOZA

to my sister ROSALINDA ...
my mother and
my father.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep appreciation to the many persons who in one way or another have made this thesis possible : to my advisor Dr.Joan B.Townsend for her invaluable critic and direction of my work, to Dr.Louise Sweet for her encouragement and suggestions, to Dr.A.M.Watts for his valuable assistance and criticism especially during the formulation of my research proposal, and to my colleague Doreen Klassen for her insights pertaining to my research and for having shared with me my initial fieldwork on this study.

Also, I would like to thank John and Sharon McLeod, Malcolm and Marilyn Sargent, and Prof. N.Elias, and the many affiliated with the group discussed in this treatise, who had been generous with their time in talking to me. I found these people warm, hospitable, and helpful. Thus, it is my hope that the readers associated with the group discussed, will feel that this meagre undertaking reflects my gratitude for the rewarding conversations and experiences my time with them has given me.

To Jhanita N. Sari for much sisterly encouragement, support, and concern, I am most grateful.

Above all, from whom I have known much love and understanding, my utmost gratitude for their unfailing support and confidence without which this work would have had no meaning and content — my sisters, my brothers, Mark, and Roshanak.

VFA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to present an ethnography of Baha'ism. The primary objective of this study was to gain insight into the nature of Baha'ism as it outspokenly professes to contain the "sure" resolutions of the problems of the modern world.

The study of Baha'i literature and participant observation in a greater Winnipeg Baha'i group were undertaken toward the achievement of the objective. To some extent, Baha'i members were asked to evaluate themselves and the teachings of Baha'u'llah with regard to their feelings and involvement/participation in the Baha'i faith.

Findings in the light of the above provided the content of this descriptive study which claims that Baha'ism is a worldwide millennarian religious movement of Iranian (i.e., Shi'ite Islam) origin. It holds its teacher Baha'u'llah as the prophet of God for this age, and its institutions as assigning a pattern for a new universal "world order" of peace, righteousness, and comradeship.

The Baha'i religious movement is an organization that is ideologically motivated by the teachings of Baha'u'llah, and committed to a purpose of collectively implementing the ideal personal and social change in view of achieving the coveted state of perfect political peace and religious unity. To Baha'is, the

embodiment of this goal is the accomplishment of the highest social order — a world federation of nations under a benevolent and unerring world government (i.e., under the divine sponsorship of Baha'u'llah). Accordingly, the embryonic stage of this world government is already evident in the Baha'i institution of the Universal House of Justice (the Baha'i international administrative body in Haifa, Israel).

Baha'is claim that Baha'u'llah is the last of the manifestations of God. Baha'i ideology prescribes that believers accept the gospel and divinity of the previous prophets (e.g., Moses, Abraham, Muhammad, Jesus, etc.) who were supposedly legitimate manifestations of God for their particular time and age. This Baha'i claim is in line with its Islamic inheritance whereby in chapter 2, verse 161 of the Qur'an, it is stated (with reference to Muhammad):

Verily We have revealed to Thee as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after Him, as We revealed to Abraham, and Ismael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and Jesus, and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron, and Solomon, and to David gave We psalms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER

I	Introduction	1
II	Baha'ism: Historical Perspective	6
III	Baha'i Principles And Institutions	24
IV	Revitalization, Millennarianism, Utopia, And The Baha'i Religious Movement	38
V	Movement Dynamics And The Baha'i Religious Group ..	47
VI	Conclusion	83
APPENDIX		91
BIBLIOGRAPHY		

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of God is the attainment of value in the temporal world. An active purpose is the adjustment of the present for the sake of adjustment of value in the future, immediately or remotely.

(Whitehead, 1954:97)

This thesis is an ethnography of the history, principles, and group experience of a revitalization movement, the Baha'i religion and the Baha'is of the greater Winnipeg area (i.e., the city of Winnipeg and the municipality of East St. Paul).

Baha'ism is the continuation of a religious movement which emerged out of a 19th century sect of Islam. This was at a time in Iran characterized by internal turmoil, socially, and culturally. This revitalization movement which confronted the theocratic leaders of Iran in the 19th century, proposed sociocultural reforms inspired by extravagant religious commitment to a newly proclaimed manifestation of God, who was to enact the absolute and final deliverance of humanity from disharmony, decadence, and misery.

The core principle of the Baha'i faith is the advance of civilization towards the oneness of humankind. Its ultimate goal is the achievement of the "most great peace", through the establishment of an ideal social order provided by the accomplishment of

a "world order" or a world federation of nations.

This study is an elaboration of the theme that the Baha'i religion is a revitalization movement with an artful blend of millenarian and utopian prospects. (See Chapter 4). Also, it is the fundamental assumption in this treatise that religion is manifest and illustrated in human behaviour and motivation, and it is the intent of this research to be a sociocultural study of religion, rather than a theological or philosophical one. In view of this, it is crucial that appropriate working definitions of culture and religion are stated at this point.

By culture here, is meant that which

consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting a distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may ... be considered as products of action, and ... as conditioning elements of further action.

(Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952:181)

As such, religion is a cultural system consisting of values, beliefs, and action elements (Spiro, 1964:102) which implies a concern or commitment defined by the affirmative cognition of a supernatural being/entity and/or power based on unempirical evidence, and which serves to reconcile a person/people's idealistic and realistic conceptions of the world and events, thus providing for a viable worldview. Indeed, religions provide

psychological comfort in times of distress; they help people to make sense out of inexplicable events; they

provide common goals, rules of conduct, and a sense of communion for the members of the social group; they provide expressive outlets for the joys and sorrows of human existence.

(Harris, 1975:547)

The history of the Baha'i religion, discussed in chapter two, reverts back to the time of Muhammad's death which gave rise to Islam's division into two main sects: Sunni and Shi'ite. As opposed to the Sunnis who believed in Muhammad as the finality of the prophets of God, the Shi'ites believed in the imminent coming of the twelfth Imam as the final "deliverer" of humankind. Thus, the latter theme provided the ideological basis for the rise of another prophet.

The institutions, principles, and teachings of the Baha'i religion are contained in chapter three. Baha'ism acknowledges its ethical inheritance from Islam, from which was derived such Baha'i characteristics as strict monotheism, emphasis on scriptural revelation and therefore on literacy, egalitarianism among believers. Thus the absence of special mediators which imply a hierarchy among the believers, the minimization of ritual/mystical extravagance corresponding to emphatic prescription for moderation and sobriety, and the emphasis on the observance of rules rather than emotional states, are attributes of Baha'ism which are described in chapter five under the heading of "Religious Behaviour".

Also described in chapter five is Christianity's tendency towards hierarchy both in this world and in the other world. This

results in ritual specialization and the implied belief in multiple spirits in the other world. Other attributes of Christianity such as emphasis on ritual and mystical practices, and an ethic of loyalty towards personality rather than strict adherence to rules are likewise discussed in this chapter.

In chapter four, the categorization of Baha'ism as a religious revitalization movement with both millennarian and utopian prospects are briefly elaborated. The Baha'i faith proposes developmental change towards the most perfect and ideal state of peace in a "reconstructed human environment". By "reconstructed environment" is implied both the physical world and even more so of the world of ideas. In it are contained new set of habits, scale of values, and social relationships.

Finally, chapter six and the appendix discuss the significance of this study as well as an overview, and the method of gathering the data used in this research.

It is commonplace that observation is always selective and requires some interest, some point of view, ... if it is to be meaningful. Not only do we not want to observe and describe everything, but it is not clear just what describing everything could possibly mean. Thus, what we choose to call "observed" or "ethnographic" facts is very much dependent upon the conceptual ... framework within which the observations are carried on.
(Manners and Kaplan, 1968:5)

This essay presupposes that millennarian ideas assume the making of a new culture, a new kind of society or moral community. In such activities, new assumptions or ideals are being ordered

into what may or may not become new orthodoxy (Burridge,1971:9).

Furthermore, from Hoffer (1951:17-20), we note three things that spell out the success and appeal of a movement : discontent among the people, access to an irresistible power, and faith in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

BAHA'ISM : HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically, what was originally the Babi religious movement in Iran continued through time as Baha'ism (see pp. 12-16). The Baha'i religion originated in Iran, homeland of the Shi'ite sect of Islam, and as was mentioned previously (see p.3), it evolved out of this sect of Islam. This was in the early 19th century when the Iranians confronted their theocratic leaders with social reforms inspired by renewed religious enthusiasm and commitment to a new prophet. Thus, in this chapter, a brief discussion of Islam is provided to serve as backdrop and source of broader understanding of the significant elements surrounding the inception of the Babi-Baha'i faith.

That the Babi-Baha'i religious movement denies being a part of Islam suggests that

...this ... was perhaps inevitable. Babism, at all stages of its doctrinal development, was of necessity opposed to Islam, for its claim to validity presupposed the supersession of Islam. The coming of a new revelation would have destroyed the worth of the existing one, which regarded itself final.

(Algar, 1969:137)

Nonetheless, it is documented in Baha'i writings that the religion does acknowledge its inheritance from Islam both ethically and historically. Gail (1953:1), a Baha'i writer with reference to Shoghi Effendi (known to Baha'is as the "guardian of the faith") wrote thus:

We can appreciate our own faith (Baha'i) better if we are familiar with Islam. The guardian refers to Islam as 'the source and background of our faith (Baha'i)'; he says, we need 'a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam', and must devote special attention to the investigation of those institutions and circumstances that are directly connected with the origin and birth of ... (the Baha'i) faith, with the station claimed by its forerunner, and with the laws revealed by its author.

Another version of the same acknowledgement written by a non-Baha'i (i.e., on the origin and source of the Babi-Baha'i religious movement) was that

Babism ... in the Qajar period ... were heresies of Shi'ite sect origin seeking to overthrow orthodoxy ... by violence, and spreading their doctrine by secret information.
(Algar, 1969:148)

Accounts of the Babi-Baha'i movement, when stripped of their emotional context warrants an examination of Islam, specifically that segment of Islamic history relating to the emergence of the Shi'ite sect.

DIVISIONS WITHIN ISLAM

Muhammad's death in A.D. 632 marked a thorny period in Islamic history. The prophet's demise gave rise to the question of legitimate successorship. In the absence of a written will, it was heavily contested. Consequently, three different opinions emerged out of the situation.

Three sects of Islam evolved from the issue. These were:

- (1) the Shi'ite or legitimists. They were the followers of Ali, adopted son and son-in-law of Muhammad.
- (2) the Sunni or caliphate. They were the followers of the caliph(s), the prominent political figures of the Qoraysh lineage (i.e., the kinship line from which Muhammad descended).
- (3) the Kharejites or the seceders. They contested that the leadership of Islam should be based on piety and puritanic adherence to the prophet's teachings and message.

Of the three developments in Islam, the Kharejites were the least known and had quite a small following. Thus, I shall consider only Shi'ite and Sunni as the significant and major branches of Islam.

There are three major points of difference between the Shi'ite and the Sunni. They are:

- (1) the notion of the intermediary in the person of the Imam, and the awaiting of a future saviour. These are important concepts in Shi'ism and which are absent in the Sunni. Accordingly, man is in a continuous need of a liaison between himself and God. After the prophet Muhammad, the Imams were and are to assume such an intermediate position. This succession of Imams culminates in the twelfth, the future saviour, the Mahdi who will redeem the world from its corrupt state. The expectation of the twelfth Imam of Shi'ite Islam is to the believers, a virtue in itself (Arberry, 1969:104).
- (2) Shi'ism denies the religious legitimacy of the institution of

the caliphate, whereas the Sunni does. Shi'ite Islam upholds monarchy to be the best form of government in the absence of the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi (Ibid:109).

(3) The Shi'ite divine exercises what is known as "Ijtihad", that is, he can issue ex cathedra decrees and judgments. His position is similar to a judge who can, within the limits of common law, administer such law according to its spirit rather than according to the letter, and thereby also, set precedents. He relies on the text of the Qur'an and the traditions ascribed to the prophet Muhammad and the Imams, which are wide open to a variety of interpretation. Indeed, the Shi'ite divine is left with a free hand. He searches the scripture and the traditions for the proper rule of law in each case as it arose. The decisions would be recorded, and when a similar case arose in the future, the divines could go back to it and be guided by it. On the contrary, the Sunni divine necessarily belongs to one of the four schools of the Islamic system of laws: the Hanafi', the Sha'fi'i, the Ma'liki, and the Hanbali. The four who founded these schools, which were named after them, set specific standards from which the Sunni divine cannot deviate in his exercise of Islamic juridical authority.

Indeed, the emergence of a new prophet in the person of Baha'u'llah as the embodiment of the saviour, was within the cultural repertoire of the Shi'ite Iranians who were in fact expecting the coming of the Mahdi. Furthermore, the exercise and administration of Islamic law according to spirit rather than according to letter, facilitates the legitimizing of a new order of assumptions regarding the established

religion.

IRAN

To follow the events of this discussion, it may be helpful to consider at this point, some aspects of Iranian culture and history.

Along with Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, Sassanian Persia was conquered by Arabs under the Islamic banner. In these regions, Islam was propagated. The Iranians were most resistant in accepting change brought by their conquerors. To elaborate,

Iran met the challenge of its geographic position through its capacity for assimilation. ...Iran was always ready... to recombine foreign ideas, influences, and artistic forms... . However, in the fields of artistic expression, of social organization, of religion, and of philosophy, elements... foreign and new... were always restudied, reworked, and reexpressed in a characteristic fashion.
(Wilber, 1955:88)

Assuming that the above quote bears any truth, indeed Islam went through such a process of restudying, reworking, and reexpression resulting in Shi'ism, a sect of Islam specific to the Iranians and which had identifiably set them apart from the rest of Islamic peoples.

Iran, in developing Shi'ism as a sect of Islam... maintained the continuity of its own thought within the forms of orthodoxy. In the Shi'a concept of the Mahdi, the twelfth direct descendant of "Ali" who was to appear at the end of the world to destroy evil and to establish the final triumph of good, the Iranians departed from orthodox belief, which regarded Muhammad as the last and greatest of the prophets, and revived the essence of their ancient myths of the hero who, believed to married a Sassanian princess, and his successors, the twelve Imams, were especially revered in Iran.
(Wilber, 1955:92)

Shi'ism became the state religion of Iran in 1500 during the reign of the Safavid dynasty, specifically under its first ruler Shah Isma'il. The Safavid empire of Iran gave way to the Afshar dynasty, founded by Nadir Shah in 1736. This reign ended with the Zand dynasty(1750-1779), followed by the Qajar , one of the Turkoman tribes that supported the rise of Shah Isma'il of the Safavids. The Qajar dynasty was founded by Agha Muhammad Khan. He was succeeded by his nephew Fath'Ali Shah(1796-1834). It was during his reign that direct contact with the Europeans began. In 1807, Iran signed a treaty of alliance with France during which time, Iran had open hostilities with Russia. This was not a working alliance however, and hostilities ended in 1813 with the Treaty of Gulistan in favour of Russia. In 1814, Iran again signed a treaty of defensive alliance, with Great Britain this time. In 1826, Iran and Russia went to war.

From this time until well into the twentieth century, Iran was to be torn between the conflicting interests of Russia and Great Britain.

