

Principles of Unity

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Friday, February 21, 2014

Princeton University

Frist Campus Center Room 302



- ◆ Organized by the Princeton University Bahá'í Club.
- ◆ Sponsored by: USG Projects Board.
- ◆ Office of Religious Life.

- ◆ Photo: Cornel West, Princeton, Class of 1943 University Professor (emeritus), Center for African American Studies.
- ◆ Source: "Cornel West praises work of Baha'is in establishing Racial Unity" <http://www.bahai.us/2012/02/01/cornel-west-praises-work-of-baha-is-in-establishing-racial-unity/>



“No two men can be found who may be said to
be outwardly and inwardly united.”



“The evidences of discord and malice are
apparent everywhere, though all were made for
harmony and union.”

—*Baha'u'llah*

Fifty Principles of Unity

Based on forthcoming paper:

- Christopher Buck, "Fifty Baha'i Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation." *Baha'i Studies Review* 18 (2012). (In press, 2014.)
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- <http://christopherbuck.com/articles/journals/>



INTRODUCTION
Cornel West on the Baha'i Faith

**"Cornel West praises work
of Baha'is in establishing
Racial Unity"**



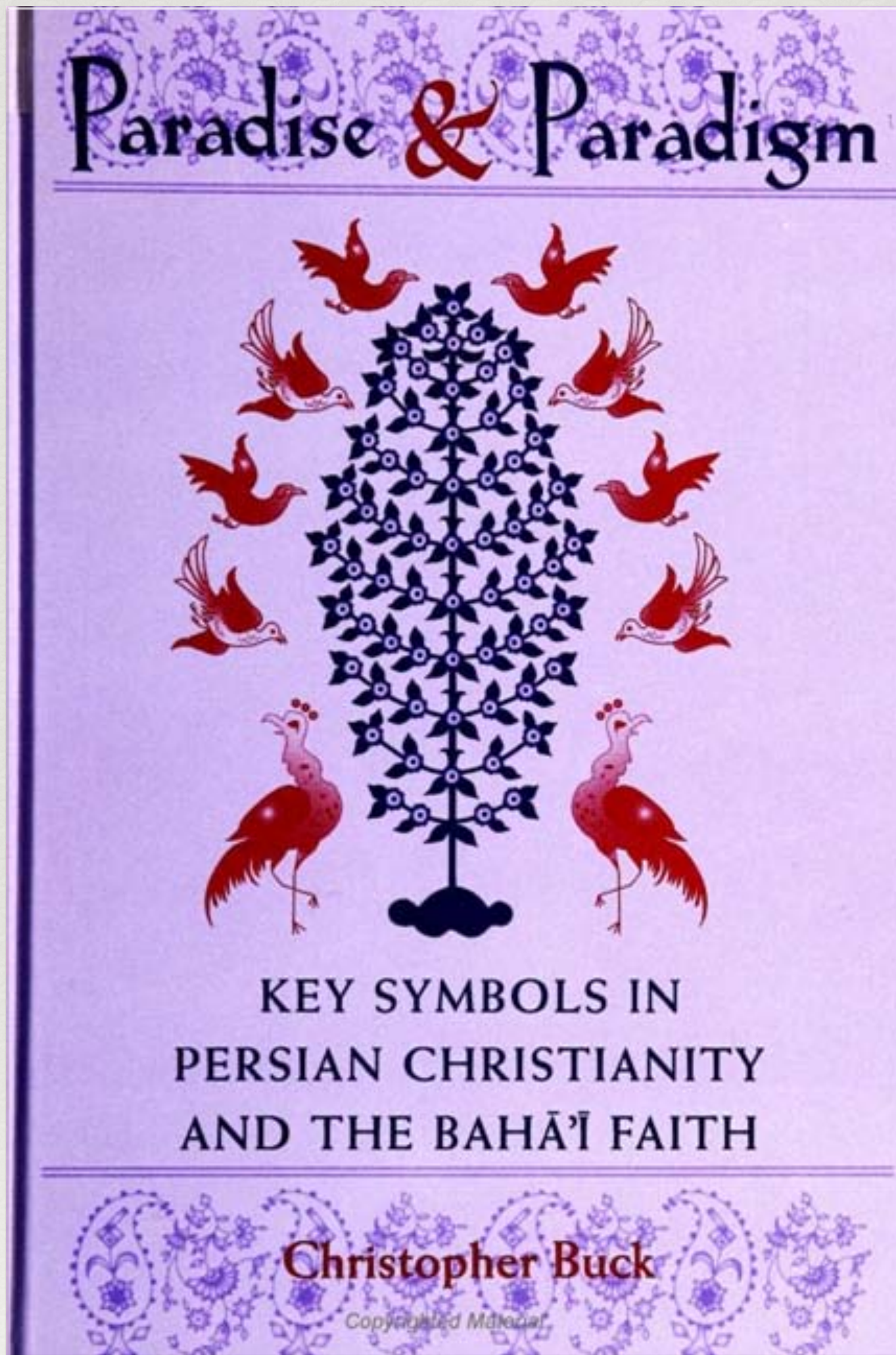
**View this Cornel West online at:
<http://www.bahai.us/2012/02/01/cornel-west-praises-work-of-baha'is-in-establishing-racial-unity/>**

