



Introduction to the volume	1
Introduction to the Baha'i Community	3
<b>WRITINGS AND MESSAGES</b>	
Baha'i Sacred Writings	19
From the Universal House of Justice	29
<b>EVENTS 1997-98</b>	
The Baha'i International Community: Activities 1997-98	39
Update: The Situation of the Baha'is in Iran	51
A Dialogue on Spirituality and Development	61
Fiftieth Anniversaries in Spain and Luxembourg	71
Mount Carmel Projects: Progress 1997-98	79
The Year in Review	89
<b>ESSAYS, STATEMENTS, AND PROFILES</b>	
Knowledge and Civilization: Implications for the Community and the Individual, by Farzam Arbab	157
World Watch: Moral Education in a Global Society, by Ann Boyles	179
Unity in Action: Models of Baha'i Community Life, by David Bikman	203
Profile :	
The New Era Development Institute, India	217
Two Wings of a Bird: The Equality of Women and Men	
A Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States	223
A Pathway to Peace and Justice	
A Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission	229
Statements by the Baha'i International Community:	
Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development	233
Empowering the Girl Child	261
Protection of Minorities	265
<b>INFORMATION AND RESOURCES</b>	
Obituaries	271
Statistics	279
Directory	283
Selected New Publications	291
A Basic Baha'i Reading List	295
Glossary	299
Index	305
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	

How does a person become a "cause of social good," which, the writings of the Baha'i Faith say, is the highest goal to which a human being can aspire? An exploration of answers to this question forms the basis of a number of articles, profiles, and compilations included in *The Baha'i World 1997-98*. The relationship between knowledge and civilization, for example, is the theme for this year's compilation of passages from the Baha'i sacred writings, and the revised text of a presentation by Farzam Arbab on the relationship between civilization's two great systems of knowledge, science and religion, and their role in our individual and social advancement, also features prominently in the volume. "World Watch" takes a look at the issue of moral education, surveying some contemporary views and outlining a perspective informed by the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. A profile of the New Era Development Institute in India offers an example of an agency operated by the Baha'i community that seeks to develop both the spiritual and material aspects of its programs' participants, giving substance to the Faith's commitment to achieving a "dynamic coherence" between these two elements of life.

In addition to these features, *The Baha'i World 1997-98* reports on the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, in which Baha'i representatives joined with leaders of eight other faith groups as well as top officials of the World Bank to discuss the relationship between spirituality and development. The full text of the document on "spiritual indicators" prepared by the Baha'i International Community for this gathering is also included, as is an account of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Baha'i communities in Spain and Luxembourg. Regular updates on the situation of the Baha'i community of Iran, on the year's progress on the Mount Carmel construction projects at the Baha'i World Centre, on the work of the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations, and the "Year in Review"-a survey of doings by Baha'i communities around the world-all provide up to date information. Many of the articles are liberally illustrated with color photographs. Highlights of major messages written by the Universal House of Justice during the year, and statements by National Spiritual Assemblies and the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations are other regular features, as are resource materials such as current statistics, brief memorial sketches of Bahi'is who passed away during the year, an annotated list of selected new publications, and a directory of Baha'i agencies and organizations. A brief introduction to the Baha'i community, a basic reading list on the Baha'i Faith, a glossary of terms, and an index are all included for the easy reference of the reader.

The initial series of *The Baha'i World*, the international record of the worldwide Baha'i community, was published intermittently beginning in 1925. A new series began to appear in 1992, covering

the period from 21 April (the beginning of the Baha'i festival of Ridván) of one year to the next. The volume provides an authoritative account of the activities and concerns of members of the Baha'i Faith and constitutes an attractive and useful reference, both for those who are already well acquainted with the Faith and its aims and for those who wish to learn more about it.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

A group of Greek and Turkish Cypriots gather joyously for a Holy Day feast, their obvious delight in each other's company contrasting with the ethnic tensions on that divided island. Young people in Angola, unable to attend school because of the war, participate in a workshop that gives them a vision of the important role they have to play in society. A princess from Western Samoa travels to Fiji to offer tribal chiefs and elders a document outlining a process of development that respects the dignity of all peoples. Women and men gather in Garoua Boulai, a rural region of eastern Cameroon, to discuss how they can work together to alleviate some of the burdens placed on the women with regard to child care. A young Mongolian woman who has never before left her province walks seventy kilometers in the snow, then travels by truck, and finally catches a plane to Ulaan Baatar, where she participates in the election of her religion's national administrative body. A youth group performs a dance about the terrible consequences of racism to a rapt audience of children in a school auditorium on Vancouver Island, Canada. In Colombia, South America, a conga musical group imbues its traditional Latin rhythms with a spiritual message about

## THE BAHAI WORLD

the unity of humankind, to the delight of listeners in open-air venues. After two weeks of basic health-care training, a woman in Zambia returns to her village and shares what she has learned with her neighbors. These people, though they have in all probability never met one another, share a united view of the world and its future, as well as their own role in shaping that future. They are members of the Baha'i international community.

The Baha'i international community, comprising members of the Baha'i Faith from all over the globe, now numbers some five million souls. They represent 2,112 ethnic and tribal groups and live in almost 132,000 localities in 190 independent countries and 45 dependent territories or overseas departments. What was once regarded by some as an obscure, tiny sect is now reported by the Encyclopedia Britannica to be the second-most widely spread independent religion in the world, after Christianity. Its membership cuts across all boundaries of class and race, governing itself through

the establishment of local and national elected bodies known as Spiritual Assemblies. Its international center and the seat of its worldgoverning council, known as the Universal House of Justice, are located in the Holy Land, in Haifa, Israel.