(Wilber,1955:78)

By and large, the Qajar rule was characterized by internal turmoil prompted and aggravated by political pressures emanating from outside the country. Categorically, historians assess this period in Iran as going through political and moral decline. The people were losing faith in their government and leaders, and turning more and more toward the leadership of the Moslem religious men.

Fath'Ali Shah was succeeded by his grandson Muhammad Shah. Marking his reign was the emergence of "the last of the imposing

number of religious movements which have been nurtured by Iran" (Wilber, 1955:79). Its onset was traced to the person of Siyyid Ali Muhammad, born at Shiraz in 1819. As an aside, note that the title "Siyyid" or "Mirza", used interchangeably, denotes that the person who carries such title descends from the prophet Muhammad.

BABI-BAHA'I RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

The people of Iran were shattered and fatigued by defeat and wars. They were desperate in the face of Great Britain and Russia who had conflicting interests for their country's potential resources. They were greatly disillusioned by the seeming futility of the sacrifices in blood and goods, as their government officials bartered national dignity for trivial concessions to the powerful nations and grossly neglecting the economic, cultural, and social conditions of the Iranians at large. There was moral chaos resulting from social, cultural, and economic stress. The rise of the Bab at this time indeed reflected the need to establish and support values that were adaptively necessary to the new-state-of-affairs in Iran. Given the circumstances, the people were susceptible to presentiments of hopes for the dawning of new and better days.

Under such conditions, Babism emerged not as a revolutionary force primarily but rather as a revitalization movement, advocating a reinterpretation of values rather than a reorganization of society.

However, they were a revolutionary force only in the sense that historically, the Babi-Baha'is confronted those in positions of power without apparent fear of consequences and armed with awareness of the need for change.

On May 23, 1844 at Shiraz, a town in southern Iran, Siyyid Ali Muhammad, a merchant, 25 years of age and until then, an observant Moslem himself, openly declared that through him would be the fulfillment of a divine mission. That is, that God had chosen him to announce the imminent coming of a divine messenger who would impart new truths to humankind. He called himself the "Bab", Arabic for "gate", as well as "Muhdi" meaning "good guide". "Anticlerical themes formed a large part of his preaching, and ... their acceptability was an important element in the earliest conversions to the new faith" (Algar, 1969:138). Needless to say, the Bab was confronted by the Moslem orthodoxy. His declaration and teachings were a major threat and protest against established religious institutions in Iran.

The Bab was notably a persuasive speaker and an effective writer. To those who listened,

He preached universal peace, improvement of the position of women, removal of class distinction, and a life led according to the spirit rather than the letter of religion.

(Wilber, 1955:78)

Indeed, here is reflected not a revolutionary message in the sense of a fundamental and sudden change in the system of government of the country but rather a progressive "change of heart" so to

say, a reinterpretation of values suited to the circumstances of the time.

The Bab and his message stirred much public opinion, undermining nonetheless the certainty of the established order of values and leadership (i.e., the "state religion"). The number of Babi followers increased, challenging the religious and political leaders of Iran at that time. This caused much alarm which prompted the Bab's arrest, imprisonment, and exile, until 1850 when he was executed for heresy in the town of Tabriz, northwestern Iran.

The influence of the Bab's teachings would have remained limited to the country of his birth and might have suffered progressive insignificance after his death, had it not found continuity in another young Iranian, Mirza Hoseyn-Ali.

Mirza Hoseyn-Ali was born in Tehran, the capital of Iran, on November 12, 1817. He was the son of a vizir, a government minister. He was 27 years old when the message of the Bab reached him. He joined the Babis, as the followers of the Bab were called. He soon became a most outspoken exponent of Babism, overshadowing the prominence of the other disciples of the Bab. He was designated Baha'u'llah, Arabic for "splendour of God", by the Bab himself.

Thus at the age of twenty-seven, the son of the minister... put Himself on the side of a religious renaissance that was bound to excite the hatred of the ruling class of the realm.

(Balyuzi, 1941:11)

In Tehran, he experienced the same persecution as the Bab, and the other disciples. He was imprisoned, beaten, and suffered many other humiliations and degradations.

The Babis were severely persecuted. This drove one of them to make an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Shah. Although alleged by the Babi movement that this was not a group instigated act, nevertheless, the Babis were held collectively responsible. Many were tortured and persecuted as a result of the incident, some were massacred by crowds incited by the "mullahs" while others were thrown into jail, Mirza Hoseyn-Ali among them.

Soon after, Mirza Hoseyn-Ali assumed the leadership of the Babi movement. Thereafter, he came to be called Baha'u'llah. He spent a year in Baghdad (capital of Iraq) as an exile. Subsequently, he left his family and followers, withdrawing voluntarily into the northern mountains of Iran where he lived for two years, "until" according to Baha'u'llah, "the hour when, from mystic source, the summons came bidding us to return whence we came"(Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, 1943:159) . Baha'u'llah returned to Baghdad in March 19, 1856 after a two year absence.

Here, we note a religious movement founded by a person of some high and respectable structural status, "structure" implying

a more or less distinctive arrangement of specialized mutually dependent institutions and institutionalized organization of positions and/or of actors which they imply.
(Turner, 1969:166)

Ritually, he stripped himself of this advantage as he withdrew

voluntarily into the mountains to momentarily live under the adverse conditions of an ascetic life. Baha'u'llah came from the upper half of the social pyramid. He withdrew into the northern mountains as symbolic of "stripping of worldly authority...and the putting on of meekness, humility, and responsible care for members of the religion, even for all men"(Turner,1969:195). This purificatory stage preceeded his public declaration of his godly position and divine mission (i.e., that of the finality of God's manifestations). Such withdrawal illustrates the humbling of a candidate in a rite of status elevation. He undergoes an experience in humility and passivity as a cleansing phase. With it, it is intended for the candidate to gain a new perspective from which to view structure as well as indeed, to purify himself of the sins of society (Turner, 1969:175-203).

Subsequently, the movement came to be known as Baha'i under Baha'u'llah. His reputation as a religious reformer and saint spread far and wide.

Hitherto, the believers in the Bab had been recruited from the Shi'ih sect of Islam. Now under the aegis of Baha'u'llah, others came to enlist. He recreated the withered lives of the Babis. They were told not to resist by violence any encroachments made on their liberties. In this manner He stemmed the tide of lawlessness that at one time had seriously menaced the integrity of the Babi community. And so it came that Baha'u'llah's guidance rallied the Babis once again to a noble life.
(Balyuzi,1941:26)

From Constantinopole, Baha'u'llah was summoned to answer charges of sedition, in 1863. It was at this time he announced

to his followers that it was him, whose coming, the Bab had announced. In Constantinople, branded a heretic, the Sultan ordered that he be banished to Adrianople. There, Baha'u'llah resumed his teachings and writings. Also, the number of his followers now known as Baha'is grew steadily. His leadership of the movement was not devoid of intrigues however. Time and again, he was contested by members of his own family and entourage.

As decreed by Sultan Abdul-Azziz of Turkey, and in collaboration with Baha'u'llah's half brother and the Shi'ite mullahs, Baha'u'llah with his immediate family and followers were banished to the penal colony at Akka. He left for Akka, Syria (now Israel) on August 21, 1868. Akka, once a crusader fortress-city which had successfully defied the siege of Napoleon, had been debased to the level of a penal colony where the worst criminals of the Ottoman empire were sent.

Altogether, Baha'u'llah was banished and imprisoned for 24 years in 6 different residences within the confines of the Akka-Haifa area. During these times, he devoted himself to writing and teaching. His prison terms restricted his activities outside his prison residence but not from within its confines. Thus, his work for the movement continued.

BAHA'ISM SPREAD FARTHER

Baha'u'llah died on May 29, 1892. He designated his eldest son Abbas Effendi (as he was known to the general public before his father's death) as his successor and leader of the Baha'i religion. He thereby assumed the title Abdu'l-Baha (meaning "servant of Baha") which was given to him by his father.

Baha'u'llah's family, now under the headship of Abdu'l-Baha, was held in prison until 1908 when the "Young Turk" revolution forced the re-instatement of the constitution, and the release of all religious and political prisoners. The Baha'is moved to Haifa where Abdu'l-Baha carried on the responsibilities left him by Baha'u'llah.

The son faithfully followed the basic teachings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah and through his own prolific writings and later his travels to Europe and the U.S. spread the Baha'i religion around the world.

(Ardon, November 26, 1971:18)

Abdu'l-Baha was also known to the Baha'is as the "center of the covenant", and sole authority and interpreter of Baha'u'llah's covenant. He died in 1912 leaving a will designating his eldest grandson Shoghi Effendi (also known as Shoghi Rabbani), as his successor and "guardian of the faith". Other provisions in Abdu'l-Baha's will, included among other things, the establishment of an international body as well as local and national assemblies for the administration of the affairs of the Baha'i communities, both locally and internationally. These institutions were to be under the guardianship of Shoghi Effendi.

In accordance with his grandfather's will, the guardian set out to establish the International House of Justice to handle the administrative control of the religion. As prerequisite to the latter, he gave explicit instruction for the formation of local and national assemblies in each community for every country and locale where there were Baha'is.

During his guardianship of the faith, Shoghi Effendi focused his efforts upon strengthening and further propagating the Baha'i religion in the western world and Europe, as initiated by Abdu'l-Baha during his nine month proselytizing tour of the U.S. and Canada in 1912. The highlight of Shoghi Effendi's efforts was his marriage to Mary Maxwell, whose mother befriended Abdu'l-Baha during his trip to Europe and North America. Both mother and daughter were western pioneer devotees of the faith who had gone on several pilgrimages to Haifa, Israel during the latter years of Abdu'l-Baha's life and in the early years of Shoghi Effendi's guardianship. Mary Maxwell was designated Ruhiiyyih Rabbani by Shoghi Effendi, and in her account of the marriage, she wrote:

The most significant point, however, associated with the Guardian's marriage is the stress he laid on the fact that it had drawn the Occident and the Orient closer to each other. It had not only done this but other ties had also been reinforced and established. In reply to an inquiry from the American Assembly: "Request advice policy concerning announcement marriage", Shoghi Effendi stated: "Approve public announcement. Emphasize significance institution Guardianship union East West and linking the destinies Persia America. Allude honor conferred British people," - a direct allusion to my Scots-Canadian father.

(Rabbani, 1969:153)

Mary Maxwell was the daughter of William Sutherland Maxwell and May Bolles. He was a prominent architect from Montreal, Canada. Maxwell's first exposure to the Baha'i faith came when he married May Bolles in 1902. She was a firm believer and was teaching for the faith in France at the time of her engagement. With the permission of Abdu'l-Baha for the marriage, she left for Montreal and upon arriving and settling, introduced the religion in Canada, with her home as its first centre.

W.S.Maxwell was skeptical about the truth of the Baha'i teachings until 1909 when he had the opportunity for a discussion with Abdu'l-Baha. After his wife's death enroute to South America for pioneer (i.e., Baha'i missionary) work, he was invited by Shoghi Effendi to come and live in Haifa. He was employed by the faith as an architect and designed the Bab's shrine in Haifa, Israel.

Shoghi Effendi was well versed in English as he was schooled in the American College in Beirut and later in Oxford, London, England. As such, during his guardianship, he undertook to translate the works and teachings of Abdu'l-Baha.

Shoghi Effendi died in 1958 survived by his wife Ruhyyih Rabbani (nee Mary Maxwell), who is involved in active pioneer work for the propagation of the Baha'i religion in Africa and South America.

Today, the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel is vested

with the international administrative control of the Baha'i religion. This institution is composed of nine elected men (see p.46).

SUMMARY

The Babi-Baha'i religion emerged as a revitalization movement at the time of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1906) in Iran, described as an era characterized by disorganization, political, and moral decline. It was a time when there was extreme economic, social, and cultural disorder ailing the country relative to such circumstances as

- (1) the people weary of wars and defeat, and economically shattered by concessions subsequent to such conquests,
- (2) the undermining by the acculturation process following Iran's initial direct contact with Europeans during that time,
- (3) the political pressures with negative economic consequences emanating from the conflicting interests between Great Britain and Russia on Iran,
- (4) the lack of dynamic, credible, and determined religious and political leadership to serve as an integrative point at a chaotic moment of Iran's history.

Shi'ite Islam, once "needed to establish and support values deemed necessary to the new order" , were by then "directed toward the maintenance of old values... out of touch with real needs (Wallace,1966:36)"at a historical moment of accelerated change and sociocultural uncertainty.

Indeed, we note a correlation between the accelerated economic, social, and cultural change, and the emergence of a revitalization movement that advocated new sociocultural values and economic order accomodating such changes. This proposes a commitment to newly prescribed values as precondition to the prospects of a more promising life in the future. In a revitalization movement, the stripping of what is believed to be degenerate old ways (i.e., the cleansing phase) and the assumption of new ways, simplistically define the path towards the achievement of a reformed and perfected world. The leader of the movement symbolically undergoes the same cleansing. Baha'u'llah underwent a rite of status elevation (i.e., the position of a saviour-prophet) with its accompanying status reversal, as he withdrew into the mountain, thus humbling himself in order to purify him of the engendered sins of society. This act sanctified his public role as the religious leader and teacher of a people wanting a way out of an unsatisfactory condition. With his solitary withdrawal, Baha'u'llah underwent an experience of enlightenment. He returned to his followers fully committed to a purpose, advocating moral and ethical preconditions (i.e., behavioural) toward the achievement of the "good life".

Baha'ism under Baha'u'llah was well received by many of his people. The appeal of this religious movement can be accounted for on the following bases:

- (1) the affinity between the cultural repertoire (i.e., religious) of the Iranians and the emergence of a prophet superseding Muhammad. The Shi'ites await the coming of the twelfth Imam as a saviour who

will come in the future and save humankind from its corrupt state,
(2) as a result of the accelerated changes in Iran, there was a dire need for progressive or developmental social reform suited to the circumstances of the time. The Baha'i movement's message indeed proposed developmental change,

(3) the Baha'i revitalization movement provided for a religious experience that appealed as an integrative power for many distraught people, and

(4) the Baha'i teachings essentially advocated the need for the establishment and support of new social values and economic order adaptive to the new circumstances, with the reassurances of success by a supernatural power.

CHAPTER THREE

BAHA'I PRINCIPLES AND INSTITUTIONS

Since its evolution as a revitalization movement in Iran, converting many who were greatly discontented and most receptive to its promise, the Baha'i religion has persisted as a revitalizing agent to this day. It professes to revive humanity from its growing meaninglessness and chaotic tendencies. Accordingly, science and technology has provided the biggest boost to the progress of humanity. However, it has also accelerated the rate of change, resulting in moral chaos, economic depression, and sociocultural instability in many parts of the world.

Indeed, the circumstances of Baha'i's application may have changed since its inception. Nonetheless, today's problems seem to Baha'ism a redefinition and a re-echoing of the modernizing troubles of Iran in the early 19th century - economic (e.g., bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, resolution of economic difficulties through emphasis on renewable resources), sociocultural (e.g., equality of men and women, world peace and the achievement of a harmonious social order), religious (e.g., the need for an integrating ideology for all the people). Baha'ism purports to come to the rescue today as it did to many in Iran before, echoing its call for peace and unity through social reforms inspired by allegiance to one final prophet, Baha'u'llah.