THEORY & METHOD
Illness/Cure Analytical Prism

The Illness/Cure Model of World Religions

- World religions are systems of salvation, liberation or harmony.
- Their respective offers of salvation, liberation or harmony are in direct response to what is defined as the human predicament.
- Stephen Prothero's analysis:
 - Hinduism: Problem is perpetual cycle of birth, death, rebirth/Solution is liberation.
 - Buddhism: Problem is suffering/Solution is awakening.
 - Judaism: Problem is exile/Solution is to return to God.
 - Christianity: Problem is sin/Solution is salvation.
 - Islam: Problem is pride/Solution is submission.
 - Baha'i Faith: Problem is disunity/Solution is world unity [Buck]. Baha'u'llah:
 - 'Shut your eyes to estrangement (bīgānigī), then fix your gaze upon unity (yigānigī).'

PRINCIPLES OF UNITY
Prior Iterations



22 Principles of Unity

- ▶ *Paradise & Paradigm*, University of Toronto Ph.D. thesis (1996), published by the State University of New York Press, 1999.
- ▶ Page 135: "Principles practically have a life of their own. They restructure consciousness. They act as social forces. They can revolutionize worldviews. They crystallize into symbols. They can become institutions. They are dynamics of world-building. A system of principles wrestles the social monster of chaos, and the creation myth becomes a recreative reality. Social evolution is catalyzed.
- ▶ Perspectively, a paradigm can function as a worldview. It patterns what we perceive. A paradigm shift, like the mirrors in a kaleidoscope, changes this pattern. Bahā'u'llāh has tried to effect a paradigm shift in the direction of world unity through a set of principles."
- ▶ Ideas are anchored in history. This chapter introduces the Bahā'ī paradigm of unity in its historical context."
- ▶ *Paradise & Paradigm*, pp. 289–309. ("Baha'i Principles of Unity.")

33 Principles of Unity

- ▶ **Photo:** First International Conference on Modern Religions and Religious Movements in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the Babi and Baha'i Faiths.
- ▶ Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Dec. 17-21, 2000).
- ▶ Buck presents paper: "Baha'u'llah's Multiple Messiahship."
- ▶ Introduction: "Baha'i Position on Judaism" and "33 Baha'i Principles of Unity."
- ▶ In discussion, graduate student exclaims: "I believe everything you just said! Can I remain a Jew, or do I become a Baha'i?"
- ▶ Buck: "Both!"



BAHA'U'LLAH
The Tablet of Unity

1. Unity in Religion

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād dar dīn)

- ▶ Distinct from the plurality of 'unity among religions' (see Principle 11, *infra*), 'unity in religion' is a singularity.
- ▶ It is unity within the Baha'i community itself:
- ▶ 'The first kind of unity is **unity in religion** (ittiḥād dar dīn)'.
- ▶ Religious solidarity 'has always been the cause of the victory of the Faith of God in every age and century', as Baha'u'llah underscores metaphorically:
- ▶ 'Togetherness is the mystic sword of God'.

2. Unity in Speech

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād dar qawl)

- ▶ A faith-community should speak with one voice ...
- ▶ So that its public discourse ought to truly reflect its social cohesion.
- ▶ 'And another kind of unity is **unity in speech** (ittiḥād dar qawl)', Baha'u'llah writes.
- ▶ He explains that internal dissension can foment discord and thus deprive the community of the inherent power of its unity.
- ▶ 'Unity in speech' has three dimensions:
 - ▶ (1) unity of discourse;
 - ▶ (2) harmony of word and deed; and
 - ▶ (3) exercise of wisdom in speech.

