■ **Lil Abdo, London, UK, "The Baha'i Faith and Wicca - a Comparison of Relevance in Two Emerging Religions"**

The purpose of this paper is to make comparisons between the growth and potential for further development of the Baha'i Faith and Wicca in Britain. This study uses the Theory of Relevance developed by Sperber and Wilson to explain cognition in the field of linguistics and applied to the field of religious studies by the author in an earlier work.

The paper begins by outlining the milieu in which both traditions began and notes possible overlaps of individuals and networks. It continues by contrasting motifs of beliefs and values between the two systems and investigates the history of both by arguing that relevance is the driving force in their respective development. Thus, the Baha'i Faith which began by attracting radical and progressive elements gradually became more conservative as its principles became generally accepted and its legalistic structure ensured the upholding of traditional concepts of family and sexuality. Conversely, the interaction with feminism and the ecology movement caused Wiccans to embrace a radical and inclusive perspective which was not present in the inception of Gardnerian tradition.

Finally, the potential for growth and influence of both traditions is assessed within the context of the Theory of Relevance.

■ **Masoud Afnan,**

■ **Houshmand Badii, "Towards a New Work Ethic: A Baha'i Perspective"**

The paper discusses that work is central to Baha'i economics with a strong emphasis on value of work and that understanding the business attitudes towards work is a prerequisite of understanding much else that it does. Bahá'í approach to work is used throughout the paper and a number of features are identified in order to illuminate and test out theoretical insights and concepts to modern working practices, work ethics in action. The centrality of value of work in Bahá'í economics is discussed in terms of two ideas, service to humanity and globalization. The article examines these two key ideas and their logic, and their implications to businesses. It argues that these two key areas also need to be linked to a third in order to fully understand their aims and outcomes and that is the promotion of 'an ever advancing civilisation'.

■ **Marion R. Finley, Jr., Université du Québec à Montréal, Montréal, Qc Canada**

In this paper, I wish to examine the evolution of the ideologies underlying much of the extremist activity we witness today being carried out in the name of Islam and then to suggest an approach for leading the adherents of such ideologies to a different, more moderate understanding of their faith, one that would lead them away from acts of violence and towards cooperative attitudes to those around them. I am motivated in this work since, it appears to me, at some point in the not-too-distance future, there will have to be an agreement to cease the violence. One can imagine scenarios under which this might occur, possibly ones involving simple military overpowering of the extremists. But, even if such an agreement be established, we shall still have to deal with the principles of faith that drove people to the extremist activities in the first place and show them that there are other ways of interpreting their faith than the ones that lead to the ideologies they had adopted.

Therefore, I shall look at some of the extremist ideologies and retrace their evolutions and attempt to identify critical branching points, points at which, clerics, theologians, political leaders, intellectuals interpreted the Qur'an, the Hadith, the Sunna, etc in their own way, leading eventually to ideologies that promote and sanction the extreme violence we see today. Elements of the methodology I use are similar to those employed by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Iqan. In that work, He identifies several key factors that blind the followers of previous revelations of God to the Manifestation of their day. Such factors include (1) the blind adherence to the traditions of the religions of the past, (2) literal interpretation of the writings of the past, in particular, (3) the failure to understand that the Manifestations of God use parables and metaphors, which are not meant to be taken literally, to convey their messages, and (4) the human ego, egotistical desires, and self-pride that blind many a soul from the truth. He illustrates these factors by examining examples from the New and Old Testaments, the Qur'an, and the sayings of the Imams of Shi'ah Islam.

■ Stephen N. Lambden, University of California, Merced, "The Bab, the Hebrew Bible, and the Question of Jewish Influence"

In my doctoral thesis, "Some Aspects of Isra'iliyyat and the Emergence of the Babi-Baha'i Interpretation of the Bible" (2002), I gave considerable attention to the Bab and his alleged knowledge of the New Testament. A chapter not included in this thesis was on the subject of the Bab, the Hebrew Bible, and the question of Jewish influence. This presentation will be based on aspects of this unpublished chapter, supplemented here and there with a few updates. Though the Bab's knowledge of the New Testament has been the subject of some debate in recent years, no attention has been paid to his possible knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and the question of Jewish doctrinal associations and influences.