The Baha'i religion through its accomodating principles directs itself to the immediate troubles of contemporary man. The major principle of the faith is the oneness and wholeness of the human race. Like Christianity, Islam, and many other religions, the primary intent of Baha'ism is to unite the entire world in one religion and one social order.

The dominating principles of the Baha'i religion as expounded by Abdu'l-Baha during his proselytizing-teaching trip to the U.S. and Canada in 1912 were as follows:

(1) Independent investigation of truth - that man should not follow blindly the ways of his fathers and forefathers; rather, he should endeavour to see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and think for himself. In Abdu'l-Baha's words (1972:60),

... we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again.

(2) Essential harmony of science and religion - scientific knowledge and religious beliefs must be in agreement to the analysis of the mind or reason.

The unity of God is logical... . All religious laws conform to reason, and are suited to the people for whom they are framed, and for the age in which they are to be obeyed... .

(Ibid:62)

(3) Recognition of the common divine foundation of all religions - among nations, certain imitations of ancestral forms of worship have been incorporated into the essential teachings of the manifestation of God, creating a divergence of divine religions which results in

prejudice. However, stripped of these imitations, all religions have a fundamental foundation that is a unity, all striving for the attainment of perfection in the human being.

(4) Universal compulsory education - ignorance and lack of education is a barrier to the mutual understanding between peoples; therefore, every father should provide for the instruction and teaching of his children, and if unable, the representative(s) of the people must provide the means for their education. Also, Baha'i teachings laid emphasis on the education of girls, for they as mothers of the future have very significant influences on their children both academically and spiritually.

(5) Spiritual solution of economic problems - humanity will adapt itself to a new social order resulting from the manifestations of spiritual forces such that God will become manifest throughout all human affairs and human equality will be universally established. As Abdu'l-Baha explained, this does not imply a uniformity of economic status but rather,

The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic conditions as well as the poor, for owing to certain provision and restriction they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress t of want and misery.

(1972:67)

By it, sharing of wealth is considered a virtue of utmost importance.

As one practical way of resolving economic difficulties, Baha'ism prescribes the practice of "graduated taxation"(Faizi,1972:83) whereby if a person through no deliberate indolence on his or his family's part

earns just enough for his (and his family's) comfortable sustenance, he should not be taxed. However, if a person earns more than he needs to live comfortably, she/he should pay a certain percentage of the surplus to the public fund. Such percentage increases with increase in surplus. Also, if a person is unable to support himself due to some unavoidable circumstances, the public fund should provide for him and his family.

(6) A universal auxiliary language - hereby is prescribed the adoption of a universal language agreed upon by the people of the world. As such, every individual will require training in two languages, his native tongue and the universal language. The object of this principle is to facilitate the intercommunication between peoples of the world.

(7) Universal peace based upon a world federation of nations or world government - there is an urgency imposed upon all nations and government to organize an international tribunal composed of select delegates and representatives from all nations/governments to which all disputes and differences shall be referred to. The decision of that tribunal shall be final. Indeed, the imminent and forthcoming accomplishment of a new world order under a world government is proclaimed.

... warfare and strife will be uprooted, disagreements and dissension pass away and Universal Peace unite the nations and peoples of the world. All mankind will dwell together as one family, blend as the waves of one sea, shine as stars of one firmament and appear as fruits of the same tree.

(Baha'i Teachings For A World
Faith, 1972:9)

Baha'is believe that all people will one day come to accept the

tenets of their Administrative Order as the pattern of the future world government. However, until such time, Baha'ism admonishes its members to be loyal and obedient to the laws and rulers of the land(s) in which they live provided such laws do not conflict with Baha'i spiritual standards.

(8) Elimination of prejudice - national, racial, and religious prejudices are forbidden whereby humankind is proclaimed to be one family.

(9) Equality of men and women - there must be an equality of rights between men and women in all respects. Women shall receive an equal privilege of education to enable them side by side with men, to progress in all degrees of occupation and accomplishment. It is in the development of both that the advance and perfection of the human world can be achieved.

(10) Recognition of the essential unity of humankind - according to the teachings of Baha'u'llah and as quoted from Abdu'l-Baha,

... in all religious teachings of the past, the human world has been represented as divided into two parts, one known as the people of the Book of God or the pure tree and the other the people of infidelity and error or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel; one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy and the other the object of wrath of their creator... Baha'u'llah removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world and humanity.
(1972:60)

The Baha'i religion makes explicit claim in honouring and acknowledging the essential content of all other religions and their specific prophets. However, it is not syncretic in the sense that it is sustained by its own holy scripture and laws based pri-

marily on the life and insights of Baha'u'llah. In the religion, there is belief in one God, however differently He may be called by different peoples at different times and places.

God has revealed His Word in each period of history through a chosen individual Whom Baha'is call the "manifestation of God". He restates in every age God's purpose and will. His teachings are revelation from God. Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muhammad were manifestations of God. Each gave men divine teachings to live by.

(Basic Facts of the Baha'i Faith, 1972:3)

Over and above this, the Baha'is believe that religion progressively evolves in time, and that Baha'u'llah is God's final spokesman for this day and age, "none other than the promised return of Christ" (Questions and Answers About the Baha'i Faith, 1959:3) . Further,

This outstanding pledge, originally given thousands of years ago, has never been taken up by any of the Great Prophets until the nineteenth century, when Baha'u'llah... announced to the rulers and religious leaders of the world that He was this Redeemer and Bearer of God's message to modern man. He proclaimed that He spoke with the voice of God Himself, that He was the Lord of Hosts, Christ come in the glory of the Father, and that this was indeed the Last Day, the Day of Judgment.

(Townshend, 1957:9)

The Baha'i community has no priesthood nor any form of institutionalized clergy. According to Baha'i teachings, the days of professional priesthood is past and that the requirements of this age is for every individual to receive a moral and academic education such that he is directly held responsible for his own scriptural well-being. In the absence of institutionalized clergy, such duties as the performance of Baha'i marriage ceremonies and burial rites are discharged under the management of Spiritual Assemblies (see p.48).

At religious ceremonies, there are no rituals, collections, nor sermons. Rather, dialogue or discussion is encouraged within the group in attendance. Financial contributions are accordingly the "privilege" of members only, and are voluntary as well as confidential, sent/given directly to the treasury of the religious community.

The Baha'is have a calendar of their own based on the solar year. It consists of 19 months of 19 days each, with four (five during leap years) "intercalary" days preceeding the last Baha'i month. The calendar begins on March 21, and the Baha'i day begins and ends at sunset. The months and days are named after the attributes of God such as "splendour", "mercy", "perfection", and many others (Baha'i Answers, 1957:20-21). (See Table 1).

The center of the spiritual life of the group is the "19-day feast" held on the first day of each of the 19 Baha'i months. The celebration is typical of a Baha'i religious ceremony. It is informal. The feast is conveniently divided into three parts: first, readings of passages from the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and Abdu'l-Baha, second, a general business meeting (exclusive to Baha'i members only), third, feasting and/or socializing. In addition to the 19-day feast, the communities hold various cultural and religious meetings and celebrations. (See Table 2). Among these are fireside gatherings, summer schools, national and international conventions, and many others.

During Baha'i holy days, members are under obligation to refrain

BAHA'I CALENDAR (Esslemont, 1970:185)

	Arabic Name	Translation	First Days
1st	Baha'	Splendour	March 21
2nd	Jala'l	Glory	April 9
3rd	Jamal	Beauty	April 28
4th	'Azamat	Grandeur	May 17
5th	Nur	Light	June 5
6th	Rahmat	Mercy	June 24
7th	Kalimat	Words	July 13
8th	Kamal	Perfection	August 1
9th	Asma'	Names	August 20
10th	'Izzat	Might	Sept. 8
11th	Mashiyyat	Will	Sept. 27
12th	'llm	Knowledge	Oct. 16
13th	Qudrat	Power	Nov. 4
14th	Qawl	Speech	Nov. 23
15th	Masa'il	Questions	Dec. 12
16th	Sharaf	Honour	Dec. 31
17th	Sultan	Sovereignty	Jan. 19
18th	Mulk	Dominion	Feb. 7

Intercalary Days Feb. 26 to March 1, inclusive.

19th	'Ala'	Loftiness	March 2
------	-------	-----------	---------

(TABLE 1)

BAHA'I FEASTS/ANNIVERSARIES (Esslemont, 1970:187)

Date	Significance
March 21	Feast of "Naw-Ruz" (Baha'i New Year which is also Persian New Year)
April 21 - May 2	Feast of Ridvan (Declaration of Baha'u'llah's mission)
May 23	Declaration of the Bab and also the birthday of Abdu'l-Baha.
May 29	Ascension of Baha'u'llah
July 9	Martyrdom of the Bab
October 20	Birthday of the Bab
November 12	Birthday of Baha'u'llah
November 26	Day of the Covenant
November 28	Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha
March 2 (and 19 days thereafter)	Period of the Fast
February 26 - March 1	Intercalary days (specially devoted to hospitality to friends, the giving of presents, ministering of the poor and the sick, etc.)

(TABLE 2)

from work and from attending school (Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1969:70).

The international propagation and teaching of the faith is vested in the "Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God". The "Hands" are assisted in their executive capacity by Auxiliary Boards. Baha'i missionary workers and teachers are called "pioneers" and are under the "Hands of the Cause" (Ibid:40-43). The members of the "Hands of the Cause of God" are appointed (trusted followers). They are not elected to the administrative institutions (see pp.48-49). They work in close collaboration with the Universal House of Justice and obey its decisions.

The financial affairs of the Baha'i religion is administered by the "Institution of Funds". Because of the unavailability of sufficient written material concerning "funds", I shall refer to data on the subject obtained at the Baha'i summer school at Riding Mountain National Park, on August, 1976. According to the lecturer who discussed "funds", there are 16 governing principles of the Baha'i "Institution of Funds". These are:

- (1) Only Baha'i can contribute.
- (2) Non-Baha'i contributions will be used for charitable purposes other than Baha'i projects.
- (3) It is a sacred obligation to contribute.
- (4) It is voluntary, that is, no force, psychological pressure or solicitation. (This has contradictory implications relative to number 3.

The lecturer, when made aware of the discrepancy, made vague references to "faith in the wisdom of God" to resolve contradictions.)

(5) Spiritual Assemblies are to place the need of the "Fund" before friends. This means that the financial needs of the Faith should be placed above the imposing similar needs of friends.

(6) The Fund has five concerns: local, national, continental, international, and special.

(7) There should be regularity in giving. (Again, note the contradiction with number 4.)

(8) The Fund is a divine institution, thus dignity is essential.

(9) Sacrifice is needed to make a quality contribution.

(10) The Fund involves universal participation on the part of the members. Contributions give the institution power and vitality.

(11) The individual has the right to set aside his contribution for some specific purpose which he has the responsibility to designate.

(12) Debts take precedence over contributions to the Fund.

(13) Contributions are confidential.

(14) The Faith or Baha'ism is the community's gift to others, thus, members are responsible for its success.

(15) Support of the work of the Faith takes precedence over the welfare of the individual and other charitable works. (This is a reiteration of number 5.)

(16) No guilt - be free to contribute as one can. (Here again, we see a contradicting principle to number 3 .)

By and large, the discrepancies within the principles listed

were resolved by most members as a bit of trivia, with the implication that "they are significant only for those who seek faults within the faith." In all fairness, perhaps they are right for I do lack the appreciation of a member. Most certainly,

Religious ideas ... are frequently deeply rooted emotionally, and religious institutions commonly provide means for their emotional expression. In defining the nature of reality, religion can provide a kind of cultural gyroscope that may be a stabilizing influence in itself but that in any event can be used to tell which way is up no matter what the current pitch and roll may be.
(Mandelbaum, 1966:1187)

As to the question of ethical principles guiding the Baha'is in their daily lives, the essence of the prescription for living can be summed as such:

Religion has always been the only power capable of inspiring moral living. The Baha'i faith likewise embodied standards of individual conduct and practices which manifest the human virtues and perfections implicit in its teachings. They include such principles as love of God, love of humanity, justice, trustworthiness, honesty, humility, and courtesy. Habits that are unclean, degrading, and detrimental to a pure and healthy life are forbidden, as are also gossip, backbiting, and prejudice. All are enjoined to engage in a useful trade, art, or profession. Daily work performed in the spirit of service is regarded as an act of worship. Baha'i ethical principles extend to areas of loyalty and cooperation from nation, race, and sect of all mankind.

(Baha'i Answers, 1957:11)

SUMMARY

The teachings of Baha'u'llah claim to revitalize the essential truths revealed by each former prophet and contained therein in the

writings of the different religions. In addition, the Baha'i further claims to reveal "new truths" embodied in the pervading principles of the faith as described in pages 25-28 .

The dominating principles of the Baha'i religion are thus as follows:

- (1) The oneness of humankind.
- (2) Independent investigation of truth (i.e., religious truth).
- (3) The common foundation of all religions.
- (4) The fundamental harmony of science and religion.
- (5) The equality of men and women.
- (6) The elimination of prejudice of all kinds.
- (7) The use of a universal auxiliary language.
- (8) Universal compulsory education for all.
- (9) Spiritual solution of economic problems.
- (10) Universal peace maintained and upheld by a world government, or world federation of nations.

Further, Baha'ism has no clergy, and believes in the progressive evolution of religion. With recognition of all the major prophets in the past (i.e., Moses, Jesus, Noah, Muhammad, etc.), it is further alleged by Baha'is that Baha'u'llah is the finality of the divine manifestations of God.

The propagation of the faith is vested administratively on the "Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God", aided by an "Auxiliary Board". The "Institution of Funds" is the official treasury body

of the faith. Its guidelines are discussed in pages 33-34.

CHAPTER FOUR
REVITALIZATION, MILLENNARIANISM, UTOPIA, AND
THE BAHAI RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

In chapter three, the Baha'i principles and institutions were discussed. It was stated that Baha'ism is not a true revolutionary movement. Also, although its goals and envisioned changes are of this world and to be accomplished through human initiative and effort, such changes nonetheless are as results of divine intervention and with explicit reassurances of imminence by a supernatural power. Indeed, Baha'ism is a conscious and coordinated religious developmental attempt by the members of a society, to bring about a more satisfying and appeasing culture (Wallace, 1966:30). It is a revitalization movement reacting to the circumstances of the time, and which embraces both millennarian and utopian prospects. In this chapter, I shall attempt to amplify the implications in such a statement.

MILLENNIUM AND UTOPIA

The millennial element in Baha'ism is explicit in the following:

The divinely propelled process, described in such awe-inspiring words by our beloved Guardian, which began six thousand years ago at the dawn of the Adamic cycle and which is destined to culminate in "the stage at which the light of God's triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet," is now entering its tenth and last part.

(Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages
From the Universal House of Justice,
1969:22)

With this, its utopian anticipation is such that

Universal Peace is assured by Baha'u'llah as a fundamental accomplishment of the religion of God; that peace shall prevail among nations, governments, and peoples, among religions, races, and all conditions of mankind.