3. Unity in Religious Acts

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād-i ā'māl)

- ▶ This unity focuses not on deeds in general, but on pious practices in particular, which can divide as well as unite:
- ▶ 'And in another respect, **unity in [ritual] acts** (ittiḥād-i āmāl) is intended. For any difference in these is the cause of disunity.'
- ▶ From the 'ocean' Islam have branched numerous 'gulfs':
- ▶ 'Thus do the stones weep and the Pen of the All-High laments.'

4. Unity of Station

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād-i maqām)

- ▶ 'And amongst the realms of unity is the **unity of rank and station**' (ittiḥād-i maqām)'.
 - ▶ Here, 'unity' means 'equality' of station.
 - ▶ The ideal demeanour of Baha'is is to see one's own self in relation to others ...
 - ▶ ... such that all people might ideally be on the same 'plane' (ṣuq') and station (maqām).
- ▶ If this were truly put into practice, then 'the world would become as the Abhá Paradise'.

5. Unity of Souls

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād-i nufūs)

- ▶ 'The meaning of the **unity of souls** (ittiḥād-i nufūs) is that all should gather around and cling to the Love of God and the Word of God.'
- ▶ All of the types of unity propounded in the Tablet of Unity interrelate:
- ▶ These unities (ittiḥād-hā) that We have mentioned are each an army among the hosts of God, a part of the party of God, and a command that is part of the Decree of God.
- ▶ The unity of souls (ittiḥād-i nufūs), from the beginning of creation until now, hath been and shall be that which doth assist and bring victory to the Truth ...
- ▶ ... that is to say that unity that is established according to the Decree of God and His Law.

6. Unity of People and Wealth

Baha'u'llah (ittiḥād-i nufūs va amvāl)

- ▶ 'Another example is the **unity of souls and of wealth** (ittiḥād-i nufūs va amvāl) and with this example we will end our discourse on unity.'
- ▶ Here, Baha'u'llah exhorts people (nufūs) to be united so that they can give their wealth (amvāl) to one another altruistically, as needed.
- ▶ After acknowledging the virtues of equality, Baha'u'llah explains that voluntary sharing (muvāsāt) ranks higher than equitable distribution of wealth (musāvāt).
- ▶ 'This station goes beyond just equality' in that altruistic individuals who 'prefer others over themselves have a station that, in truth, is above this station'.
- ▶ Baha'u'llah then cites Q. 59:9.

7. Unity of God

Baha'u'llah (tawḥīd-i ilāhī)

- ▶ Baha'u'llah ends this Tablet by reminding the recipient to contemplate God:
- ▶ 'Everyone must meditate upon God and in particular upon the **Unity of God** (tawḥīd-i ilāhī)'.

BAHA'U'LLAH
Other Types of Unity



8. Unity of Existence & Unity of Vision

(Arabic: waḥdat al-wujūd wa shuhūd/Persian: vaḥdat-i vujūd va shuhūd)

- ▶ Here, this 'oneness' is not the '**Unity of Existence and Manifestation**' per se, but rather what is described as 'a oneness that is sanctified above these two stations'.
- ▶ This mystical station has no name because it is beyond description, representing the pinnacle of mystical experience, which is ineffable.
- ▶ Elsewhere, Baha'u'llah explains that true '**unity of vision**' (tawḥīd-i-shuhūdī) is witnessing God's attributes and seeing the reflection of God's uniqueness in all things.
- ▶ Distinction between the Baha'i doctrine of 'manifestation' and the Sufi doctrine of 'emanation' (leading to pantheism).

9. Unity of the Manifestations of God

Baha'u'llah (maqām-i tawḥīd)

- ▶ A major Baha'i doctrine is that of prophetic unity, wherein all Messengers of God – such as Abraham, Moses, Christ and Muhammad in the Abraham faiths, along with Zoroaster, Krishna and the Buddha in the Indo-Aryan religions.
 - ▶ 'Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person.'
- ▶ 'These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the **station of pure abstraction and essential unity**. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attribute, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: "No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers!"

...