Shiraz and Bushire, the two major Persian centres of the Bab's early years, were the homes of several hundred Jewish inhabitants and traders. It is very likely that the Bab interacted with them and gave close attention to their circumstances, practices, and situation as aspects of Jewish religiosity seem here and there to be reflected in the massive Arabic and Persian canon of the writings of the Bab. It will be argued in this paper that while the Bab never seems to have directly cited either the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament, he was influenced by dimensions of Jewish religiosity sometimes as Islamic channeled Isrā'īliyyāt (Israelitica).

■ Zaid Lundberg, University of Copenhagen, "The Guardian and the Globe: Shoghi Effendi's Discourse on Modernity and the Bahá'í Faith."

This presentation is a summary of my forthcoming doctoral dissertation which is an analysis of the Guardian's discourse on "modernity" and the Bahá'í Faith. The presentation will centre around three main areas: 1) Key concepts: "discourse" and "modernity", 2) The Guardian's discourse on modernity, and 3) The Guardian's discourse of modernity (civilisational critique) in a larger context (e.g., Spengler, Freud, Jung, Sorokin, Toynbee, Fromm et al.)"

■ Sen McGlinn, Leiden University, "Friday, and the continuity of the Aqdas and the Bayan"

In a brief question and answer recorded by Mason Remey in Haifa, 1910, and published in Star of the West, the statement that Bahais will eventually observe Friday as a day of rest is attributed to `Abdu'l-Baha. In this paper, the question of this ruling is examined. It is proposed that the brief mention of a Bayanic law in the writings of Baha'u'llah implies the endorsement of the whole of that law (except parts explicitly changed by Baha'u'llah). Abdu'l-Baha's answer to the question recorded by Remey makes sense if Abdu'l-Baha is taking this continuity as a given. The Master's reasoning would be based on the fact that the Bayan names Friday as a day of rest and specifies devotions for it, and that Baha'u'llah

has endorsed and altered the devotional part of this, therefore the 'day of rest' part is also endorsed.

■ Moojan Momen, Cambridge, UK, "Shi`i History: the alternate view"

The history of Shi`ism is usually told as a procession of clerics who took forward the development of Shi`i jurisprudence down the ages. But this is in fact just the victor's story. Because the view of Shi`i Islam promoted by the Usuli school and culminating in the Vilayat-i Faqih of Khumayni was the school that ultimately triumphed, it is history as viewed by that school that has become normative. Views of Shi`ism that dissent from this normative view are dismissed as being minority and marginal views.

This paper is an attempt to reconstruct a subaltern history of Shi`ism -a history of a series of movements within Shi`ism that opposed the tendency to see the Shari`ah as central or to view the faqih as the leader of the community. Indeed if we look carefully and without accepting the present normative view, we can see that in each epoch, there was a movement that opposed the Shari`ah-centred view of Shi`ism that eventually became the Usuli school -- the view that advanced the social role of the clerical class.

In this paper, the word that will be attached to this opposition viewpoint is the Walayah-centred viewpoint -- the viewpoint that was centred on the person of the Imam as spiritual guide. Through history, we can see a series of movements that opposed the Shari`ah-centred school: the School of Qumm, the Isma`ilis, Sufism, the School of Isfahan, the Shaykhis, the Babis and the Baha'is. Each in turn opposed the Shari`ah-centred school and the advancement of the social role of the clerical class. Each in turn was defeated in Iran and marginalized. The triumph of the Shari`ah-centred viewpoint appears to be complete and yet recent evidence from Iran may indicate that the Shari`ah-centred view has in fact through its political triumph ensured its ultimate defeat.