... war is destruction, while Universal Peace is construction; war is death while peace is life; war is rapacity and blood thirstiness while peace is beneficence and humaneness ; war is appurtenance of the world of nature while peace is of the foundation of the religion of God; war is darkness upon darkness while peace is heavenly light; war is destroyer of the edifice of mankind while peace is everlasting life of the world of humanity; war is like devouring wolf while peace is like angels of heaven; war is struggle for existence while peace is mutual aid and co-operation among the peoples of the world and the cause of the good-pleasure of the True One in the heavenly realm.

... until the minds of men become united, no important matter can be accomplished. At present, Universal Peace is a matter of great importance, but unity of conscience is essential, so that the foundation of this matter may become secure, its establishment firm and its edifice strong.

(Abdu'l-Baha, 1972:65)

In Baha'i ideology, there is an indiscriminate overlap of both the ideas of the millennium and utopia, giving to Baha'ism a dual character. It has both explicit political and religious dispositions. The political aspect leans heavily if not wholly on the utopian inspiration, and central to it is the millennarian idea of the supernatural intervention and design in the achievement of total perfection.

Baha'ism as a millennarian movement subscribes to the definition of "millennarism" as "simply a convenient label for a particular type of salvationism" (Cohn, 1970:31). The nature of this deliverance from all worldly imperfections is such that it is collective, to

be realized on this earth, imminent, and total. Thus, the new dispensation will be no mere improvement on the present but the perfection of it, and accomplished through consciously regarded supernatural agencies (Ibid:32). The fulfillment of the promised return of Christ (in the Christian context) or the twelfth Imam (in the Shi'ite Islam context) in the person of Baha'u'llah, and through him, the ultimate deliverance from Chaotic tendencies, want, misery, and inequality, is definitive of the millennial element in the Baha'i. Accentuating this promise is a vision of a time and space in the future that is humanely harmonious, content, and blissful. It is, to borrow Mumford's phrase, "utopia of reconstruction" (1962:11-26). This implies a vision of a reconstructed environment which is better or more suitably adapted to the nature and aims of the people who dwell in it than the actual one, and not only better adapted to their apparent actual nature for one, but also better suited to their possible progress or development. Also, by reconstructed environment is meant not only of the physical world but also of the world of ideas which includes a new set of habits, a fresh scale of values, a different set of relationships and institutions. In a most explicit way, the utopian vision of Baha'ism has the issue of social order as its highest concern.

In simplistic terms, utopia is a vision of an ideal reconstruction (i.e., worldly and political) without necessarily being dependent upon a supernatural agent, whereas millennial aspiration implies a view of perfection with the role of divine intervention and design as being crucial to its achievement. In view of this,

revitalization movements such as the Baha'i would appropriately be categorized as a millennarian movement with carefully and significantly blended and indispensable aspects of utopia in it. Such is to say that within a religious framework, Baha'ism offers itself as a social moral philosophy primarily directed towards a group effort of achieving peace and a blissful life in this world. This is to be achieved through the performance of prescribed moral behaviour, inspired by social responsibility. In Abdu'l-Baha's words,

Verily, God loveth those who are working in His path in groups, for they are a solid foundation. Consider ye that he says "in groups", united and bound together, supporting one another. "To work", mentioned in this holy verse...mean...to perform with sincere intentions, good designs, useful advices, divine moralities, beautiful actions, spiritual qualities,
What a great blessing it is when the torrents, streams, currents, tides, and drops are all gathered in one place! They will form a great ocean and the real harmony shall overcome and reign in such a manner that all the rules, laws, distinctions, and differences of the imaginations ... shall disappear and vanish like little drops and shall be submerged in the ocean of spiritual unity. ...in this case and condition, the blessings of the great ocean will overflow and canals shall become as spacious as an endless ocean and each drop shall become as a boundless sea!

(Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha,
1943:401-402)

In spite of the immediacy of achieving perfection in this world, Baha'i ideology also provides for the continuing life of the soul after bodily death. Accordingly,

To consider that after the death of the body, the spirit perishes, is like imagining that a bird in a cage will be destroyed if the cage is broken. ...if the cage is broken, the bird will continue and exist: its feelings will be even more powerful, its perceptions greater, and its happiness increased.

(Ibid:327)

"Life after death" is affirmed as a higher level or state of awareness and spirituality. It is not an absolute level . Rather, it is one that is in serious pursuit (of a different state) of perfection.

As the spirit of man after putting off this material form has an everlasting life, certainly any existing being is ... making progress ; That is why in the prayers of Baha'u'llah forgiveness and remission of sins are asked for those who have died. Moreover, as people in this world are in need of God, they will also need Him in the other world. The creatures are always in need, and God is absolutely independent, whether in this world or in the world to come.

(Ibid:329)

The fundamental difference between this world and the "other world" is expressed in Baha'ism as

The wealth of the other world is nearness to God. Consequently... those who are near the Divine Court are allowed to intercede,... . But intercession in the other world is not like intercession in this world: it is another thing, another reality, which cannot be expressed in words.

(Ibid:329)

Also,

The rewards of the other world are the perfections and the peace obtained in the spiritual worlds after leaving this world; whilst the rewards of this life are the real luminous perfections which are realized in this world, and which are the cause of eternal life, ... they are the very progress of existence. ... The rewards of the other world are peace, the spiritual graces, the various spiritual gifts in the kingdom of God, the gaining of the desires of the heart and the soul, and the meeting of God in the world of eternity. In the same way the punishment of the other world, that is to say, the torments of the other world, consists of being deprived of the special divine blessings and the absolute bounties, and falling into the lowest degrees of existence. He who is deprived of these divine favors, although he continues after death, is concerned as dead by the people of truth.

(Ibid:325)

Indeed, Baha'i ideology affirms the existence of the individual soul and life after death. However, emphasis on the terrestrial



achievement of perfection or most ideal state-of-affairs through collective action is rationalized dogmatically in Baha'ism with the prevailing idea that the "cause of eternal life" is the perfection of this life. Furthermore, to Baha'is Baha'ism is a divine affirmation that we are living in the "age of Blessed Perfection and this is the time of the Greatest Name" (Ibid:351). Accordingly, we have supposedly reached "this period of time that is the Promised Age, the assembling of the human race to the Resurrection Day" (Ibid:352), when all the aspirations of humanity are apparently to be realized in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Correspondingly, Baha'i teachings expound that no single investigation and study of the human environment has sufficiently elucidated the root of the difficulties that face the world today, and that the social structure the world over and the systems of values on which they were born out of and fed cannot now meet the new needs of humankind (The Environment And Human Values, A Baha'i View, 1974:1-6). In a way, this is a reiteration that

...technology is transformed into an end in itself, it is enmeshed in the fallacy of the intellectualism and becomes a self-perpetuating system far removed from human needs ...

(Means, 1969:88)

whereby

Man has developed a new relationship to both his natural environment and his fellow beings. The radical transformation of his physical environment by science and technology during the last century has given him the power to control and modify natural forces. It has eliminated physical barriers to world unity, but it has created at the same time complex and divisive social relationships.

(The Environment And Human Values,
A Baha'i View, 1974:2)

It is alleged by Baha'is that as it appears from the date of Baha'u'llah's writings, this predicament of man was foreseen by him over one hundred years ago. Through his writings, which Baha'is believe to have divine authority and power, he had given humankind a plan for achieving human understanding and world order necessary to reform and unify human society, the ultimate achievement of which is explicitly assured.

Here are some of the Baha'i principles directly concerned with the achievement of the ultimate ideal state-of-affairs in man:

1. A continuously advancing civilization for all peoples with a transformation to the quality of life that comes from an emphasis on spiritual values.
2. Harmony of science and religion, that is congruence of the material and spiritual values which deal with the complementary aspects of human needs.
3. Oneness of mankind, involving the recognition that all men are brothers and thereby eliminating prejudice of race, religion, class, sex, and nation.
4. Unity in diversity which accepts the situational differences among men and societies, and uniting individuality with social responsibility.
5. A world order which provides for a world government acclaimed by and representing all nations and peoples, capable of maintaining world peace and leadership for a world society.
6. A world economy with emphasis on renewable resources.
7. Social justice providing for the establishment of equal rights

and privileges (i.e., the commitment of every individual to the welfare of his fellowman).

8. Universal education for world understanding and moderation in all things (Ibid:2-3).

Baha'is say that these principles and many others like them in the writings of Baha'u'llah, are simple and world-embracing, yet readily adaptable to local needs and circumstances. Accordingly,

God has sent a spokesman with a solution to the great problems that plague the world at mid century. His message frees man from fear and prejudice. By obeying these teachings, we will fashion a new and happy earth freed from war, poverty and needless disease. We are told how to do this but the job will not be done for us. Men are God's instruments for the building of a world civilization. Americans have a special part to play. One of the most startling Baha'i predictions is that America will lead all nations spiritually.

(Faith For Freedom, 1947:3)

On the matter of imminence and supernatural reassurance of the promises of the Baha'i Faith, I shall fittingly quote Abdul-Baha on the topic of "the most great peace" and the "seven candles" toward achievement(Ibid:23):

The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmering of which can now be discerned. The second... is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third... is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth ... 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 splendour. The fifth... is the unity of nations - a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth... is unity in races... . The seventh... is unity of language, ie, the choice of a universal tongue in which all people will be instructed and converse. 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.

SUMMARY

Baha'ism is a religious revitalization movement which is not revolutionary but which ideologically utilizes an artful blend of millennarian and utopian prospects. It preaches the primacy of human collective action and terrestrial achievement in the divine enactment of the ultimate deliverance of humankind from all worldly imperfections and sufferings. Hence, its principles and goals are worldly, although extremely ideal, and deriving authority and certainty from the promise of imminence by a supernatural/divine agent, in this case Baha'u'llah.

In a most expressive manner, Baha'i teachings impress "social order" as the highest concern. Consequently, were it not for the element of divine intervention and religiofication (see Hoffer, 1951, p.15) of otherwise Baha'i secular and practical aims, it would simply be a social movement with a blueprint for social order.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOVEMENT DYNAMICS AND A BAHAI RELIGIOUS GROUP

In the previous chapters, I had made references to Baha'ism as a religious revitalization movement. Indeed, it must be reiterated that the Baha'i faith is a true movement, that is, that the Baha'is are a collectivity

who are organized for, ideologically motivated by, and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change, who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others, and whose influence is spreading in opposition to the established order within which it originated.

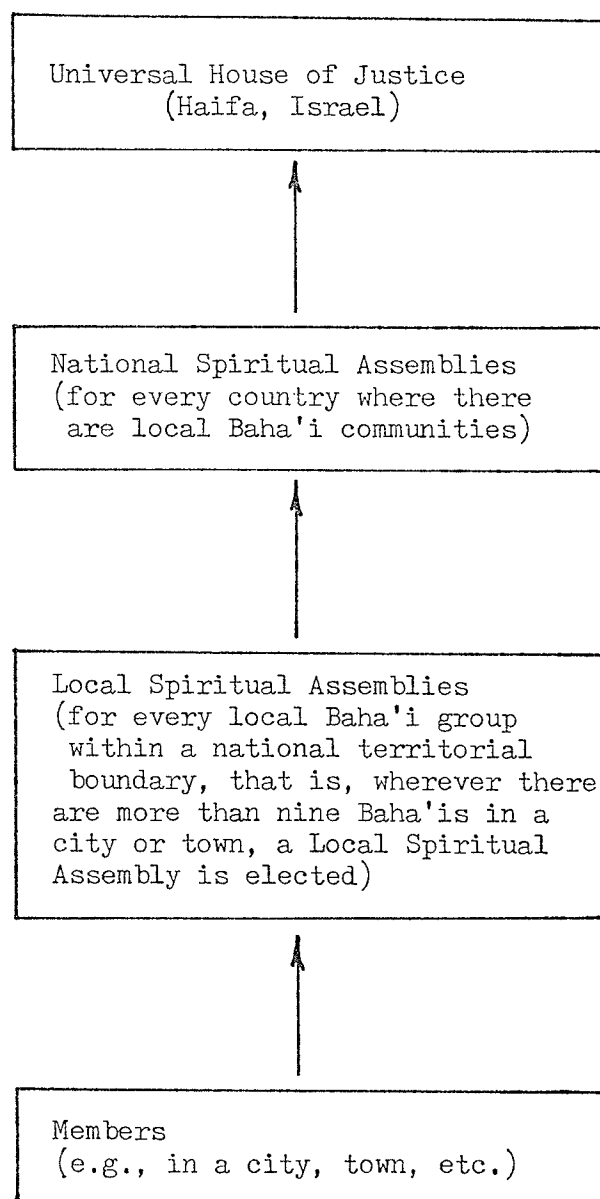
(Gerlach and Hine, 1970:xvi)

This chapter will attempt to elaborate on the merits of the above statement and discuss the dynamic aspects of organization, recruitment, commitment, and religious behaviour in the Baha'i, also using intermittent comparative discussion based on a brief parallel study/fieldwork with a (Catholic) Christian revival movement as well as other pertinent literatures in order to illuminate some points.

ORGANIZATION

On April 21, 1963 during the first international Baha'i convention in London, England, the establishment of the Universal House of Justice came to a realization (Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages From The House Of Justice, 1969:v). Since then, it had been the one

decision-making authority above the levels of national and local communities of Baha'is. In a sense, the Universal House of Justice is the central governing body of Baha'u'llah's embryonic ideal "world commonwealth". In diagram, the centralized administrative structure of the Baha'i religious movement is as below:



The local and national administrative control of the Baha'i

religion are vested in the Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, respectively. Both these assemblies are each composed of nine members elected by secret ballot, without prior nomination, for a term of one year. Local Assembly members are elected by the entire adult community of Baha'is in one region or locale. National Spiritual Assemblies which are charged with the administration of the affairs of national groups, are elected annually by delegates of each region that compose the national body of believers. The international administration of the Baha'i movement is vested upon the Universal House of Justice, an institution outlined in the teachings of Baha'u'llah, comprehensively executed into writing by Abdu'l-Baha, and implemented its creation by Shoghi Effendi, in accordance with the specifications of the last will and testament of Abdu'l-Baha. The institution administers the affairs of the faith from Haifa, Israel. Members of this body are nine men elected by secret ballot and without previous nomination, to a five-year term by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies. The nine men as a decision making body and for the duration of their term of office make-up an infallible administrative institution for the whole of the Baha'i religion.