10. Spiritual Oneness/Unity of Spirit

Baha'u'llah (vaḥdat-i rawḥānī)

- ▶ Tablet of the Holy Mariner is an important Baha'i allegory.
- ▶ The Baha'i ship of salvation is called the 'Crimson Ark'.
- ▶ The Arabic Tablet of the Holy Mariner was the first complete Tablet that Shoghi Effendi translated after his appointment as the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith in 1921.
- ▶ In the untranslated Persian section of the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, there is a scene in which the captain imparts a secret to the dwellers of the Ark.
- ▶ The secret transports them with such joy that they attain '**spiritual oneness**' or '**unity of spirit**'.

11. Unity Among Religions

'Abdu'l-Baha: Peace among Religions (ṣuḥul bayn-i adyān)

- ▶ This Baha'i principle of unity is inferred from such passages as the 'Tablet of Ornaments' (Lawḥ-i Ṭarazāt). Baha'u'llah writes:
- ▶ 'The second Ṭaráz is to **consort with the followers of all religions** (mu'āsharat bā adyān) **in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship** (bi-rawḥ va rayḥān) ...
- ▶ 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to the Sixth International Congress of Free and Progressive Christians and other Religious Liberals:
- ▶ "I hope that the noble congress may become assisted . . . and create a compact of **eternal peace among the adherents of religion** (sabab-i ṣuḥul bayn-i adyān shavad);' ...
- ▶ 'so that the world may become free from strangeness (bīgānigī) and the followers of all religions may enter into the world of unity, that is, the oneness of the world of humanity (jamī'-i adyān bi-'ālam-i yigānigī ya'nī vaḥdat-i 'ālam-i insānī dar āyand).

'ABDU'L-BAHA
The Seven Candles of Unity



12. Unity in the Political Realm

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i siyāsāt)

- ▶ 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision of the future is based on the prescience of insight and foresight:
- ▶ 'The first candle is **unity in the political realm** (vaḥdat-i siyāsāt), the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned'.
- ▶ From the 'Century of Light':
- ▶ 'As to "unity in the political realm", Shoghi Effendi has explained that the reference is to unity which sovereign states achieve among themselves ...
- ▶ ... a developing process the present stage of which is the establishment of the United Nations'.
- ▶ The UN is far from perfect, but its formation was a landmark achievement.

13. Unity of Thought in World Undertakings

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i ārā)

- ▶ The next global development foreseen by 'Abdu'l-Baha is that of international cooperation:
- ▶ 'The second candle is **unity of thought** (vaḥdat-i ārā) **in world undertakings**, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed'.
- ▶ The authors of 'Century of Light' observe that this prediction, for the most part, has already taken place.

14. Unity in Freedom

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i āzādī)

- ▶ 'Abdu'l-Baha's next predicate, in the form of a prediction, is the burgeoning desire for freedom and independence and national self-determination worldwide:
- ▶ 'The third candle is **unity in freedom** (vaḥdat-i āzādī) which will surely come to pass'.
- ▶ In Century of Light, the authors note that this urge to freedom is now a global phenomenon:
- ▶ "'Unity in freedom" has today, of course, become a universal aspiration of the Earth's inhabitants'.

15. Unity in Religion

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i dīnī)

- ▶ 'Abdu'l-Baha next writes of unity in religion (i.e. eventual uniting of all religions in common cause for the commonweal):
- ▶ 'The fourth candle is **unity in religion** (vaḥdat-i dīnī) which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour'.
- ▶ This principle is closely related to Principle #1 above.

16. Unity of Nations

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i vaṭān)

- ▶ The eventual unity of nations is distinct from political unity:
- ▶ 'The fifth candle is the **unity of nations** (vaḥdat-i vaṭān) – 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'.
- ▶ This fifth 'candle of unity', according to Shoghi Effendi, 'is one which is brought about between nations, the difference between a state and a nation ...
- ▶ ... being that the former, as you know, is a political entity without necessarily being homogeneous in race, whereas the second implies national as well as political homogeneity'.

17. Unity of Races

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i jins)

- ▶ 'The sixth candle is **unity of races** (vaḥdat-i jins), making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race'.
- ▶ In Century of Light, the authors comment that 'the processes involved' in the 'unity of race' are 'far advanced'.
- ▶ Elsewhere, 'Abdu'l-Baha urges the Baha'is to perfect their unity, irregardless of race or ethnicity, so that the Baha'i community can offer a living model of unity.

