

Excerpt from

A Global Family: Concept and Reality

The most meaningful activity in which a human being can be engaged is one that is directly related to human evolution If humankind would become creatively engaged in the process of metabiological evolution, a new reality would emerge, and a new age would be born.

Jonas Salk

Cultural conflicts are becoming more dangerous than at any time in history. A new model of coexistence is needed, based on man's transcending himself.

Vaclav Havel,

*from "The Need for Transcendence in the Postmodern World,"
a speech given at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4, 1984*

The Purpose of the Papers

The Global Family Papers are modelled, very loosely, on the Federalist Papers, published in New York in 1787, and familiar to every American high school student. Since they are not widely known otherwise, except to political historians, some explanation is needed of their significance in the present context. The Federalist Papers appeared first as essays in newspapers, under the pen name "Publius", but were, in fact, written by three men who had played a major role in forging an American nation from the colonies that had broken away from British rule in 1774. The three were Alexander Hamilton, who was probably their originator, John Jay and James Madison, later to become the fourth president of the United States. Their purpose, as expressed in the Federalist Papers, was twofold, firstly to work out the best balance of power between the central government of the new federation and the rights of the individual states and, secondly, to persuade Americans - who now had to find a new post-colonial identity - of the merits of a strong central government. The aims of the Global Family Papers are also philosophical and persuasive, but on a different scale. Information about their initiator and contributors can be found on the inside back

cover of this booklet. The project anticipates a long-term need for contributions large and small, in print and other media.

The difference in scale between the Federalist and Global Family papers is the difference between a continental and planetary sized challenge. While the present initiative deals with new global structures, the Federalist Papers dealt with a new kind of political structure, a “nation of states,” by which the newly born American federation defined itself. Later this was to be modified, subtly but significantly, as “a nation of states under God.” The American constitution, which gave form to the concept of a nation of states, has been the basic model for almost all the new democratic states which have come into existence since then, and which form the greater part of the 191 member countries of the United Nations today.

The significance of a nation of states in the vast panorama of human evolution can hardly be over-emphasized, for its emergence marks a clear step beyond the essentially tribal mentality of “them and us” which had previously dominated relationships between large human groups. It is easy to forget today that each of the thirteen colonies was an independent political entity, with its own constitution, when they first joined together in the war of independence from Britain. Creating a new political unity, with all the practical decisions that this implied, was by no means so easy or natural as it might seem today, and it was, in fact, a close run thing, but we can see it now as only one step towards a greater political unity in which the individual’s sense of identity comes from being a member of the global community. This process will parallel the change by which citizenship in the “united states of America” came to override the colonists’ former identity as citizens of the individual states. They had, of course, the great advantage of sharing the same language, religion and cultural heritage.

Though the American federation was by no means the first of its kind - the Swiss confederation predated it by five centuries - it was ground-breaking in many ways, not least because the Constitution of the United States was based on a particular concept of what it means to be human, expressed in the preamble in the famous phrase, “endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Such a statement would have been meaningless in comparable documents of earlier ages, say in the Justinian Code of the late Roman empire, and even in Magna Carta. Underlying this definition of man were the unspoken values of the Christian religion, most notably the principle of human equality which flows from belief that all human beings are brothers and sisters “in Christ” and, like Jesus, are children of the same Father God in heaven. While it is no exaggeration to call the American Constitution a work of political genius, it is now under enormous strain and has possibly reached the limits of its usefulness. Against the explicit intentions of the founding fathers, the United States of America has found itself unable to avoid “foreign entanglements” and step by step has become an empire in practice, if not in constitutional form and, alas, an increasingly corrupt empire. By deliberate manipulation of the world’s oil supply, and the values of the US dollar and of gold, it has effectively been taxing the rest of the world for half a century, which has enabled it to sustain a high standard of living while building up the greatest war machine in history. The American military budget is, astonishingly, greater than that of the rest of the world combined.