Outside the institutionalized administrative hierarchy, there is emphasis on egalitarianism among believers. This is explicit in the Baha'i principle of "independent investigation of truth", which appears to be a carry-over of the Islamic idea of "ijtihad" which implies a personalized pursuit in the path of God (see p.9). Further, this is also evident in the absence of a clergy role (or

religious specialist) within the movement as a liaison between God and the members, the relationship being,

members $\longleftrightarrow$ Baha'u'llah = God

where Baha'u'llah assumes an undefined role of not only a spokesman of God but God personified himself. Baha'i members parallel the station of Christ with that of Baha'u'llah, such that it is believed that Christ was indeed the embodiment of God Himself on earth (i.e., as implicit in the Christian mystery of the trinity), and that Baha'u'llah was the return of Christ with the purpose of literally concluding the Christian promise of establishing or culminating God's kingdom on earth. According to Baha'i interpretation, God's kingdom on earth is the Baha'i vision/goal of a world commonwealth (i.e., world federation of nations), an ideal world order which accomodates individuality within social responsibility (see p.44, number 4)

In Baha'ism, the individual members have direct access to knowledge and truth but not to the source of its spiritual power and authority, which is the station of Baha'u'llah alone. In practical terms, the teachings of Baha'u'llah expressed the will of God for the collectivity but that the members are encouraged to take individual initiative in implementing their beliefs according to the accomodating rules set by the faith. By "accomodating" is meant the recognition of situational differences in the application of Baha'i principles (e.g., different religious upbringings, etc.).

Baha'i members are linked into unity by a common goal, ideology, and allegiance to the authority of one prophet, as well as the administrative leadership of the Universal House of Justice. To quote a Baha'i pamphlet entitled "The Messages of Baha'u'llah",

For the whole world, we have the Universal House of Justice established by Baha'u'llah. All Baha'is must obey the Universal House of Justice. It is under the protection of Baha'u'llah.

On a local level, Baha'i members are linked by penetrating pre-membership ties of friendship and/or kinship. Data to this effect were largely through my associations with the Winnipeg and East St. Paul Baha'i group, and to some extent with Baha'i members of other localities who were in attendance at the Baha'i summer school. I had found that members of a local group/community had previous social ties prior to membership in the movement, that is, that they were one time or presently business/professional associates, co-workers in an office, neighbors, or schoolmates, not to mention being close friends, siblings, parents and children, cousins, aunts, uncles, or nieces and nephews. Significant in these social relationships was the fact that such relations were of a positive nature as opposed to being of a hostile or indifferent nature (see section on recruitment).

In a non-segmentary movement such as the Baha'i, the resulting minimal range of differences in the socio-economic and/or level of education background among (local) members, is a function of pre-existing social links prior to membership. The greater Winnipeg Baha'i group (approximately 50 members from Winnipeg proper and 14

from East St. Paul Municipality) is generally middle class, made-up of professionals, students, career (i.e., college graduates with white collar jobs), and business people. The members are predominantly white Anglo-Saxon of Christian background. The minority is composed of immigrant Iranians from Baha'i households, and a few blacks also of Christian background.

At this point, I shall undertake a brief comparative discussion of a Christian revival movement, the Pentecostals, to show an alternate organization in a religious revitalization movement. Based on a brief participation in the (Catholic Charismatic Group) MIZPAH meetings and on the extensive account and study by Gerlach and Hine (1970) of the Pentecostal movement, it appears that within the movement, there is no decision-making authority or centralized administrative control beyond the local group or community. The movement has a decentralized and segmented structure such that each grouping has its own leader and is virtually autonomous. In these groups, headship is a function of charismatic attribute(s) which means the qualities of an individual to command a following by inspiring loyalty and obedience (Gerlach and Hine, 1970:38-39). As in the Baha'i, members of the Pentecostal movement have direct access to knowledge and truth but they go one step further than Baha'is in the sense that they also have direct access to spiritual power and source of spiritual authority. The characteristic phenomenon of glossolalia or "speaking with tongues" as experienced by members at one time or another is to the movement an indication of communion between the member and the Holy Spirit. The implication suggested

here is that the members do not only take individual initiative at implementing their beliefs but that on the basis of the "Holy Spirit filling" glossolalia experience, they also decide on what is the will of God for them (Ibid:33-78).

In short, the Pentecostal movement is a religious revitalization movement that is decentralized and segmentary. This is a function of unlimited egalitarianism among members, resulting in competitive charismatic leadership due to equal access to the source of spiritual authority and power, personal interpretation of an otherwise unifying common ideological theme, similar experiences based on glossolalia, and pre-existing social relationships of friendship and kinship prior to membership (Ibid:33-78).

Furthermore, for lack of a centralized authority, legitimate segmentary tendencies within the movement, strong emphasis on charismatic leadership, personal experience of glossolalia and individualized interpretation of a common ideological theme, it is appropriate to refer to the members of the individual and autonomous groups as "participants in the movement" more than "full members" (Ibid:33-78).

RECRUITMENT AND COMMITMENT

No matter what condition of social disorganization of social or psychological deprivation facilitate the rise

of a movement, the key to its spread is to be found in the process of face-to-face recruitment by committed participants.

(Gerlach and Hine, 1970:97)

The spread of Baha'ism appears to confirm the above theoretical position of Gerlach and Hine (1970).

Regardless of the socio-economic and cultural conditions that gave rise to Baha'ism, its dynamic and evidently successful expansion is significantly a result of individual direct contact with a committed member of the movement. Such face-to-face encounters are consistently repeated for a duration of time resulting in a positive or meaningful relationship between those in contact. The intensity and frequency of interaction between the potential convert and the committed member(s) often results in an altering experience in the attitude of the non-member, so much so that he develops a positive concern with the belief system of the movement. Thereafter, when the potential convert undergoes behavioural change in favour of participation in the social organization of the movement, and becomes emotionally equipped with an inspiring capacity to influence others climaxed by his willingness to take risks for the cause of the movement, then commitment had occurred.

As previously mentioned, there were predominating and existing pre-membership social relationships of friends and kin among the members of the greater Winnipeg Baha'i group. A pioneer Baha'i who had moved to and settled in the city became the founding stone of the local group. Social activities had been the channel through

which he had built meaningful relationships with others in the city. A few of his neighbors and associates became committed Baha'is and so did some members of their families. Furthermore, other members of the Baha'i faith later on moved to the city. They themselves became recruiters of friends. This was through repeated social activities which essentially define Baha'i gatherings.

Foremost in the Baha'i proselytizing social activities was the "fireside". A "fireside" is a weekly "hosting of friends for purposes of fellowship and of sharing some aspects of the faith". To Baha'is, this is an expression of hospitality in their homes as well as fulfillment of a personal obligation. This is in compliance with the religion's obligatory prescription that members should host to their friends to reinforce the bonds of friendship in the light of Baha'u'llah's teachings, at least once in 19 days (of every Baha'i month). In practice, a "fireside" is a Baha'i weekly discussion session independently initiated and hosted by members of the religious group in an individual effort to reach other people. Ideally, it is by a blazing, cozy, and warm fire or fireplace (i.e., weather suitable and facility available), thus the loose designation of western origin "fireside". In the Middle East, such gatherings are simply called meetings. Primarily, these meetings are for the informative benefit of non-members and secondarily for the reinforcement of believers. Non-Baha'is are invited and are introduced to or further acquainted with the faith and the group, alongside other Baha'i guests. The proportion of insiders and outsiders in a fireside varies from host to host. The number in attendance is

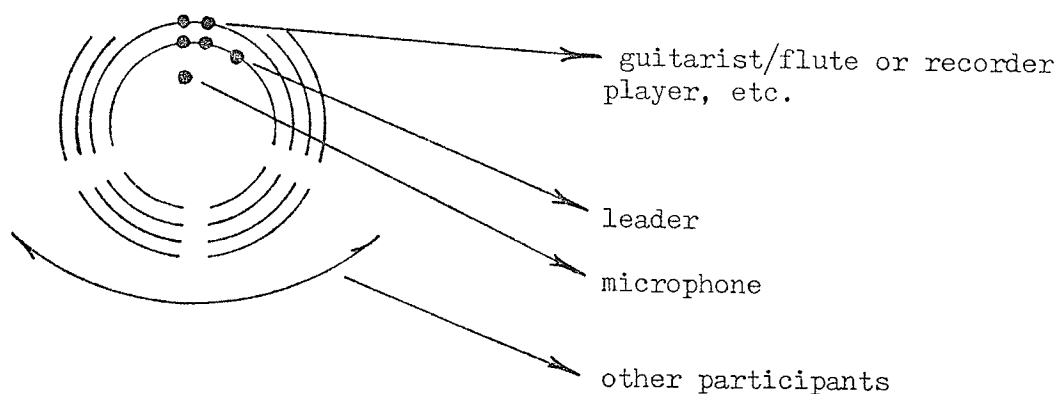
invariably small, ranging from two to about 12 or so, depending on the number the host invites for the purpose.

I participated in several firesides and generally the evening/ event opened with a reading of a choice passage from Baha'u'llah's writings (in a dialogue situation, such readings were bypassed). This was followed by a general discussion with impetus deriving from the host, and accompanied by refreshments. The topics of discussion often focused on the reasons for accepting Bah'u'llah's station as prophet of God, on the finality of the divine manifestations, as well as on Baha'u'llah's teachings. Also, special emphasis was placed on Baha'ism as being the fulfillment of all the religions and of modern man's secular hope for a better world.

Fireside gatherings are by no means restricted to verbal exchange. They can take the form of slide shows of a members's travels and experience living in other places, thus purely a social evening except for the casual remark from a guest, "were there other Baha'is there?" Also, a "fireside" can be a showing of a proselytizing and inspiring documentary film showing some Baha'i pioneer work, or some kind of a musical experience (see section on "Religious Behaviour").

The "fireside" is a parallel activity to the MIZPAH weekly Friday meetings. However, the nature of the two collective activities were quite different.

I participated in a MIZPAH meeting on a number of occasions, held at the basement of a Catholic church on Portage Avenue. Upon entering the hall, I was greeted by the sight of some 50 people, in a well proportioned number of the young and the more mature. The group was in a lively mood. Everyone had name tags pinned on the lapel of their collar which were provided by some elderly ladies as one entered the hall. Shortly, after some brief socializing, the group took their desired places in chairs arranged in a layered circle. In diagram, the arrangement was :



Hymnbooks containing religious songs in folk and popular style was provided each participant. Someone played guitar to the accompaniment of another playing a "recorder flute", leading the group in singing for some thirty minutes. Then, a prayer was offered by the leader and seconded by group chanting of "Praise to Jesus, Alleluia, Alleluia". Subsequently, individual members singly stood at random telling what the movement had meant to and done for them. They narrated allegedly traumatic experiences that

had been resolved by being in the movement : "Last Tuesday, I was so angry with my sister that I ... gave her hell. She left the room and I was left remorseful of my action because I know that Jesus taught us love and patience. I went to my sister and I told her I was sorry ... because of Jesus." Another story went like so: "Since I joined the group , I feel closer to Jesus, and one day I was coming home from work rather in a bad and low mood. As I approached the door of my house, I was stunned. I...I... saw the Holy Spirit... I saw Jesus. I was happy, very happy... and I cried". Following every story or narration was a group response of "Praise to Jesus, Brother (or Sister), Alleluia, Alleluia", with hands extended upwards or palms facing up. This phenomenon is called "testifying".

After a meditative interval during which no more participants stood to tell their stories, the leader offered a prayer amidst bowed heads and closed eyes, with extended arms upwards or palms facing up. Again, this was followed by a group chanting of "praise to Jesus, Alleluia, Alleluia", followed by a long meditative silence. Then, singing resumed for some twenty minutes or so. This was succeeded by an inspiring short talk from the leader and on one occasion, from a guest speaker as well. He was a Catholic priest visiting the city. A box for contributions was passed around, during yet more singing.

After the above activity, the group socialized in the hall over coffee and soft drinks purchased at a counter opened after the meeting. There was also the usual table of Christian literature

for sale, where one could browse.

It is apparent that there are significant points of departure between the MIZPAH group and the Baha'i group. Fundamentally, these are: that the Catholic revival group represented here has a much more structured, ritualized group activity than the Baha'i group. The latter has a strong social orientation in its gathering(s) (see pages 60-67). Also, there is the obvious tendency towards hierarchy, reflected in the presence of a charismatic leader in the MIZPAH group. No such leader appears in Baha'i meetings. In addition, the significant utilization of music with an intellectual content to it (i.e., music with accompanying lyrics in exaltation of God, etc.) by the Christian group is an important contrast to the absence of music in Baha'i gatherings.

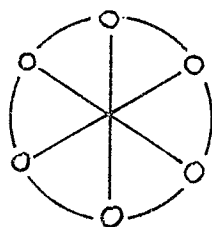
It may be argued that the MIZPAH gatherings are more structured because whereas the Baha'i meetings occur in a home, the MIZPAH hold theirs in a church basement. Also, it might be speculated that the MIZPAH group is predominantly composed of strangers while the Baha'i group is made-up of intimates. I do not think that we can so easily explain the difference as such, because although a setting affects the mood of a gathering, it cannot significantly alter its organizational structure. On many occasions, wedding and "stag and shower" socials are held in church basements as well. Furthermore, the MIZPAH group is not composed of strangers. On the contrary, a great majority of them do in fact know each other with varying degrees of intimacy.

Other social gatherings that are channels for Baha'i and non-Baha'i interactions are celebrations of Baha'i holy days. These occasions were celebrated in largely secular way. The implication here is that the celebrations do not utilize ritualized activities that have a purely religious significance (i.e., extravagant religious forms of divine worship or exaltation). Some of these Baha'i celebrations I recorded in my field notes:

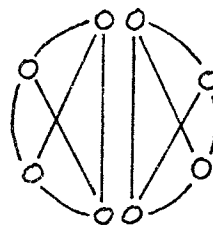
1. Intercalary Feast

During the Baha'i intercalary days, I participated in a feast. Such days are a prelude to the last Baha'i month. Like the majority of firesides I attended, the affair was held in the Municipality of East St. Paul, Manitoba, in the home of a physician. There were 27 people present including the host and the hostess, 7 of whom were non-Baha'is. It was a friendly crowd in the living room by a lit fireplace.

As with the other occasions, the evening opened with a reading from Baha'u'llah's writings. There followed an exposition of the significance of the occasion. It had to do with the idea of preparing oneself for the coming new year (March 21). This date likewise is the Persian New Year. There was no religious discussion initiated; rather, in its place was a pleasant conversation about business, school, and other subjects shared by the group. The interaction took the diagrammatic structure of

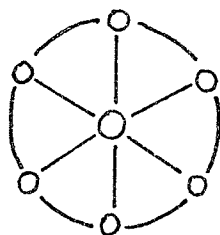


as opposed to factional interaction:

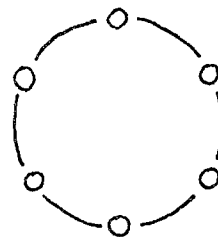


Furthermore, there was no center figure in the crowd, the relation being metaphorically a circle rather than a wheel:

wheel



circle



At length, refreshments were laid on the dining table as we helped ourselves. Further socializing was pursued over the snack. Subsequently, a game was initiated by a guest in the basement of the house. Thus, the crowd moved from the living room to the basement. We started with "passing the ring" all around 27 people. There were jokes and laughter throughout. Cold drinks were brought down as the group shifted to another activity, this time the "air-plane trick". The basement was cleared of people except for 7 people including the host. A sturdy board was held on two sides and individuals were blindfolded and singly brought back down. He was asked to step on the board and to hold on to the host for support, as he will be experiencing a "flight" shortly. A make-believe pilot announced the ascending altitude as the board was

shaken continuously and the host started to gradually bend down. The blindfolded person gets the feeling that he is indeed rising, screams and falls from a board 6 inches off the floor. The variety of responses to the experience were indeed a comic sight and everybody was game, young and old alike.