18. Unity of Language

‘Abdu’l-Baha (vaḥdat-i lisān)

- ▶ ‘The seventh candle is **unity of language** (vaḥdat-i lisān), i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse’.
- ▶ In *Century of Light*, the authors observe that ‘the processes involved’ in achieving ‘unity of language’ are ‘far advanced’ ...
- ▶ ... ‘while the need for formal adoption of a universal auxiliary language remains’.

'ABDU'L-BAHA
Other Types of Unity



19. Unity of All Mankind/World Unity

‘Abdu’l-Baha (ittifāq-i kull va ittiḥād-i ‘umūm)

- ▶ The overarching principle of Baha’i teachings is the consciousness of the oneness of humankind:
- ▶ ‘Hence the **unity of all mankind** (ittifāq-i kull va ittiḥād-i ‘umūm) can in this day be achieved’.
- ▶ ‘Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century’.

20. Unity of Species

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i jins)

- ▶ Appeals to nature are commonly met with in 'Abdu'l-Baha's discourse.
- ▶ This is one example, from 'Abdu'l-Baha's Howard University speech in Rankin Chapel on 23 April 1912:
- ▶ 'Often a white dove soars aloft with a black one. Throughout the animal kingdom we do not find the creatures separated because of color. They recognize **unity of species** and **oneness of kind**'.

21. Unity of Truth

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i ḥaqīqat)

With confidence, 'Abdu'l-Baha expresses hope that 'the **unity of truth** (vaḥdat-i ḥaqīqat), through the power of God, will make these illusory differences to vanish away', such that, over time, truth becomes self-evident.

Truth is seen as a necessary adjunct of unity, largely because disunity is the outcome of illusion, such as the pernicious notions of racial, national or religious superiority.

'This is the one essential', 'Abdu'l-Baha goes on to say, 'for if unity be gained, all other problems will disappear of themselves'.

22. Unity of Conscience

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i vujdān)

- ▶ The question of peace requires 'unity of conscience' in reaching consensus:
- ▶ 'There is not one soul whose conscience does not testify that in this day there is no more important matter in the world than that of universal peace'. ...
- ▶ '[U]ntil 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** (vaḥdat-i vujdān) is essential'. ...
- ▶ 'Therefore Bahá'u'lláh, fifty years ago, expounded this question of universal peace at a time when He was confined in the fortress of 'Akká and was wronged and imprisoned'.

23. All-Unifying Power/Collective Center/Covenant

'Abdu'l-Baha (jihāt-i jāmi'ih)

- in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, after speaking of various kinds of 'collective centers' (an alternative translation to '**All-Unifying Power**') – patriotism, nationalism, identity of interests, political alliance, union of ideals, etc. – 'Abdu'l-Baha writes of the Baha'i 'Collective Center' that embodies its institutions and teachings:
- 'But the **Collective Center** (*jihāt-i jāmi'ih*) of the Kingdom, embodying the institutions and divine teachings, is the eternal Collective Center'.
- 'It establishes a relationship between the East and the West, organizes the oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences'.
- A synonym for 'Collective Center' would be the Baha'i '**Covenant**', a term that adumbrates fidelity to the authority of the Baha'i 'Central Figures' (the Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha), Baha'i institutions (The Guardianship, i.e. Shoghi Effendi as 'The Guardian', the Universal House of Justice, national, regional and local spiritual assemblies), and Baha'i laws and ethics.

24. Unity of Science and Religion



'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i 'ilm va dīn)

- ▶ The harmony and complementarity of science and religion is a bedrock principle of Baha'i belief:
- ▶ 'For every era hath a spirit; the spirit of this illumined era lieth in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh'. ...
- ▶ 'They are founded upon the **unity of science and religion** (vaḥdat-i 'ilm va dīn) and upon investigation of truth'.

25. Unity of the Rights of Men and Women

‘Abdu’l-Baha (vaḥdat-i huqūq-i rijāl va nisā’)

- ▶ ‘Equality of both sexes’, that is, gender equality, is presented by ‘Abdu’l-Baha as one of the foremost principles of Baha’i precept and praxis:
- ▶ ‘Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed equality of the sexes (literally, **‘oneness of the rights of men and women’** (vaḥdat-i huqūq-i rijāl va nisā’)) – that both man and woman are servants of God before Whom there is no distinction’. ...

- ▶ ‘Equality of the sexes will be established in proportion to the increased opportunities afforded woman in this age, for man and woman are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from God, the Creator’.

