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The Never-ending Journey of the Soul

Papers

The Soul in Chinese and Bahá'í Belief

Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew

An Introduction to the Doctrines of Soul and Enlightenment in
Mahayana Buddhism and the Bahá'í Faith

Yeo Yew Hock

Heaven, Hell and the Afterlife

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The Mystic Journey of the Soul

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Body, Mind, Soul and Spirit

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Note from editor

In an open letter addressed to the "Peoples of the World" in October 1985, the Universal House of Justice, the elected supreme assembly of the Bahá'í World, wrote of a "paralyzing contradiction" concerning human nature. While most people long for peace and harmony, "uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive"¹. In contrast to modern popular images of man being an aggressive animal, they indicated that man's true self is in fact fundamentally spiritual in character and that recognition of this fact is vital to the success of peace initiatives everywhere.

Whether human beings are essentially selfish animals or spiritual beings is of course, one of the central questions of religion. The myth of man being an aggressive animal, a "survival machine", is a familiar modern self-portrait. But just what do we mean by human nature being "spiritual"? Traditionally, being "spiritual" was grounded in a "Never-ending Journey of the Soul", and one possible approach to understanding our true selves is to start by exploring this concept. The 3rd Bahá'í Studies conference in Singapore, held on the 5th April 1998, set out to do precisely this.

The conference brought together Bahá'ís and their friends from a wide variety of different cultural backgrounds. The papers that appear in this volume started off as talks delivered at this conference. The views expressed at the conference, and which now appear in this volume, undoubtedly re-enforce the age-old belief that we are on a "Never-ending Journey of the Soul".

Anjam Khursheed, editor

December 1998

¹ The Promise of World Peace, A Statement by The Universal House of Justice, Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa, 1985, p. 3.