

Baha'i Horizons in the 21st Century

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Coming home to America, and of course we've never really left, just had another home for a few years, coming home I look and figure the American Bahá'í Community should be 2 or 3 times the size it is...

I want to talk a bit about our Prophetic Horizon, our Visible Horizon and what is shaping the broad scale obligations of the U.S. to the Bahá'í World...

Abdu'l Baha talked about the coming of the Lesser Peace before the end of the century, that is, before December 31, 2000. There will be surprising events in the next 7 years, many to rival the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union in the last few. I can suggest a few scenarios. But when people wonder about the Lesser Peace, we wonder, Is it going to be in a big conference with 175 countries all represented, and a big parchment all are signing? Will it happen that way? It probably won't be that way, in the form of a great conclave as the House of Justice suggested. Will it be by a cataclysmic event? Probably not. My own presumption is that there will be great crises we cannot anticipate. I suspect there will be no official declaration, but something will happen that in the future will be seen as the historical turning point, the start of the Great Peace for mankind. As we look at the visible horizons, great forces are at work. Dark forces are visible, but underneath are great forces of unity, energized by great energy systems such as are energized by the Bahá'ís...

You know, world-scale, world-encompassing science and ideology came into being the second half of the last century. Some will say we had in Bahá'u'lláh the spiritual Darwin, the Darwin of religious evolution, coming at the same time as they did, but I think it will be more the reverse, in how people will view Darwin's role with Bahá'u'lláh as the model. You know, every breakthrough since that point has been an instrument to pull the world together...

Someday we'll be able to get on a rocket in Miami, and blooey, in less than an hour we will land in Teheran for the first part of the Real Pilgrimage... Transportation and energy systems are always changing, knitting us together tighter and tighter...

There's a word that's used alot by some theorists lately. They call it the Noosphere, that is, the Mind of Man. You know, there is the lithosphere, and the atmosphere, and now we have the Noosphere, which is not an envelope of air but the envelope of the ideas, the Mind of Man that surrounds us and interpenetrates all of us. These advances in information exchange, computer

networking, communication, all helps to bring us into a world science Mind, a world business mind, all over.

In current chaos theory - there's also complexity theory which is bigger now, in chaos theory there is this idea of all these collisions, the collisions of people and ideas, all help to fuse together to rise us into a higher energy level. The systems guys talk alot about that, like Ervin Lazlo, who has talked alot to us, I think he really is a crypto-Bahá'í you know, he just doesn't want to sign anything or join anything, but he comes to us and he says: The Bahá'ís have it. They are pushing society to a higher level. We are with all this computer stuff (I want to get us a computer I think but Meg is a little wary of them, and I understand that, because you know, you can be aiming for Beijing one day with the computer and you hit the wrong button, and bang you land in Timbuktu, so I understand her concerns...But you know, with all of this we are building a Common Brain for society, it is as if with all the computers connecting in networks, all over, we are making the neurons and the axons, building the media of unity for the Mind of Man...

So what are the specific Bahá'í horizons we observe:

Friends, we are in for surprises, all of us in the mind sphere, the noosphere. Lazlo says that when the Crash occurs, you will be able to pull the whole system into your order of thinking. So just a few Bahá'ís can really make the difference on society at large. Our numbers are deceiving. Still I look at the Bahá'í community, and I see erratic and minimal growth in the U.S. Erratic and minimal growth during these years. We really should be doubling our numbers every 3 to 5 years. We must grow - monumentally. Monumentally. And growth warnings are in the air. There are some recent surprises.

1) The Peace Message: there was a marvelous effort by many NSAs to deliver the book to Presidents, leaders of thought, etc, that really took us out of obscurity in ways we still don't understand. For many NSAs it was a very brave thing, and the first time they tried to meet with their President or Prime Minister. You know, only one President wrote back to the Bahá'í World Center - the President of the Marshall Islands. He said: when the great conclave assembles, we will be there. We will sign the parchment. He followed through you know on those contacts. He really is another crypto-Bahá'í. He saw: the Americans pulled out, leavng that atomic waste, and the schools declined, and Kabua, the President, wrote asking the Bahá'ís to take over the educational system. And we have, starting with 5 schools, and the teacher training school. Expect much more like that. Such as in Kiribati. It is only a matter of time until the majority of the population is Bahá'í, and the same thing starts, the Catholics and the protestants, will pull out, and the Bahá'ís will have to fill in the gap.

2) The Centenary at Bahji: You know in Brazil our community there

had just finished changes suggested for the Brazilian constitution. In the Chamber of Deputies, a leftist leader, of the communists in the chamber, called for a solemn session in honor of the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's passing. Bahá'ís helped a number of the deputies with their speeches, but the leftist leader wrote his own. How did it happen? Well, he had a secretary in his office who was a Bahá'í, a young girl, an aide really. This deputy was the grandson of Okinawan slave labor in Brazil. He told us, because when we were in Brasilia he asked to meet with us, he said Communism as a religion is dead. Well the Bahá'í was an influence, but he himself saw that the Left had lost its great paradigm, and indeed Communism - as a religion- was now dead. And we have a great chance to swing these people over to us. What we will do with them I don't know, but they will be very important...

We have a great opportunity to co-opt the left. In Chile, at the Universidad Bolivariana, which can perhaps be our 4th or 5th Bahá'í university, Allende's old gang, the leftists and the ideologues are suddenly interested in what the Bahá'ís are doing...

3) The World Congress - well it left repercussions all over New York. Somehow it seemed to calm even that tumultous city for a time. All the taxi cab drivers remember the Bahá'ís, event though we were a drop in the big ocean of New York...

4) Legal changes: We have been influencing important legal changes. Many governments are changing their constitution. Our national treasurer, Bill Davis, is working with the Government of the Argentine to change their constitution. In Germany, you know, the constitution was designed only for a Christian framework, and we led a legal challenge to certain parts of the German law which blocked our legal registration there, and the court found in our favor, to the opposition of the Catholics and the Protestants, and this is leading to a revision of the German constitution and our recognition in Germany as a valid primary world religion. We are having a hand in rewriting constitutions all over, the Argentine, the Cameroon. Many governments will re-write theirs in the next ten years, and we have the chance to write in Bahá'í elements and write out many negative things...

5) The World Parliament of Religions. The centenary of it really was a Bahá'í initiative, and even if many others were there, and we seemed to be downplaying it, well, it came about because of Bahá'ís, and this is a triumph of the power of the individual taking the initiative, even if the authority is in the institutions.

You know, the NSA is not going to do all the thinking for you. Use your

individual brains. However much you feel you must consult with the administrative bodies, individuals must be the actioneers, and take the initiative.

It is important to incorporate character education and weave a moral society into the curriculum. We are knee deep in trying to reach the leaders of tomorrow through the schools...

We have, oh, maybe 17 Bahá'í schools that are really of a calibre to take off. There is also the College of Human Services, which we are trying to help develop at the Rabbani school in Panchgani. All they need is \$2.5 million, and we think it is sustainable because we have studied their business plan, and agree that if they can just ratchet themselves up then they can maintain it. There is the Universidad Rural in Colombia, Nur University in Bolivia, and Universidad Bolivariana in Chile, which I mentioned, named after the great Liberator, Simon Bolivar. Notice that none of the schools I mention are here in North America.

Oh we have the Maxwell school yes, but look where the action is.

We have to make a challenge to the youth, excellence is our drive. Well my time is up - Above all expect surprises in every field of endeavor...

We have to be the complete and integral peace people, the peace experts to all...

— Bahá'í Horizons in the 21st Century (Used by permission of the curator)