26. Unity in Education

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i usūl va qavānīn-i tarbiyat)

- Universal compulsory education is another core Baha'i belief, and the curriculum must be the same, irrespective of gender, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha:
- Eighth, education is essential, and all standards of training and teaching (vaḥdat-i usūl va qavānīn-i tarbiyat) throughout the world of mankind should be brought into conformity and agreement' ...

- 'a **universal curriculum** (tarbiyat-i vāḥidih) should be established, and the **basis of ethics be the same** (yik usūl va adab)'.

27. Unity of Husband and Wife

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat)

- ✦ Unity of husband and wife is capable of fulfilment if true equality exists between husband and wife, and if that unity is spiritual as well as physical:
- ✦ 'Among the people of Bahá, however, marriage must be a union of the body and of the spirit as well, ... for if the marriage is based both on the spirit and the body, that **union** (vaḥdat) is a true one, hence it will endure'.

28. Unity of the Family

‘Abdu’l-Baha (ittiḥād va ittifāq dar miyān-i khāndān)

- ▶ In a Baha’i perspective, the family is considered the fundamental unit of society:
- ▶ ‘Bahá’u’lláh came to bring unity to the world, and **a fundamental unity is that of the family**’.
- ▶ If society is an aggregate of families, then family unity is an index of social cohesion:
- ▶ ‘Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family (ittiḥād va ittifāq dar miyān-i khāndān), the affairs of that family are conducted’, ‘Abdu’l-Baha observes,
- ▶ ‘what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world’.

29. Baha'i Unity

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i Bahā'ī)

- ▶ Moral authenticity is needed before Baha'i ideals can be respected and taken seriously by the world at large:
- ▶ Today the one overriding need is **unity and harmony** (ittiḥād va ittifāq-i aḥibbā-yi ilāhī) **among the beloved of the Lord**, for they should have among them but one heart and soul (yik dil va yik jān) and should, so far as in them lieth, unitedly withstand the hostility of all the peoples of the world (ahl-i 'ālam). ...
- ▶ 'They must bring to an end the benighted prejudices of all nations and religions and must make known to every member of the human race that all are the leaves of one branch, the fruits of one bough'.
- ▶ 'Until such time, however, as the friends establish perfect unity (ittiḥād va ittifāq) among themselves, how can they summon others to harmony and peace (ittiḥād va ittifāq)?'

30. Unity among Baha'i Women

‘Abdu’l-Baha (al-ittihād wa’l-ittifāq)

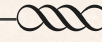
- While this Baha'i principle of unity may be considered to be a subset of the previous one, 'Abdu'l-Baha exhorts the 'spreading the **spirit of unity among His handmaids**' as a worthy endeavour with its own intrinsic value.

31. Unity of Emotions

'Abdu'l-Baha (iḥsāsāt-i vāḥidih)

- ▶ In a talk given on the morning of 9 June 1912 at the Unitarian Church, Fifteenth Street and Girard Avenue, in Philadelphia, 'Abdu'l-Baha ends his speech with this prediction:
- ▶ 'All will become as one family, one people, and the same susceptibility to the divine bounty and education will be witnessed among mankind'.
- ▶ A Persian transcription for this speech exists.
- ▶ In the Persian original, in a single sentence, 'Abdu'l-Baha enumerates seven types of unity:
- ▶ (1) One Family ('a'ila-yi vāḥidih); (2) One Nation (millat-i vāḥidih); (3) One People (jins-i vāḥid); (4) One Nation/Homeland (vatan-i vāḥid); (5) One Political System (siyāsāt-i vāḥid); (6) **Oneness of Emotions** (iḥsāsāt-i vāḥidih); (7) Oneness of Education (tarbiyat-i vāḥidih).

32. Unity of the Nations/International Unity



‘Abdu’l-Baha (vaḥdat-i ‘ālam-i insānī)

- ▀ ‘Today the world of humanity is in need of **international unity** (vaḥdat) and conciliation (vaḥdat-i ‘ālam-i insānī)’.

33. Unity of the Spiritual Assembly

'Abdu'l-Baha (yigānigī)

Just as each Baha'i community should be united and supportive of the elected local spiritual assembly (Baha'i consultative council), the members of that institution itself should be united, as their efficacy depends upon it:

'The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly', 'Abdu'l-Baha counsels, adding: 'They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the **Unity** (yigānigī) of God.

