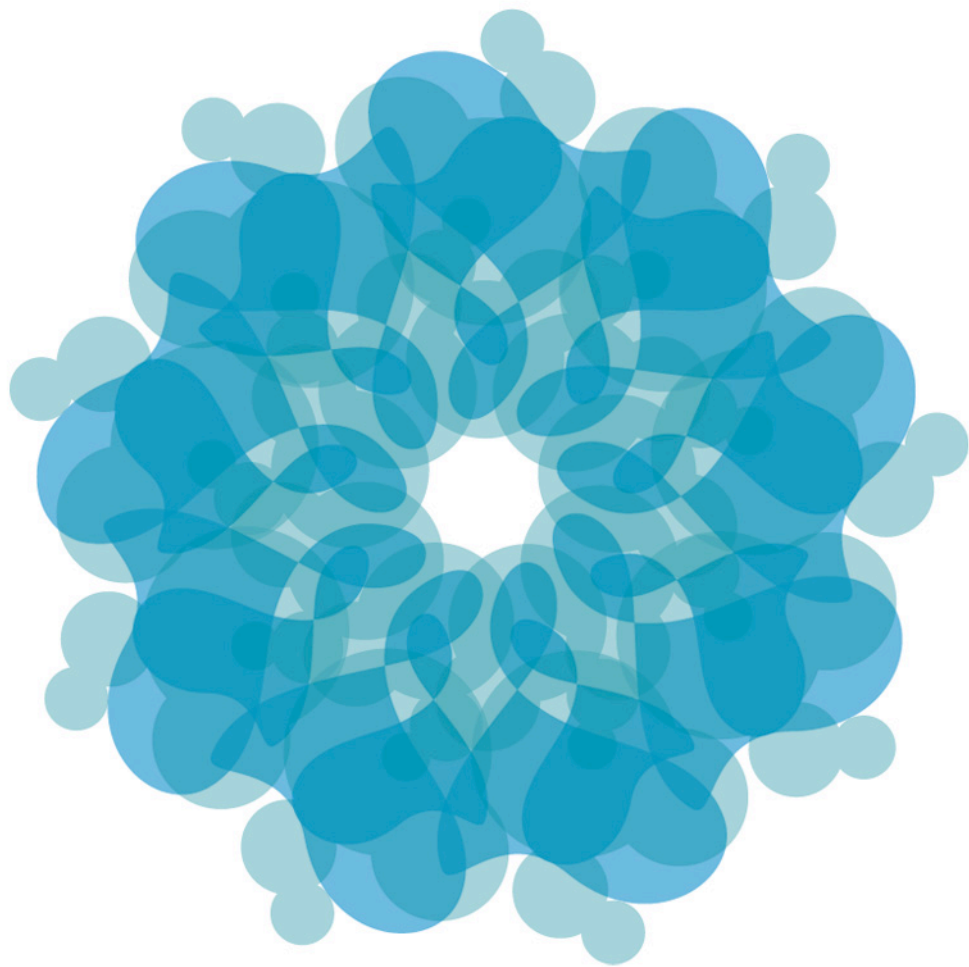


# Soul Food

Visions of Oneness



# Visions of Oneness

August 2008

## Program

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**We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but  
have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth as brothers.**

**– Dr Martin Luther King (1967)**

01. Ye observe how the world is divided against itself, how many a land is red with blood and its very dust is caked with human gore. The fires of conflict have blazed so high that never in early times, not in the Middle Ages, not in recent centuries hath there ever been such a hideous war, a war that is even as millstones, taking for grain the skulls of men. Nay, even worse, for flourishing countries have been reduced to rubble, cities have been levelled with the ground, and many a once prosperous village hath been turned into ruin. Fathers have lost their sons, and sons their fathers. Mothers have wept away their hearts over dead children. Children have been orphaned, women left to wander, vagrants without a home.

From every aspect, humankind hath sunken low. Loud are the piercing cries of fatherless children; loud the mothers' anguished voices, reaching to the skies. And the breeding-ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past – imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics. So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direct peril.

– `Abdu'l-Baha, *from the Bahá'í Writings*

02. But the gentle mind of the Buddha was offended at the unnecessary cruelty performed on the altars of the gods. He said: 'Ignorance only can make these men prepare festivals and hold vast meetings for sacrifices. Far better to revere the truth than try to appease the gods by shedding blood. What love can a man possess who believes that the destruction of life will atone for evil deeds? Can a new wrong expiate old wrongs? And can the slaughter of an innocent victim blot out the evil deeds of mankind? This is practicing religion by neglect of moral conduct. Purify you hearts and cease to kill; that is true religion.'

– *The Teachings of Buddha*

**Grandfather, Great Spirit, all over the world the faces of living ones  
are alike... Teach us to walk the soft earth as relatives to all that live.**

*– Native American, Sioux prayer*

**03. From the Promise of World Peace**

The endowments which distinguish the human race from all other forms of life are summed up in what is known as the human spirit; the mind is its essential quality. These endowments have enabled humanity to build civilizations and to prosper materially. But such accomplishments alone have never satisfied the human spirit, whose mysterious nature inclines it towards transcendence, a reaching towards an invisible realm, towards the ultimate reality, that unknowable essence of essences called God. The religions brought to mankind by a succession of spiritual luminaries have been the primary link between humanity and that ultimate reality, and have galvanized and refined mankind's capacity to achieve spiritual success together with social progress.