There is a paradox in the term “nation of states”, for it is more logical to see a federation as a state made up of different nations, which are essentially tribes writ large. The word “nation” comes from the same root as “nativity” - i.e., birth - implying a blood relationship and a group which is bonded “naturally”. The term “nation of states,” therefore, raises the question, how is this natural, almost instinctive, sense of unity to be created artificially among different cultural groups in order to build a unified political entity? In the context of the Global Family Papers the question will be, “How are individuals from cultural blocs with vastly different world views to acquire a natural and over-riding sense of belonging to a global community?” Whatever the answer, it can only come through a process of education in the widest sense. This must be the core agenda of a Global Family project, and it will call for exceptional educators – not lecturers or preachers – but most importantly it will call for all its member to see themselves as both learners and teachers and as life-long learners. The revolution implicit in the last term may not be immediately apparent, but it must be borne in mind that a hundred and fifty years ago, even in the most advanced countries in the world, education for the great majority of citizens ended at eleven or twelve years of age, and no need was seen for formal learning beyond this. What would it mean to have learning structures that took one up to sixty or seventy? And why would one want to continue learning in a systematic way to such an age?

Uniting the United States was to pose an enormous challenge when the tide of European immigrants arrived in the nineteenth century, bringing not only people with vastly different cultures and languages and Christians of conflicting denominations but millions of Jews, who found a refuge from persecution, but whose sense of being a “chosen race” implied resistance to complete absorption into another nation. This is a very large and complex subject, and the only point being made here is that American acculturation did not just happen. The potential confusion of the “melting pot” was resolved deliberately by various means, most obviously by symbolizing American unity in the national flag, to which all American school children ritually swear allegiance every day, although there were, and are, of course, many more subtle influences at work. The sense of oneness on which national consciousness depends had to be created not only through education of the individual but also through, dialogue and compromise between the different states, and through economic interdependence. The same elements - education, dialogue, compromise and trade - will be required to create a sense of global oneness. In the beginning the inhabitants of the original thirteen colonies had only an intellectual vision of an American nation and no feeling for what it was like to be an American citizen, for that had to wait upon the experience of federation. The Global Family Papers aim to present a wider vision of global citizenship, but the feeling of being a member of a global family must wait upon the creation of a whole new set of structures. Whatever they may turn out to be, they will have to operate for many years within the world as it is.

Since the United States was founded, the world has gone through several revolutions which together are creating not only political crisis but an evolutionary crisis, for we are now facing political problems on a global scale that are ultimately driven by different ideas of what constitutes a human being. The conquest of fascism and the collapse of Soviet totalitarianism by no means eliminated the model of man as a slave of the state on which both were based, and the rising tide of consumerism across the world assumes a debased concept

of man, the selfish materialist, which presents a new kind of threat to human progress. Globalisation, which promises to unify the world, is a two-edged sword, for it is responsible for the spread of AIDS, the drug traffic the arms trade and socially destructive competition. Furthermore, while global communication can expand cultural understanding, it can intensify, rather than diminish, the clash of cultural values. It was hoped that the nation state would eventually make tribal consciousness obsolete, but events seem now to be reshaping the world along the lines of greater tribes, through groupings on a continental scale - notably Russia, China, the US itself and, possibly the European Union – and new geo-religious conflict. The developments in communication which have made the world a “global village” also enable large scale confrontation to develop and thus regress us to tribal consciousness in a more dangerous form. To quote again from the speech of Vaclav Havel with which this paper begins:

The single planetary civilization to which we all belong confronts us with global challenges. We stand helpless before them because our civilization has essentially globalized only the surfaces of our lives [and] the fewer answers that the era of rational knowledge provides to the basic questions of human Being, the more deeply it would seem that people cling to the ancient certainties of the tribe.

Havel’s unusual phrase “human Being,” with a capital B, indicates the same concern with what it means to be fully human that inspires the Global Family Papers. What do we feel, how do we behave, when we no longer think of ourselves primarily as members of a particular nation, culture or ancient religion? What certainties can we cling to in a globalizing world? One thing we can say for sure, we will not inherit them passively, as in the past, but will have to actively seek them and, indeed, construct them. There is no future salvation without hard spiritual and intellectual work.

As the spiral path of evolution has unfolded, we find ourselves facing similar problems of federation to those which the first citizens of America had to overcome, but on a scale that they could not have imagined. Where federalism was a response to external threat, the ordinary thinking person today fears what Samuel Huntington has called “the clash of civilizations”. The American Constitution spelled out a new vision for human government and opened a new phase in human history, but that phase is now over and a new vision for the future is now called for. What higher ideal of man, what new political philosophy, what new social structures on a planetary and local scale are now required? These are the questions which the Global Family Papers sets out to address.