34. Unity of the Universal House of Justice & Governments

‘Abdu’l-Baha (irtibāṭ va iltiyām)

‘And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers’. ...

‘This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them’.

‘The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the **close union and harmony** (irtibāṭ va iltiyām, literally, ‘affinity and conciliation’) of these two forces (īn du qūvat), the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself’.

SHOGHI EFFENDI
Baha'i Administration &
Future World Commonwealth



35. Unity in Diversity

Shoghi Effendi

- 'For the bedrock of the Bahá'í administrative order is the principle of **unity in diversity**', Shoghi Effendi stresses, 'which has been so strongly and so repeatedly emphasized in the writings of the Cause'.
- While a commonplace catchphrase today, 'unity in diversity' remains a watchword in the Baha'i community.

36. Unity of the Baha'i Revelation

Shoghi Effendi

- ▶ Baha'u'llah was preceded by a religious figure, known as 'the Bab', a spiritual title meaning 'the Gate' (1819-50).
- ▶ 'Shoghi Effendi feels that the **unity of the Bahá'í revelation** as one complete whole embracing the Faith of the Báb should be emphasised.'
- ▶ Thus the Bab is considered the 'Co-founder' of the Baha'i religion, historically, doctrinally and legislatively (to the extent that certain laws of the Bab have been adopted, in modified form, in Baha'i praxis).

37. Unity of Doctrine

Shoghi Effendi

▀ **Doctrinal unity** and administrative unity, these are the two chief pillars that sustain the edifice of the Cause', writes Shoghi Effendi 'and protect it from the storms of opposition which so severely rage against it.'

38. Unity of Administration

Shoghi Effendi

- ▶ The unity and integrity of the Baha'i administrative order is considered to be divinely inspired in its essential features and is therefore highly valued.
- ▶ Shoghi Effendi urges Baha'is to 'maintain the unity of the administrative order' along with 'the unity of the believers'.
- ▶ 'Differences which are not fundamental and contrary to the basic teachings of the Cause should be maintained', Shoghi Effendi goes on to say, 'while the **underlying unity of the administrative order** should be at any cost preserved and insured'.

39. Unity of Purpose

Shoghi Effendi

▶ 'With **unity of purpose** firmly established in our minds, with every trace of personal animosity banished from our hearts, and with the spirit of whole-hearted and sustained fellowship kindled in our souls', Shoghi Effendi counsels, 'can we hope to deliver effectively the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and execute faithfully the various provisions of our Beloved's Will and Testament'.

▶ And further, Shoghi Effendi urges 'unity of purpose and action' in order to 'form one united front and combat, wisely and tactfully, every force that might darken the spirit of the Movement, cause division in its ranks, and narrow it by dogmatic and sectarian belief'.

40. Unity of Means

Shoghi Effendi

- ▀ **'Unity, both of purpose and of means, is,**
indeed, indispensable to the safe and
speedy working of every Assembly,
whether local or national'.

41. Unity of Vision

The Universal House of Justice

▶ The Universal House of Justice employs the expression, 'unity of vision' in the context of 'systematic action'.

▶ Speaking of the 'requirements of systematic action in advancing the process of entry by troops' (i.e. attracting significant numbers of new Baha'is), the Universal House of Justice stresses the strategic importance of conducting Baha'i 'reflection meetings' at the local 'cluster' level, in which 'participatory discussions' serve 'to maintain **unity of vision**, sharpen clarity of thought and heighten enthusiasm'.

42. Unity of Action

Shoghi Effendi

- Once 'unity of vision' is reached, 'unity of action' follows. This Baha'i principle of unity is to be distinguished from 'Unity of (Ritual) Acts' (Principle #3, supra).
- As to the observance of Baha'i feasts and holy days, Shoghi Effendi wrote:
- 'Unity of action'**, in matters of so vital an importance as the observance of Bahá'í holidays, is essential'.
- 'It is the responsibility of the NSA to remind and urge the friends to faithfully carry out all such laws and precepts of the Cause, the enforcement of which does not constitute an open violation of the laws of their country'.

43. Evolving Social Unities

Shoghi Effendi

- Underlying the future golden age of world civilization that the Baha'i writings envision is a theory of social evolution, where civilization advances throughout history in a progressive series of widening circles of unity, as Shoghi Effendi has framed it:
- 'Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching'.
- 'Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established'.
- 'World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end'.