If, therefore, humanity has come to a point of paralysing conflict it must look to itself, to its own negligence, to the siren voices to which it has listened, for the source of the misunderstandings and confusion perpetrated in the name of religion. Those who have held blindly and selfishly to their particular orthodoxies, who have imposed on their votaries erroneous and conflicting interpretations of the pronouncements of the Prophets of God, bear heavy responsibility for this confusion – a confusion compounded by the artificial barriers erected between faith and reason, science and religion.

*– The Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í World Centre, Letter to the people of the world.*

**04. No Man Is An Island**

No man is an island, entire of itself,  
Every man is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
As well as if a promontory were,  
As well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were.  
Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.  
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls.  
It tolls for thee.

*– John Donne*

**The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love  
and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes  
blend together in the making of a perfect chord.**

*– Bahá'í Writings*

05. Henri Dunant, at the age of 30 was a wealthy Swiss banker and financier. His life would probably have continued much as it had except for one fateful day, June 24, 1859, that changed everything. Dunant had been sent by his government to talk to Napoleon III. He was to discuss a business deal between the Swiss and the French that would benefit both. But Napoleon was not in Paris; he was on the plain of Solferino about to do battle with the Austrians.

Henri Dunant tried to reach the scene before the battle began, but he was too late. His carriage came to a halt on top of a hill that overlooked the battlefield. Suddenly trumpets blared, muskets cracked, cannons boomed. The two cavalries charged and the battle was on. Henri Dunant, as if in a box seat at the theatre, sat transfixed. He could see the dust rising, hear the screams of the injured, the dying. Dunant sat as if in a trance at the horror below him. But the real horror was later — when he entered the small town after the battle was over. Every house, every building was filled with the mangled, the injured, the dead. Driven by pity at the suffering he saw all around him, Dunant stayed in the town for three days doing everything he could to help.

He was never the same man again. War was barbarous. The world should abolish it. This was not the way to settle differences between nations. And most of all, there ought to be a worldwide organization to help people in times of suffering and chaos. Henri Dunant returned to Switzerland. In the next few years he became a fanatic on the subject of peace and mercy. He began to travel all over Europe preaching his message. Eventually his business suffered in the effort and he was soon broke. But he persisted.

At the first Geneva Conference he carried on a one-man assault against war. As a result, the Conference passed the first international law against war — a movement that was to give birth eventually to both the League of Nations and the U.N.

In 1901, Dunant was awarded the first Nobel Peace prize. And though he was penniless and living in a poor house, he gave the entire prize to the worldwide movement he had founded. Henri Dunant died in 1910 almost totally forgotten by the world. But Dunant needed no monument to mark his grave. As a symbol of the organization he had fathered, he had taken the Swiss flag, a white cross on a red background and reversed it: a red cross on a white background. The organization that became his everlasting monument was the Red Cross.

**We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic.  
Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings,  
different hopes, different dreams.**

**– Jimmy Carter**

06. One day our descendants will think it incredible that we paid so much attention to things like the amount of melanin in our skin or the shape of our eyes or our gender instead of the unique identities of each of us as complex human beings.

– *Franklin Thomas*

07. And let it be known once more that until woman and man recognize and realize equality, social and political progress here or anywhere will not be possible... Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality.

– *'Abdu'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace*

08. [Leaders of the nations of the world] must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking – the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world – should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth... In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained... Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavour, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of God, the lovingkindness of His favoured ones, the unrivalled endeavours of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Endeavour, ceaseless endeavour, is required.

Nothing short of an indomitable determination can possibly achieve it. Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable... Surely the day will come when its beautiful light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man.

– *Shoghi Effendi, from the Bahá'í Writings*

09. To develop a sense of universal responsibility – of the universal dimension of our every act and of the equal right of all others to happiness and not to suffer – is to develop an attitude of mind whereby, if we see an opportunity to benefit others, we will take it in preference to merely looking after our own self-interests. But, though, of course, we care about what is beyond our scope, we accept it as part of nature and concern ourselves with doing what we can.

An important benefit of developing such a sense of universal responsibility is that it helps us become sensitive to others – not just those closest to us. We come to see the need for caring, to care for those members of the human family who suffer most. We recognize the need to avoid causing divisiveness among our fellow beings. And we become aware of the overwhelming importance of contentment.

– *The Dalai Lama, Buddhist sentiment*

10. When the cooling tyre contracts  
Round the fellowe of the wheel,  
Do not spokes that once where boughs  
In close knitting fibers feel  
A glow in being ironbound  
In unity secure and round  
For conquest of untravelled ground?

– *Wilfred Gibson*

11. Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets”.

– *Christianity*

12. Seek for mankind that of which you are desirous for yourself, that you may be a believer; Treat well as a neighbour the one who lives near you, that you may be a Muslim.

That which you want for yourself seek for mankind.