■ Geoffrey Nash, Sunderland University, "Christianity, the Baha'i Faith, and the Crisis of Religious Modernism: an Inquiry"

This paper raises a number of issues in the context of what I call 'religious modernism' – which can be defined loosely as the religious response to modernity that dispenses with 'pre-modern' theologies and favours rational and developmental over supernatural and miraculous explanations of religion. Discussion begins with Christianity as the existing religion at the moment of modernity's arrival in the West ; the crisis of the 1860s is scrutinised for the way in which traditional Christianity first confronted then eventually conceded to religious modernism with respect to Church-Christianity. The victory of religious modernism has however proved hollow as Church-Christianity has lost its popular grip to be replaced by burgeoning fundamentalist and pentcostalist forms. While we are informed that religion is making a 'comeback' worldwide it is in forms that largely sideline the rational, developmental mapping of religious truth that we might call religious modernism. The intellectual and liberally-minded classes have in the meantime left religion behind and adopted liberal-secular attitudes which are frequently hostile toward religion. In an environment in which religious modernism is increasingly squeezed, it is worthwhile to question whether this is anyway a marginal phenomenon, and to posit the view that religion is inherently emotion-based, and both uninterested in and unable to mount a coherent appeal to plausible reason.

Though few outside its ranks would recognise it, the Baha'i Faith, I argue, is at the crux of the crisis of religious modernism. I adopt the argument that – without underemphasising its mystical and affective dimensions - this religious manifestation constitutes, in nineteenth and early twentieth century terms, a prime achievement of religious modernism. Evidence for this can be adduced from the progressivist re-interpretation of Islamic thought mounted in the Bayan and the Kitab-i Iqan, and the rationalistic exegesis of Biblical

themes and doctrines in the writings of Abdu'l Baha and Mirza Abu'l Fadl. The Baha'i community is seen to have undergone a crisis of religious modernism of its own in the 1970s and 80s in which rational discussion of Baha'i history was effectively proscribed and there has been a subsequent move towards scriptural literalism. These tendencies might be seen in the context of the tensions impacting upon religion in the contemporary world, which has also witnessed the marginalisation of religious modernism in favour of the experience of the subject-self, and given rise to the appropriation of religion by political, identitarian movements.

Is religious modernism therefore capable of being sustained? Or is the retreat to religious dogma and irrationality irresistible given the intractable nature of problems modernity has thrown up, e.g. the replacement of the supernatural by science, and of providence by natural laws ? To address these questions I refer to the writings of the nineteenth century critic of religion, historian of Christianity and engaged observer of Babism, Ernest Renan, and to contemporary Christian theologians, John Hick and Michael Goulder.

■ **Roger Prentice, Burnlaw, "Justice and Religion: Baha'i Reflections on Justice as the Supreme Conditioner of Thought and Activity"**

Having looked at what we mean by justice, art, science, humanity and religion the presentation provides examples of how people in the arts, sciences and humanities indicate the application of justice in their work. From the definitions and examples some tentative conclusions are drawn along with some questions that are seen as facing us all.

■ **James Russell, History of the Book, Durham University Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, "The Middle Ages in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi: A Survey"**

The medieval ages of darkness have passed away and this century of radiance has dawned." (1) The Centre of the Baha'i Covenant proclaimed brightness of this Age in contrast with the '/darkness/' of the Middle Ages. The Day of God has been defined through comparison with the medieval era in the Writings of the Master and the Guardian, providing a reference point for the development of humankind in Baha'i historiography. This paper will present a survey of references to the European Middle Ages in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. Such an overview is offered as a contribution towards an understanding of this historical period in the light of the Baha'i Revelation, and is intended open the field of inquiry into the intersection of Baha'i Studies and Medieval Studies.
(1) 'Abdu'l-Baha, /The Promulgation of Universal Peace/, p. 369 (US Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2nd edn. 1982)

■ **Erfan Sabeti, Lancaster University**

■ **Peter Smith, Thailand**