44. Unity of the World Commonwealth

Shoghi Effendi

▶ 'The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded'. ...

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

'ABDU'L-BAHA,
SHOGHI EFFENDI
& THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
Other Types of Unity



45. Mystic Unity of God and His Manifestations

'Abdu'l-Baha (vaḥdat-i ma'navīyih-yi mazāhir-i ilāhīyih)

▶ 'Abdu'l-Baha was charismatic and, without any intention to do so, attracted some followers who variously thought him to be the return of Christ or to share the powers of Baha'u'llah, etc. In the course of addressing the error of such views, Shoghi Effendi wrote of the 'the mystic unity of God and His Manifestations':

▶ 'Moreover, to maintain that the assertion 'He is Myself', instead of denoting the **mystic unity of God and His Manifestations** (vaḥdat-i ma'navīyih-yi mazāhir-i ilāhīyih), as explained in the Kitáb-i Íqán, establishes the identity of Bahá'u'lláh with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, would constitute a direct violation of the oft-repeated principle of the oneness of God's Manifestations – a principle which the Author of these same extracts is seeking by implication to emphasize'.

46. Unity of Meaning

The Universal House of Justice

▶ 'In attempting to understand the Writings, therefore, one must first realize that there is and can be no real contradiction in them, and in the light of this we can confidently seek the **unity of meaning** which they contain'.

▶ While 'unity of meaning' is not a term commonly met with in Baha'i discourse, the principle for which it stands is universally accepted and adhered to within the Baha'i community at large.

47. Economic Unity



'Abdu'l-Baha (ittiḥād-i iqtisādī)

▶ In an untranslated Persian text, within the short space of the single sentence, 'Abdu'l-Baha sets forth five principles of unity:

- ▶ political unity (ittiḥād-i siyāsī);
- ▶ religious unity (ittiḥād-i dīnī);
- ▶ racial unity (ittiḥād-i nizhādī);
- ▶ economic unity (ittiḥād-i iqtisādī);
- ▶ social unity (ittiḥād-i ijtimā'ī).

▶ This Baha'i teaching is far better known as "abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty."

48. Methodological Coherence

The Universal House of Justice

- ▶ In what essentially amounts to the harmony of faith and reason as applied to the academic study of the Baha'i religion, The Universal House of Justice recommends that the academic study of religion not be divorced from an ontological commitment (or, at least, a first-order phenomenological acknowledgment) of spiritual reality, as a key dimension of religion and spirituality that must be appreciated in any holistic appraisal.
- ▶ It 'is quite impossible for a Bahá'í, for it ignores the fact that our world-view includes the spiritual dimension as an indispensable component for consistency and coherence, and it does not beseem a Bahá'í to write ... about his Faith as if he looked upon it from the norm of humanism or materialism'.
- ▶ Baha'i scholars are thereby encouraged to avoid "adopting what is, in essence, a materialistic and localized stance."

49. Unity with the Environment

Former Vice-President Al Gore quotes Shoghi Effendi

- ▶ 'One of the newest of the great universalist religions, ... Baha'i seems to dwell on the spiritual implications of the great transformation to which it bore fresh witness:
- ▶ "We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved".

- ▶ "Man is organic with the world. His inner life molds the environment and is itself deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions".

50. Unity of the Free

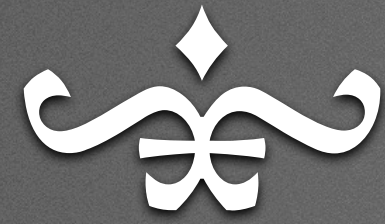
The Universal House of Justice

- ▶ 'Consider what Bahá'u'lláh has done:'
- ▶ He revealed laws and principles to guide the free, He established an Order to channel the actions of the free, He proclaimed a Covenant to guarantee the **unity of the free**.
- ▶ 'Thus, we hold to this ultimate perspective:'
- ▶ 'Bahá'u'lláh came to set humanity free.'
- ▶ 'His Revelation is, indeed, an invitation to freedom' ...
- ▶ 'freedom from want, freedom from war, freedom to unite, freedom to progress, freedom in peace and joy.'

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
& DISCUSSION

Please ask your questions now.





Thanks to:

- Princeton University Bahá'í Club
- USG Projects Board
- Office of Religious Life
- Special thanks to: Emily Goshey, Graduate Student, Princeton University, Department of Religion

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