The most righteous of men is the one who is glad that men should have what is pleasing to himself, and who dislikes for them what is for him disagreeable.

Whatever you abhor for yourself, abhor it also for others, and whatever you desire for yourself desire also for others.

– *Attributed to Muhammad, Sukhanan-i-Muhammad*

13. **A Mythic Dreaming**

Plumed serpent

Sending forth a clarion call To Peace

Leaping the mountain tops

Swooping low into teeming vales

Calling 'Peace'

Circling the boundaries of the earth

Taking in the shapes, the patterns, the colours

Designs

Lace work of the ages

Songs, rhythms, beats, harmonies,

Drawing them deeply within the feathered plumes

Each clan, each tribe, each heartbeat and hope

Each primal rhythm and nuance of colour

Woven now in the plumes of Love and Peace

Every life-giving element woven now into

Rainbow Feathers

Love in Diversity

Peacing the Globe in new dancing

New weavings and blendings,

New stories

New songs

Out of the ancient towards tomorrow now!

The Rainbow Serpent.

– *Eulalie Zarb*

14. Learn from the past.  
Learn from the sadnesses,  
The disappointments,  
The tears,  
The successes,  
The joys.  
And release them all.  
Do not carry them  
In your mind  
And in your heart  
Instead  
See anew.  
Feel anew.  
Create wonders.

– *Words by Clear Water*

15. Let no one deceive another,  
Let no one despise another in any situation,  
Let no one, from antipathy or hatred, wish evil to anyone,  
Just as a mother, with her own life, protects her only son from hurt,  
So within yourself foster a limitless concern for every living creature.  
Display a heart of boundless love for all the world  
In all its height and depth and broad extent,  
Love unrestrained, without hate or enmity.  
Then as you stand or walk, sit or lie, until overcome by drowsiness,  
Devote your mind entirely to this; it is known as living here life divine.

– *Buddhist Enlightenment*

16. The person who doesn't fit in with our notions of who is worthy of our love – the bag lady at the corner, the strange old man who rides through town on a three-wheel bike all strung up with flags – is just the person who, by not fitting into our patterns, insists that we expand not only our views but also our capacity to love. Today, see if you can stretch your heart and expand your love so that it touches not only those to whom you can give it easily, but also to those who need it so much.

– *Daphne Rose Kingman*

17. Look up, my people,  
The dawn is breaking,  
The world is waking  
To a new bright day  
Where none defame us,  
No restriction tame us,  
No colour shame us,  
No sneer dismay.

– *A Song of Hope by Oodgeroo of the tribe Noonuccal*

**Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for  
your fellow creatures. Glory not in love for your country,  
but in love for all mankind.**

– *Bahá'u'lláh*

18. This is the hour when ye must associate with all the earth's peoples in extreme kindness and love, and be to them the signs and tokens of God's great mercy. Ye must become the very soul of the world, the living spirit in the body of the children of men. In this wondrous Age, at this time... the Word of God hath infused such awesome power into the inmost essence of humankind that He hath stripped men's human qualities of all effect, and hath, with His all conquering might, unified the peoples in a vast sea of oneness.

Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banners of unity, to intone, in the assemblages of the world, the verses of friendship and love and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one.

In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love... praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity and loving-kindness to every community on earth... He hath guided all the peoples of the earth to oneness... He hath lit man's world and made this earth of dust to send forth streams of light.

– *Bahá'í Writings*

19. There is a time for everything,  
And a season for every activity under heaven:  
A time to be born and a time to die,  
A time to plant and a time to uproot,  
A time to kill and a time to heal,  
A time to tear down and a time to build,  
A time to weep and a time to laugh,  
A time to mourn and a time to dance,  
A time to scatter stones and  
A time to gather them,  
A time to embrace and a time to refrain,  
A time to search and a time to give up,  
A time to keep and a time to throw away,  
A time to tear and a time to mend,  
A time to be silent and a time to speak,  
A time to love and a time to hate,  
A time for war and a time for peace.

– *Ecclesiastes 3, Christian Bible*

**Please join us for refreshments**



All Soul Food programs are available for free download from  
**[www.soulfood.com.au](http://www.soulfood.com.au)**

## **About Soul Food**

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

### **Venue**

State Library of Victoria  
Village Roadshow Theatre  
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St  
(Enter via La Trobe Street)

### **Time**

10.30am – 11.30am

### **Dates**

First Sunday of every month:  
Sunday September 7th, 2008  
Sunday October 5th, 2008  
Sunday November 2nd, 2008  
Sunday December 7th, 2008

### **Further Information**

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia or Western Australia please call 0402 245 752 or visit [www.soulfood.com.au](http://www.soulfood.com.au).

## **Study Circles**

In response to interest from Soul Food guests, the Bahá'í community is now offering a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people. The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 0402 245 752 or email [soulfoodvic@gmail.com](mailto:soulfoodvic@gmail.com).

## **The Bahá'í Community of Victoria**

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit [www.bahai.org.au](http://www.bahai.org.au). For books on the Bahá'í Faith and related subjects such as spiritual development, world religion, education and more please visit:

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