There was an abundance of fun and laughter. The only reminders of the serious religious significance of the occasion were a laminated picture of Abdu'l-Baha, a plaque with inscription of the Baha'i symbol, and a tiny bookshelf with Baha'i books in the living room and in the basement den.

2. "Naw Ruz"

The Persian "Naw Ruz" literally means "new day". It officially designates New Year for the Iranians as also for the whole of the Baha'i religion. There was a luncheon celebration for the event. There were 20 people including the host and the hostess. Three were non-Baha'is and one new member who had made a "declaration" (i.e., Baha'i "rite of passage" to committed membership in the movement) that day during the celebration. He was a medical student from the University of Manitoba sharing an apartment with a Baha'i college student. Again, there was the initial reading from Baha'u'llah's writing and an invocation to acknowledge the new year. This was followed by renewing acquaintances informally and exchanging pleasantries. Buffet lunch of potluck dishes, prepared for the celebration by the members of the East St. Paul Baha'i group was served. After lunch and over coffee and dessert, there was

intermittent discussion to accomodate questions of non-Baha'i guests regarding the faith and the religious group in general.

One non-Baha'i guest, a middle aged lady, bashfully expressed her search for "meaning" and genuine fellowship. This prompted a discussion for the purpose of answering her questions and resolving her doubts. She was a new widow, very lonely and needed to find new meaning in life. She was a devout Christian which apparently did her not much good in uplifting her spirit after her husband died. She seemed to have needed a great deal of companionship and sympathy after his recent demise. Apparently, she has a Baha'i friend and had been to several firesides and Baha'i celebrations. She expressed that she invariably found the company of the Baha'i to be warm and reassuring. Thus, she was wondering if Baha'ism indeed could relieve her of her emptiness and sorrow, and help her cope with her difficulties and loss. Some Baha'i members present at that time aired their past experiences and quests which had come to a resolution through the Baha'i movement. These members narrating their stories on becoming Baha'is seemed to have been struck by sudden charismatic eloquence in telling their tales. The resolve of the conversation, if I may be concise, was that Baha'ism had given them new hope and revived their faith in their fellowmen.

Later on that afternoon, there was a slide showing of the Baha'i temples and gardens. The theme was "the freshness of spring after the harshness of winter is like unto the freshness and beauty of Baha'ism after a decadent era of human history". The slides were

backed-up by a tape of a very melodious tune played on the flute.

3. Baha'i Summer School

The Manitoba Baha'i summer school discussed here was held at Camp Manito , Riding National Park, on August 20 through 29, 1976. It was a well attended affair with a fluctuating number that averaged about 130 people. Some were in attendance for 3 days, some 5, while others stayed the full 9 days. Through "getting-acquainted" conversations among the members of the camp group, it became apparent how far many people had to travel to get to summer school; some came from Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, with the majority from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Minnesota, and North Dakota. There were 8 non-Baha'is in the group. Our presence was acknowledged prior to the commencement of a lecture regarding the Baha'i institution of "Funds" (see pp. 33-34).

The lectures and other activities were as outlined in the program schedule provided for the participants in the school (Table 3). However, the timetable was not implemented rigidly, nor was there any sign of compulsion of any form other than the individual's own initiative and interest to participate in all or some of the activities. On the average, one-third at a time of this rather large group came to lectures. Some busied themselves with chores like volunteer kitchen help, while others sat in the shade conversing, laughing, joking, reading, making and/or renewing acquaintances. At times, the younger set (i.e., 14 to 20 years old) played ball on a volleyball court at one side of the camp area. There was

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE MANITOBA BAHAI SUMMER SCHOOL 1976

Arrival and Registration Friday eve.	SATURDAY AUG 21	SUNDAY 22	MONDAY 23	TUESDAY 24	WEDNESDAY 25	THURSDAY 26	FRIDAY 27	SATURDAY 28	SUNDAY 29
7:30	Prayers Lecture Hall or volleyball court								
7:45	Exercises Lecture Hall or volleyball court								
8:00	Breakfast								
A.M. 9:00-10:15	The Fund Ed Muttart			Family Life Anya S. Boyd					
10:15-10:45	BREAK								
10:45-12:00	Service ... Don Rogers								
12:15-1:30	Lunch Break								
1:30-2:45	Tablets... Hasan Rushdy				History Ishrat Naqui		Proclamation Preparation		clean up
2:45-3:00	BREAK Drinks available in Lecture Hall for these "quick" breaks			Recreation etc.					
3:00-4:00	The Fund Ed Muttart		Recreation Relax, etc.	Recreation Relax / Questions Hasan Rushdy	Recreation Relaxation, etc.	Recreation Relax / Questions Ishrat Naqui			
P.M. 4:00-5:30	Recreation, Relaxation, etc.								
5:30-6:30	Dinner								
8:00	evening Program To be announced		Eli Harper Indian Religion	Evening Program To be announced		Jim Heideman Man. Bahai History	Proclamation T.B.A. in Dauphin		
9:30-10:00	snack								
11:00 curfew	Wash up clean up, Lights off								

(TABLE 3)

an occasional teach-in for non-Baha'is simultaneous with the lectures, held outdoors instead of inside a lecture hall. This was rather informal and for the benefit of answering questions regarding the faith and the Baha'i group. In the evening, most everyone attended the viewing of films on Baha'i pioneer work. After the viewing was a late snack in the dining hall. There was a variety of evening activities. One night, there was a sing-along, marshmallow roasting, and getting acquainted around a campfire. It was a warm and happy gathering with fun and laughter including a rather unsuccessful attempt to put on a comedy skit. The campfire lasted about 2 hours. Evening functions usually lasted until about 9:30 p.m. to allow time for personal hygiene before 11 p.m. curfew when camp lights were turned off. Accomodations for boys and girls were in separate dormitories. There was a separated unit for families too (i.e., husbands and wives with infants and/or toddlers).

Goodbyes and welcomes were frequent. Members were almost always either departing or arriving. The process of getting acquainted and reacquainted thus occurred continuously.

4. Baha'u'llah's Birthday

November 12 was Baha'u'llah's natal day. It was celebrated by the Winnipeg Baha'is in Fort Richmond at the home of a university professor. The East St. Paul Municipality group had its celebration in the municipality at the home of a physician. I briefly participated in the Fort Richmond gathering. That evening, the group size was approximately 20 people.

The central activity of the celebration was the documentary film viewing of Baha'i pioneer work, specifically the proselytizing activities of Ruhiiyyih Rabbani, widow of the late Shoghi Effendi. The film was purposely inspiring in theme. According to the introduction of the film, "it is gratifying and personally fulfilling to reach out to simple folks in the service of Baha'u'llah and in the propagation of his teachings", in other words, proselytizing endeavours are personally rewarding.

This brings to mind the implication of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, in an attempt to explicate a member's need to proselytize. According to the theory, when a person is committed to a set of beliefs or behaviour which involved a choice between it and opposing sets, internal personal discomfort or dissonance within the person is produced. This reflects human nature's lack of absolute certainty with regard to a choice made in the face of other options. Dissonance is more intense in a minority held belief or action system. Thus, individual(s) with a significant amount of dissonance will be motivated to reduce such a state of psychological discomfort (i.e., which is all on the unconscious level). One way is to intensify one's commitment by actively engaging in the persuading of others to one's side (Hilgard, Atkinson and Atkinson, 1975:555).

According to the film, there are two mountains separated by a deep valley in between. One mountain was the state of simplicity and ignorance of peasants, aborigines all over the world, and the

other rural and forest peoples. The other mountain was the mount of spirituality and goodness, the state of godliness. The deep valley was the condition of extreme materialism and spiritual degeneration characteristic of modern developed countries. Ruhiiyyih Rabbani's message in this film was that it was the urgent and moral responsibility of true Baha'is to effectively prevent the simple folks from falling into the deep valley. Instead, they should make it their devotion to help people directly reach the mountain of goodness and spirituality through the teachings of Baha'u'llah which symbolically serves as a connecting bridge between the two above mentioned mountains. This is the value and urgency of pioneer work.

There was a brief intermission between parts I and II of the film to allow for rewinding and changing. Jokes were told to fill-in the time. This was to everybody's delight.

There was a big birthday cake for the occasion and refreshments were served.

There are two aspects of the proselytizing individual contacts and social experiences in the Baha'i gatherings that have considerable effect on the commitment of potential converts into the movement as well as the reinforcement of members in their membership:

1. The pressure towards connection or genuine fellowship, which brings people together. By a "genuine" relationship is meant

the reciprocally "successful" acts of attribution between two or more persons. "Successful" implies the idea of complementarity the function of personal relations to mutually fulfill or complete each other. (Laing, 1969:82).

The Baha'i group predominantly consists of people seeking something. They were students, managers, career people, professionals, and as such people who share in idealism, people who do not in any way define themselves lacking, and yet who come in serious pursuit. This was evident in the following responses from some Baha'i members I met at the summer school:

Working student from Nova Scotia (Christian background) - "It is like finding a family for me. I can go anywhere and where there are Baha'is, I'm confident I have something like a family".

Working mother of a little girl (Christian background) - "It's wonderful. I'm happy. I feel like I found something and it has opened my eyes to many things. There is love here".

2. The power of human interaction (i.e., fellowship) to satisfy man's need for connection and self realization.

In Anthropology, the analytical study of cultures emphasized the comparative approach, that is, studying distinct groups of people such that generalizations can be inferred as to the characteristic identity of one based on the other(s). In a sense, we characterize what is a peasant by knowing the characteristic(s) of a non-peasant, or that knowledge of a second language emphasizes the structure of our first language, or according to Laing (1969:82), a woman is called a mother when she has a child. In much the same

way, individuals confirm each other whereby they derive their identities. Furthermore, when personal mutual confirmations are on the positive side and for a long period of time, meaningful relationships are built between the "interactors".

With reference to and characterizing the frequent and regular small group social gatherings of the greater Winnipeg Baha'is, one thing was almost invariably evident. Implicit in the Baha'i recruitment strategy is the idea that persons progressively build meaningful/positive relationships as they confront each other repeatedly for a period of time, given these circumstances -

- a. there is no goading for individuals to extend towards connection,
- b. there is no hierarchy in the group to bind, contain, and ritualize interaction. The Baha'i gatherings have informal structures with emphasis on rewarding social experiences. This perhaps is a reflection of the high concern of Baha'i teachings and goals for an ideal harmonious social order in a sense, a visualized ultimate transcending state or condition of "heaven on earth" achieved through independent pursuit coupled with social responsibility,
- c. the presence of enthusiastic committed persons charismatically inspiring expressions of friendly feeling in the group. By this is implied the presence of charismatic members as opposed to the presence of a charismatic leader.

In summary, relative to the Baha'is, recruitment is initiated by

individual contact between a committed member and a non-member, presupposing also a pre-existing social relation of kinship or friendship which is positive between the interacting individuals.

Exemplary of this is such narration as:

Architecture graduate student (Christian background) - "It was like finding that which you've been searching for a long time. I was on drugs and I travelled to Europe, the Middle East, India, looking for something meaningful, I didn't know what exactly. I went to gurus in India but I came out with as many doubts as I had before. I came back to Winnipeg because I ran out of money. In the city, I met an old friend. We knew each other very well. Since last I saw her, she has changed the quality of her life dramatically. She told me all about being a Baha'i and how it changed her life. She brought me to... . At that time, I was very lonely and alone. I asked my questions to the doctor and told him of my doubts and seeking. His answers satisfied me and I remember a passage from Baha'u'llah's writing which he read to me at that time. I was very touched by the passage. When I left, I felt I had found what I was looking for".

This encounter is pursued in repeated social activities involving the religious group where interrelationships are governed by two underlying principles:

1. People with high frequency and intensity of contact (as in a close religious group) tend to develop an informal social organization, involving patterned behaviour necessary to avoid conflict resulting in apparent smooth interpersonal relationships within the group. Such behaviour is an acute and artful blend of manifest activity, speech, manners, feelings, and ideas which eventually come to serve as an identifying mark of membership as opposed to non-membership. Ideally and prescriptively,

Wherever a Baha'i community exists, whether large or small, let it be distinguished for its abiding sense of security and faith, its high standard of rectitude, its complete freedom from all forms of prejudice, the spirit of love among its members, and for the closely

knit fabric of its social life.

(Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages
From the Universal House of
Justice, 1969:ii)

In practice, non-Baha'is who had come in contact with Baha'is have the general impression of the group as being extremely hospitable, amiable, who look after each other and when need be, after each other's children.

2. A significant and major element of this informal social organization is a group standard (i.e., tantamount to an informal law governing behaviour). For the most part, this is unwritten, and members may not be aware or conscious how such standard(s) mold their behaviour (see p.35 and the above quote). This element operates with the individual's initiative at mastering its conflicts with his other tendencies and pressures, and not denying them.

The above conditions facilitate the building up of relationships that have a fulfilling effect for the individual in the Baha'i group, who is there because of an undefined quest. These reciprocal and rewarding complementary relationships between individuals in the group is the medium in which the central elements or principles of the Baha'i religious movement is felt. In short, the social experience in Baha'ism is the altering experience whereby the individual becomes committed to the group and its belief system.

The highest part of reality resides not (only) in the eternal but in the glory of the transitory. Earthly goals, for instance, the perfection of one's own personality or of the social structure, are (also) man's

true goals. Life is not merely a preparation for another world, but it has immanent value and ought to be formed with as much dignity, beauty, and richness as possible according to ... earthly standards.

(Landmann, 1974:104)

Furthermore, comparative fieldwork shows that in the Christian (Catholic) revival movement (e.g., MIZPAH group), recruitment and commitment go through the same channels of individual contact of a positive nature based on pre-existing social relationships, to social participation of the individual non-member with the religious group. However, there is a significant point of departure between the MIZPAH and the Baha'i after that phase of recruitment when the non-member becomes a motivated member or participant. In the MIZPAH group, the act of "testifying" (see pages 57-58) is utilized by members as an external reinforcement of each other's commitment and participation, thus the source of a member's sense of belonging in the group. In Baha'ism, no such technique as "testifying is used to externally reinforce the religious beliefs of the members. Overt and active acts of religiously justifying one's beliefs are a significant part of Baha'i proselytizing activities. When non-members become motivated members, such external religious practices designed to justify belief undergoes a metamorphosis. They then assume a more secular form such that "social hosting" of friends become the device by which members are maintained as members. Indeed, it is the fulfilling (by design) social interaction (i.e., intense and frequent) within the group which is the primary source of Baha'i's continuing group life.

Whereas "testifying" appears to be an effective instrument at motivating current participation in MIZPAH meetings, it is questionable whether it is in fact just as effective in maintaining the same enthusiastic participation for a long period of time. This is because when a person's belief/commitment is repeatedly and ritually justified "for him" instead of "by him", there is the very probable danger of overjustification which can well undermine the future participation of that person based on the merits of the belief system itself. In Baha'ism, this probability at overjustification appears to be a recognized fact. Members are admonished to personally and independently sustain their religious beliefs (recall the Baha'i principle of "independent investigation of truth"). With this, the member's commitment / participation is maintained and reinforced by regular social activities that are meant to be fulfilling for the participants.

RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR

1. Group prayer or collective addressing of the supernatural, either asking for a favour or thanking for past blessing(s).

During the duration of my fieldwork, there was no evidence in the Baha'is of "prayer" in the sense of collective address to God. This is significantly a departure from Orthodox Shi'ite Islam where both congregational as well as individual prayer is practiced by the believers. In the Christian(Catholic) revival movement MIZPAH, the act of prayer is also performed, and this is commonly led by

a leader who enacts the address to God aloud while the other members participate by meditating on the prayer in silence. This is usually accompanied by such gestures as bowed heads, eyes closed, and arms extended upwards.

2. Recitation of code or of the revealed text.

This was a more commonly used invocation of the supernatural, by the Baha'i group. Readings of passages from Baha'u'llah's writings commenced every social activity. Instead of a direct address to the supernatural, Baha'is utilized recitations in remembrances to or reiteration of Baha'u'llah's teachings. An example of a recitation is a reading from The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah:

O SON OF MAN!

My Majesty is My gift to thee, and My grandeur the token of My mercy unto thee. That which beseemeth Me none shall understand, nor can anyone recount. Verily, I have preserved it in My hidden storehouse and in the treasures of My command, as a sign of My loving-kindness unto My servants and My mercy unto My people.

(Baha'u'llah, 1949:19)

The MIZPAH group likewise utilized recitation of passages from the Bible. However, it was not for purposes of commencing a gathering or meeting, nor was it a regular occurrence. It was utilized at the discretion of a member who wanted to use it. Quite often, a recitation of a passage from the scripture was used as a kind of "sanctifying ornament" to an experience being related by a member for the benefit of the group, and which usually followed a story which was designed to have spiritual significance for the collectivity.

3. Music

I recall one fireside gathering where the topic of interest was "Baha'i music", or more appropriately, Baha'i attitude towards having music in their gatherings. I was quite happy when informed of the topic for the evening, because there was a marked absence of any form of music in Baha'i group activities, be it in feasts, celebrations, or in any other gatherings with the exception of the summer school where there was some sing-along activity.

The evening opened with a reading from Baha'u'llah regarding the topic of "music in gatherings". As I understood it, according to Baha'u'llah, the pleasantness of music is relative to the ear listening to it. Therefore, consideration should be made such that none is irritated or offended by the music that otherwise is pleasant to he who chose to play or listen to it. As such, given the condition when the host may not be familiar with the backgrounds of his guests, it is advisable that there be no music at all, that aggravation may be avoided.

After the reading, there was a sing-along among the 14 people in the group including the host and hostess. This was mainly of popular and folk music with no religious significance. This was to the accompaniment of two guitars brought by two Baha'i guests. At that time, the hostess brought some refreshments. Subsequent to this, the host prodded his guests to help themselves to any object in the house that can make a sound : a jar of beans, an empty tin can, a pot, a pan, a plastic pitcher, a ladle, some water-filled

bottles, silverware, a chopping board, the piano bench, and many others. We gathered in a circle. It was suggested we close our eyes and as we feel, to strike a note with our improvised musical instrument at anytime. After a minute of silence, a tiny soft, and somewhat whimpering tune came from the guitar. It was soon followed and accompanied by a rather unsure "thump" "thump" slow beat sound from the tin can and thereafter, everybody was beating a tune with their devices following the lead of the guitar. It was a very melodious overall tune and it seemed that everybody were playing in harmony. In a rather gradual way, the music accelerated in volume. It got slowly louder and louder as each person seemed to be playing his instrument with increasing gusto and feeling. Everyone's eyes were closed and with heads bowed slightly. From a climax, the music started getting softer and softer, slower and slower, until all came to a gradual halt. All was absolute quiet suddenly. This pervaded among such closed eyes and bowed heads of squatted figures on the floor. It was a minute or two thereafter when the host broke the silence in appreciation. Eyes opened, heads lifted, and pleasant smiles lined everybody's lips. With this, the host read a passage from Baha'u'llah on the topic of the evening. There were more refreshments and the group broke in a sing-along again. Then, with some goading, individual contributions were rendered. One person played a pop music on the piano, another played jazz, there was a guitar solo, a guitar duet, a folk singing, and a teenage girl's attempt at the flute. Having exhausted the invited talents to the delight of all, a long playing record of a Baha'i family of professional singers rendering modern ballad Baha'i proselytizing

songs, was played. Interspersed within all these activities were explications of what is the discrete use of music in Baha'ism (see pp.76-77), as well as jokes.

In Islamic traditions from which Baha'ism acknowledges inheritance, music is a significant part of ritual. In mosques, the Qur'an is chanted, often time to the accompaniment of drums.

Also, in the MIZPAH meetings, I noted earlier that sing-alongs from a hymnbook of religious songs were a regular occurrence (i.e., a regular part of the ritualized gathering). These songs were rendered to the beat of folk and popular music. In all the group gatherings I attended, there was singing to the accompaniment of guitars and/or flute (see p.57).

4. Physical manipulation of the psychological state.

In Baha'ism, there was no apparent utilization of ecstatic states or behaviour. There was neither an occurrence such as "glossolalia" characteristic of the Pentecostal movement.

Glossolalia is the utterance of streams of sounds which are unintelligible to both speaker and listener but which Pentecostals call "heavenly language" and considered to be the Holy Spirit acting through them. Its practice is usually accompanied by a sense of emotional release, joy, and closeness to God.

(Gerlach and Hine, 1970:2)

In the Baha'i fireside where the topic of music was the highlight of the evening, there was indeed physical manipulation of the psychological state. However, this was an exception rather

than a rule. Admittedly, this was a proselytizing improvisation by the host of the fireside (see p.77). Such incident was never again duplicated in any Baha'i function for the duration of my (one year) fieldwork/participation with the group.

5. Feast or eating and drinking in a religious context.

In Baha'i gatherings and celebrations, there was no overt prayer or "grace" said before meals. Furthermore, there was no sacred food, that is "profane food" which are blessed and thus become symbolic of something holy. This was in direct contrast to the generally orthodox Christian practice of "communion". This practice involves the partaking of bread and wine which are blessed and become the symbolic body and blood of Jesus Christ. By the blessing, the food is invested with sacred virtues which are likewise invested on the partaker of the food, symbolically: "Jesus becomes a part of you".

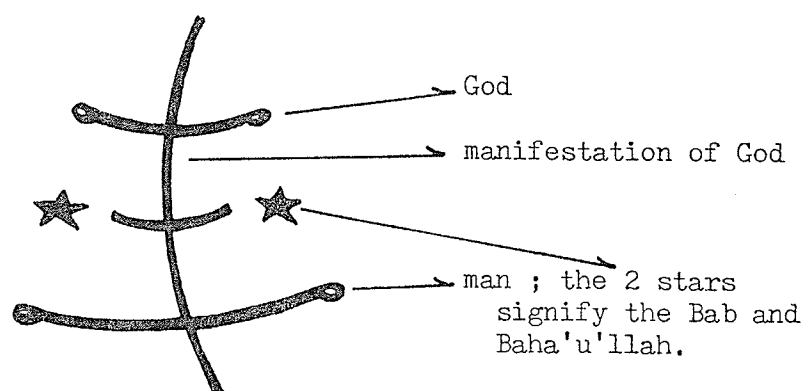
6. Sacrifice or offerings.

Contribution to the "fund" is to Baha'is, a sacrificial service to the religious cause, a sacred obligation to enable the movement to carry-out the obligations set by Baha'u'llah for the achievement of the Baha'i goals and the maintenance of his institutions. Essentially, the same motivation for contributions to the movement occurs among the Christians, except that here, it is for the Christian cause. The basic difference however is that while Baha'is do not solicit during their gatherings, and that only Baha'is are "privileged" to contribute to the movement's fund, the Christian

groups solicit during their meetings and accept contributions regardless of the religious commitment of the contributor.

7. Symbolism: evoking religious sentiment.

A majority of committed Baha'is wear rings that have the Baha'i emblem:



This symbol is interchangeably called the "greatest symbol" or the "ring stone symbol" (i.e., symbol on the stone of a Baha'i ring). The significance of the symbolism is the relationship of God, man, and the manifestation of God. The emblem is "actually a combination of Arabic letters with numerical values that imply the relationship".

Other objects that evoke religious sentiment among Baha'is were such things as the name of Baha'u'llah in Arabic script, inscribed and laminated on wall plaques. Likewise, the pictures of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha evoke the same sentiment.



("Baha'u'llah" in Arabic script)

Also, the number 9 has heavy religious symbolism in the Baha'i faith. According to my informants, the numeral is the "number of perfection" or the "most perfect number", the "highest single number". The Baha'i faith claims that Baha'u'llah brought the ninth true religion since the time of Adam. Furthermore, it was said of the "perfection" of the number 9 that : "9 when multiplied by any number will give a product which adds up to 9". For example, $9 \times 8 = 72$ and $7 + 2 = 9$, $9 \times 590723 = 5316507$ and $5 + 3 + 1 + 6 + 5 + 0 + 7 = 27$ and $2 + 7 = 9$, etc. The numerical maneuvers in Baha'ism have other far reaching effects besides its symbolic reinforcement of Baha'u'llah's claim to Godship or perfection. Evidence for this is the fact that a Baha'i member from St. Norbert, Manitoba was led to a commitment to the movement by his prior involvement with numerology. Furthermore, Arabic letters have their numerical meanings such that "baha" which means "glory" has the numerical value of ($b = 2$, $a = 1$, $h = 5$) 9.

Indeed, symbols are significant parts of all religions. The cross is the symbol of Christianity signifying the agony and death of Jesus Christ in his redemption of humankind from sin. In Christianity, numbers are utilized with a religious context. Accordingly, 7 is "frequently used to denote holiness" (Buttrick, 1962:564).

Also, 12 is used to denote completeness in the Christian sense. Indications to this effect is given in the following : 12 tribes of Israel, 12 disciples of Christ, 144,000 "righteous people" in the Book of Revelation. The number 3 has a religious symbolism as well. This is apparent in the Holy Trinity (i.e., God the Father, God the Son = Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as the three persons in one divinity).

Another aspect of religious symbolism as evoking religious sentiment is in the use of kinship terms. Baha'is do not use such kinship terms as "brothers" and "sisters" as the members of the Christian groups do. Rather, in Baha'ism, they refer to each other (i.e., being members of the faith) as "friends". To illustrate this is a quote of a message sent by the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'i members:

The heart of an unlettered soul is extremely sensitive; any trace of prejudice on the part of a pioneer... is... sensed. When teaching among masses, the friends should be careful not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the Faith as a means to win recruits. Experience has shown that when facilities such as schools, dispensaries, hospitals, or even clothes and food are offered to the people being taught, many complications arise.

(Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages
From the Universal House of
Justice, 1969:32)

Indeed,

Why does one say that certain behavior is religious ? The answer lies in the fundamental pattern, or structure, which the layman and the ethnographer alike recognize when they look at society and which, wherever it is found, is called "religious" , despite the manifold diversity of its forms.
(Wallace, 1966:52)

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

For though ours is a godless age, it is the very opposite of irreligious. The true believer is everywhere on the march, and both by converting and antagonizing, he is shaping the world in his own image.

(Hoffer, 1951:10)

In this thesis, I was motivated to a quest for the spiritual experience in the Baha'i group through clues in the Baha'i movement/group history, group structure, and group symbol. I believe that such undertaking necessarily implies the involvement of intuitive as much as analytical appreciation of the social, pragmatic, and ideological context out of which such spiritual experience is born. Furthermore, by "spiritual" I mean

something perfectly natural, and not in the least supernatural namely, the expression of the inner qualities of a human being that relate him in a humanely cultured manner to everything that he is capable of experiencing or contemplating.

(Montagu, 1958:31)

The Baha'i spiritual experience has a predominant social orientation, although it is not devoid of mysticism or dedication to a holy life. It has simultaneous expression in two areas: ideological (i.e., doctrine) and social. The latter implies individual behaviour geared towards interpersonal action or fellowship which is the primary source of a continuing group life. Furthermore, Baha'is claim that the individual experiences in the teachings and practices of the group (i.e., social life) are the means toward

the achievement of the goals set by the faith. This is apparent in the following statement issued by the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and the Environmental Forum, Stockholm, Sweden, 1972:

... nothing short of the kind of change that is beginning to take place in Baha'i communities, where the basic transformation in purpose and character occurring in each individual is reflected in his social life, will be able to provide the highest quality of human life on this planet. A new consciousness must emerge, based on an understanding of the spiritual nature of man and the belief in the organic oneness of humanity.

(The Environment And Human Values,
A Baha'i View, 1974:4)

In Baha'ism, its "totality" is a strong source of its attractiveness. It does not restrict its appeal territorially, that is, it acknowledges all of the other world religions (i.e., as legitimate revelations from God), thereby minimizing its exposure to the hostile sentiments of people of different ideologies. Also, Baha'i ideology does not restrict its application to some institutions only. Through its teachings and principles, Baha'ism claims to offer resolutions to the contemporary problems of the modern world, be it economic, political, educational, etc. (see Chapter Three). Furthermore, the Baha'i religion has an independent existence in a scripture and set of rules/norms that are not exclusively equated with the practices of a particular society or group. This last is in contrast with tribal religions which are indeed exclusive in their content to the specific way of life or practices of the groups or societies in which they occur.

In the light of the preceeding, the ability of Baha'ism to engage people into its cause becomes evident when we are confronted with such response as:

Practicing microbiologist (Christian background) - " I'm of Anglican background. My parents are very orthodox. So was I until I started to have questions and doubts about some discrepancies in my beliefs. I studied and scrutinized Baha'ism very well. It was enlightening. I didn't have to turn my back on other people's beliefs anymore. Being Baha'i makes me just as good a Christian as I was, even more. I still believe in Jesus and the other prophets as well. ...I'm not much of a sociable person. I don't enjoy going to parties very much, but when I am with Baha'is, I'm happy."

Furthermore, in modern western societies, changes in the attitude of the people towards western religious traditions greatly enhance the appeal of Baha'i ideology. These changes in attitude are correlated with

1. secularization.

In the Western sense, secularization has come to mean "the effort of religion to be relevant, to solve human problems (with a sense of immediacy), to make men happy" (Needleman, 1972:16). This implies a preoccupation with the external conditions of human life, with charitable works, and relegating a secondary direct concern with the internal longings of the human being, that is, the meaningful reconciliation between his inner experiences and external event.

One can feel physically empty when not putting oneself into what one is doing, or when what one is putting oneself into feels intrinsically meaningless to oneself. But emptiness and futility can arise when a person has put himself into his acts, even when these acts seem to have some point to him, if he is accorded no recognition by the other, and if he feels he is not able to make any difference to anyone. ... A prototype of the other as giver but not receiver, unresponsive or impervious, tends to generate in self a sense of failure. He may be successful

in different walks of life but ... he has lost both sense of his capacity to give and sense of "the other's" capacity to receive.

(Laing, 1969:84)

An awareness of the condition is evident in Baha'i writings as it stressed that "friends should be careful not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the faith as a means to win recruits " (Wellsprings of Guidance, Messages From The Universal House of Justice, 1969:32).

2. The separation of religion from other areas of life activity, and Christianity's weakening religious control over its members.

Arts graduate student (Christian background) - It's the social body of the church. I was brought up a good Christian. We lived in a small community and I was active in church organization when I was young. As I grew up, I lost my faith in the church. The people did not really practice nor seem to mind the things they profess in church when they are outside. I didn't believe in religion for a long time until I became a Baha'i. The things they teach you are for your own good, for your health, avoiding drinking and smoking, and other such things. It makes sense.

Also, Baha'ism attempts to resolve the problems of "alienated labour" by investing intrinsic worth or value on the individual and his labour. This is embodied in its prescription that "daily work performed in the spirit of service is regarded as an act of worship" (see p.35).

Indeed, although religion and morality are not synonymous, it is apparent in Baha'ism that there is a strong and definite correlation between the two whereby the practice and obedience to prescribed behavioural preconditions (i.e., set against the "right"

and "wrong" scale of Baha'u'llah's "prescription for living") are instrumental in the achievement of the ultimate goal set by the religious movement.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

I had endeavoured to show that in Baha'ism, the achievement of a wholesome "man to man" relationship is of utmost importance. The incorporation of such incidents as "snacks", jokes sessions", "laughter" and "games" in the writing of this thesis was designed to show that "socializing " (in its most secular form), is a repeated and significant theme in Baha'i gatherings and celebrations. It is an important source of continued participation from the members of the movement as well as an effective proselytizing strategy.

In the light of the above, the significance of this study is in effect primarily that it affirms the depth of man's need for religious experience in view of what Martin Buber (1965:71) alleged, that it is "from one man to another that the heavenly breath of self being is passed". Also, Baha'ism as a religious movement exhibits that variety of religious experience that reiterates :
 "... the evidence of God lies primarily in inner personal experience rather than in abstract philosophical systems" (James, 1961) .

To the best of my knowledge, this attempt is the first ethno-

graphic study done on the Baha'i religious movement (in any locality), and it is my hope that this research will become a basis for further comparative study of Baha'ism whereby the appeal or workability of the faith in the rural areas (specially in locales of low literacy rates) can be tested against its appeal in the urban areas. I am unable to undertake such an extensive study due to such factors as time, my inability to obtain data from members in the rural areas, and the lack of reliable statistics on Baha'i membership in the generally illiterate areas. However, it is my hypothesis that Baha'ism is a workable faith significantly much more in the urban areas because of two factors : first, Baha'ism's high requirement of literacy as expressed in its principle of "independent investigation of truth", where the individual is essentially left in charge of his own "religious research" to validate and sustain his commitment to the only "one interpretation" of the Baha'i scripture (i.e., ideology), secondly, the emphasis on the absence of an ethic of loyalty towards personality to personify the teachings in the absence of literate understanding.

A NOTE ON DEPRIVATION, etc.

In a most simplistic way, deprivation can be defined as the inconsistency or gap between expectation and actual state-of-affairs in an individual or group. Deprivation theories, whether relative or absolute, material or otherwise, can only be significant in a

study if available information provides for such things as the individual's or group's past set against his/their present condition, or their present situation set against other's present situation.

With regard to this study on the Baha'is, it is most difficult if not pretentious on my part to impute such theories as deprivation or psychological maladjustment as significant attributes which account for membership in the religious movement. I have no extensive nor intensive data on the past history of its members and their present material condition (i.e., predominantly middle class) evidently compares quite well with that of the great majority of others. Furthermore, based on my repeated associations with Baha'i members, I cannot state with any degree of certainty that the individual's commitment to the Baha'i ideology is directly related to psychological maladjustment nor emotional deprivation to any significant extent.

Suffice it to say however, that individuals by their own admission came to the movement seeking something they cannot define, and that a common factor among such individuals is that they share a marked idealistic outlook in life (i.e., strongly utopian idealism). Such is defined by the movement's emphasis on moral behaviour not in any withdrawing ascetic sense by community oriented and involved, that is, toward the accomplishment of the most ideal social order.

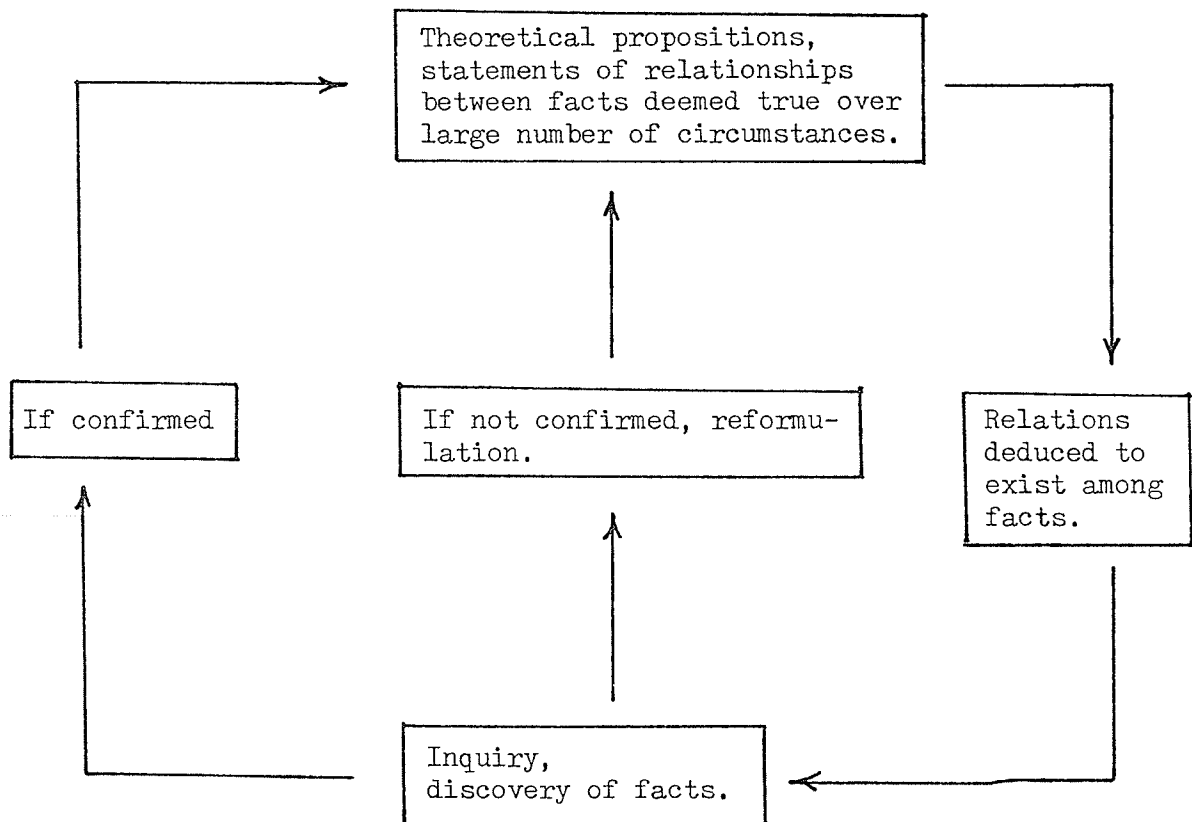
What makes a millennarian religious movement of Baha'ism today, so engrossed in the idea of the most perfect world order (or world

federation of nations under one world government) and the highest political peace on this planet earth in the coming millennium ? Perhaps, (to borrow David Aberle's concept, 1970:212) it is indeed the "sense of blockage" or insufficiency of ordinary action in the accomplishment of its ideals that such movements find supernatural reassurances of imminence to be crucial.

A P P E N D I X

At the initiation of this project, I proceeded to provide operational definitions of the concepts around which the project revolves and setting-up a loose conceptual framework to aid in outlining the research and to effect a selective inquiry. Subsequently, library exploration was undertaken, for available pertinent literature from which was generated a more specific proposition regarding the relationship(s) of the concepts as they are relevant to the subject of study.

I had adopted the deductive approach in this study. Diagrammatically:



With regard to data collection, I had made use of personal interviews and telephone conversations. I had tried to emphasize informality in my interviews, thus underplaying a straight-forward question-answer circumstance. I must admit however, that I did conduct the initial few of these sessions rather formally, sitting with my informants over coffee, expressed my interest in Baha'ism and asked questions in a rather crude structured series. In time, I became more confident of what I was doing and hopefully ceased being an interviewer, instead, only an outsider with some questions in mind, taking cue as the conversation went on rather than inflexibly leading. Our talks became progressively relaxed.

Adjunct to these dialogues were serious efforts at participant observation. The greater and main body as well as the commitment of this research in fact came largely from the latter effort, in "a special effort to see the whole and to avoid the distortions of preoccupation with parts". (Gerlach and Hine, 1970: Introduction).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdu'l-Baha.
1972 Faith for every man. London : Baha'i Publishing Trust.
- Aberle, David.
1970 A note on relative deprivation theory as applied to millenarian and other cult movement. In Millenial dreams in action, studies in revolutionary religious movements. Sylvia Thrupp, ed. New York : Schocken Books . pp.209-214.
- Algar, Hamid.
1969 Religion and state in Iran 1785-1906, the role of the ulama in the Qajar period. Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press.
- Anderson, J.N.D.
1970 Christianity and comparative religion. London: Tyndale Press.
- Arberry, A.J., ed.
1969 Religion in the middle east. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Ardon, Ya'acov.
1971 The youngest faith. In The Jerusalem Post Magazine. November 26.

Armajani, Yahyah.
1972

Iran . Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Baha'i answers.
1957

Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Baha'i teachings for a world faith.
1972

Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Basic facts of the Baha'i faith.
1972

Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha.
1931

The reality of man. Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

1943

Baha'i world faith . U.S.A.:Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.
1948

The pattern of Baha'i life. London : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Baha'u'llah, trans. by Shoghi Effendi.
1949

The hidden words . Manchester : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Balyuzi, H.M.
1941

Baha'u'llah. London: George Ronald.

-
- 1956 Abdu'l-Baha, the center of the covenant of
Baha'u'llah. London: George Ronald.
-
-
- 1973 The Bab . Oxford: George Ronald.
-
- Barney, Laura Clifford.
1968 Some answered questions collected and trans-
lated from the Persian of Abdu'l-Baha.
Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.
-
- Buber, Martin.
1965 The knowledge of man . New York : Harper Torch
Books.
-
- Burridge, Kenelm.
1971 New heaven, new earth. Great Britain : Copp
Clark Publishing Company.
-
- Buse, Heribert.
1972 History of Persian under Qajar rule. New York
and London : Columbia University Press.
-
- Buttrick, G.A. , ed.
1962 Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. New York:
Abingdon Press. Vol.3 . p.564.
-
- Cohn, Norman.
1970 The pursuit of the millenium. U.S.A. : Oxford
University Press.

- Ellwood, Robert S., Jr.
1973 Religious and spiritual groups in modern America.
New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, Inc. pp.251-255,
pp.275-281.
- Esslemont, J.E.
1970 Baha'u'llah and the new era. Wilmette, Illinois:
Baha'i Books.
- Faith for freedom.
1947 Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.
- Faizi, Gloria.
1972 The Baha'i faith, an introduction. Penang ,
Malaysia : The Ganesh Printing Works.
- Gail, Marzieh.
1953 Six lessons on Islam. Wilmette, Illinois:
Baha'i Publishing Trust.
- Gerlach, Luther P. and Virginia H.Hine.
1970 People, power, change : movements of social
transformation. Indianapolis : The Bobbs-Merrill
Co., Inc.
- Harris, Marvin.
1975 Culture, people, and nature. New York: Thomas Y.
Crowell.
- Hesse, Herman.
1956 Journey to the east. Toronto : Bantam Books.
pp.5-10

- Hilgard, Ernest, Richard C. Atkinson and Rita L. Atkinson.
1975 Psychology, an introduction , 6th ed. New York:
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.
- Hobsbawm, E.J.
1963 Primitive rebels. Manchester : University of
Manchester Press.
- Hoffer, Eric.
1951 The true believer. New York : Harper & Row.
- Huxley, Aldous.
1938 Ends and means, an inquiry into the nature of
ideals and into the methods employed for their
realization. London : Chatto & Windus.
- James, William.
1961 The varieties of religious experience, a study
in human nature. New York : Collier Books.
- Johnson, Paul Emmanuel.
1945 Psychology of religion. New York : Abingdon-
Cokesbury Press.
- Kroeber, A.L., and C. Kluckhohn.
1952 Culture : a critical review of concepts and
definitions. In Papers of the Peabody Museum
of American Archaeology and Ethnology.
Harvard University. XLVII : Number One.
- Laing, R.D.
1969 Self and others . Middlesex : Penguin Books.

- Landmann, Michael, trans. by David Parent.
1974 Philosophical Anthropology. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press.
- Manners, Robert A. and David Kaplan, eds.
1968 Notes on theory and non-theory in anthropology.
In Theory in Anthropology. Chicago : Aldine-Atherton.
- Means, Richard L.
1969 The ethical imperative, the crisis in American values. Garden City, New York : Doubleday and Co., Inc.
- Mandelbaum, David G.
1966 Transcendental and pragmatic aspects of religion.
In American Anthropologist. 68:2:1174-1191.
- Montagu, Ashley.
1958 The cultured man. Cleveland and New York : The World Publishing Company.
- Mumford, L.
1962 The story of utopias. New York : The Viking Press. pp.11-26.
- Needleman, Jacob.
1972 The new religions. Garden City, New York : Doubleday and Co., Inc.
- Olmsted, Michael.
1959 The small group. New York : Random House.

Pelto, Pertti J.
1970

Anthropological research, the structure of inquiry. New York : Harper & Row.

Province of Quebec Association of Architects . Biographical File
on W.S. Maxwell.

Questions and answers about the Baha'i faith.
1959 Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Rabbani, Ruhiyyih.
1969 The priceless pearl. London : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Spiro, Melford E.
1964 Religion and the irrational. In Proceedings of the 1964 American Ethnological Society. pp. 102-115.

The environment and human values, a Baha'i view.
1974 Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.

Thrupp, Sylvia , ed.
1970 Millenial dreams in action, studies in revolutionary religious movements. New York : Schocken Books.

Townshend, George.
1957 Christ and Baha'u'llah. Oxford : George Ronald.

- Turner, Victor.
1969 The ritual process, structure and anti-structure.
Chicago : Aldine Publishing Co.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C.
1966 Religion, an anthropological view. New York:
Random House.
- _____
1970 Culture and personality. New York : Random House.
- Weber, M.
1972 Major features of world religions. In Socio-
logy of religion. Roland Robertson, ed.
Middlesex : Penguin Books.
- Wellsprings of guidance, messages from the Universal House of Justice.
1969 Wilmette, Illinois : Baha'i Publishing Trust.
- Whitehead, Alfred H.
1954 Religion in the making. U.S.A.: Meridian Book.
- Wilber, Donald.
1955 Iran, past and present. Princeton, New Jersey :
Princeton University Press.