From what source do the members of the Baha'i Faith draw their spiritual strength and their organizational structure? What are the tenets of faith that can so attract and unify such a diverse group of people? How do they see the future? This brief introduction to the Baha'i community, its history, its spiritual teachings, and its aims and objectives, provides information in response to these questions.

#### Origins

In 1844, in Persia, a young siyyid (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad) named Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad declared Himself to be the Promised Qa'im awaited by Shi'ite Muslims. He adopted the title "the Bab," which means "the Gate," and His teachings quickly attracted a large following. Alarmed by the growing numbers of "Babis," as His followers were known, the Muslim clergy allied themselves with ministers of the Shah in an effort to destroy the infant Faith. Several thousand Babis were persecuted, tortured, and killed over the next number of years, but the growth of this new religion continued, even after the Bab Himself was imprisoned

#### THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

and subsequently publicly executed by a firing squad in July 1850.

The horrific treatment of the Babis at the hands of the secular and religious authorities was recorded by a number of Western diplomats, scholars, and travelers, who expressed their admiration for the character and fortitude of the victims of the persecution.

The Babi religion sprang from Islam in the same manner that Christianity sprang from Judaism or Buddhism from Hinduism. It was apparent from early in the Bab's ministry that the religion established by Him represented not merely a sect or a movement within Islam but possessed the character of an independent Faith. Furthermore, one of the main tenets of Babi belief was the Bab's statement that He had been sent by God to prepare the way for One greater than Himself, who would inaugurate an era of peace and righteousness throughout the world, representing the culmination of all the religious dispensations of the past.

Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad, known to history as Baha'u'llah, was one of the leading adherents of the Babi Faith who was arrested and imprisoned during the tumultuous years of the Bab's brief ministry.

He was spared from execution but was banished from Persia to Baghdad, thence to Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally to the penal colony of Acre in Palestine. Thus, the Persian government, which had secured the support of the rulers of the rival Ottoman empire in suppressing the new movement, expected that His sphere of influence would be severely limited. During His imprisonment

Mirza I:usayn-' Ali had received the first divine intimations that He was the Promised One of whom the Bab had spoken. He adopted the title Baha' u' llah, which means "the Glory of God," and publicly declared His mission on the eve of His exile from Baghdad, in April 1863.

Baha'u'llah was still nominally a prisoner when He passed away some forty years later in Acre, in May 1892, although the authorities had gradually loosened their restrictions as they became acquainted with Him and the nature of His teachings. During the long years of His exile and imprisonment, Baha'u'llah revealed the equivalent of over one hundred volumes of writings, consisting of the laws and ordinances of His dispensation, letters to the kings and rulers of the East and the West, mystical teachings, and other divinely inspired writings.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

In His Will and Testament, Baha'u'llah appointed His eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, who adopted the title 'Abdu' l-Baha (the Servant of Baha), as His successor and sole authoritative interpreter of His teachings. 'Abdu' l-Baha had shared the long years of exile and imprisonment of His Father, being freed only after a new regime was installed by the "Young Turk" movement in 1908. Shortly thereafter, at an advanced age, He embarked on an arduous journey to Europe and America where, from 1911 to 1913, He proclaimed Baha' u' llah's message of universal brotherhood and peace to large audiences, consolidated fledgling Baha'i communities, and warned of the potential catastrophe looming on Europe's darkening horizon. By the time World War I broke out in 1914, 'Abdu' l-Baha had returned to His home in Haifa, just across the bay from Acre in Palestine, and devoted Himself to caring for the people of that city, fending off famine by feeding them from stores of grain He had safeguarded for just such an eventuality. ' Abdu'l-Baha's humanitarian services and His promotion of intercultural harmony were recognized by the British government, which, at the end of the war, conferred upon Him a knighthood, a title He acknowledged, although He declined to use it. He passed away in 1921 and is buried on Mount Carmel in a vault near where the remains of the Bab had been interred by Him some years before. Among the significant legacies that 'Abdu' l-Baha bequeathed to history was a series of letters called the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which He had addressed to the Baha'is of North America during the years of World War I. These fourteen letters directed the recipients to scatter to countries on all continents and share with their populations the teachings of Baha'u'llah-a mandate that led to the global expansion of the Baha'i community. Another legacy of ' Abdu'l-Baha was His Will and Testament, which Baha'is regard as the charter of the administrative order conceived by

Baha'u'llah. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed Him after His passing as Guardian of the Baha'i Faith and authorized interpreter of its teachings.

During the period of his Guardianship, from 1921 to 1957, Shoghi Effendi concentrated his attention on four main areas: the development of the Baha'i World Centre in the environs of Haifa, Israel;

#### THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

the translation and interpretation of the Baha'i sacred writings; the rise and consolidation of the institutions of the administrative order of the Baha'i Faith; and the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan for the propagation of the Baha'i Faith around the world.

At the Baha'i World Centre, Shoghi Effendi effected the construction of a superstructure for the mausoleum containing the remains of the Bab, which had been brought secretly from Persia and interred by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a tomb on Mount Carmel in a spot designated by Baha'u'llah. Shoghi Effendi beautified and expanded the simple native stone structure, which is today a site of pilgrimage for Bahais from all over the world. He enhanced the Baha'i properties, particularly the site of Baha'u'llah's grave at Bahji, with gardens of striking beauty, and initiated construction of the International Baha'i Archives building to house and preserve artifacts from the early days of the Baha'i Faith. This building, the first structure built along the arc-shaped path on the site designated as the world administrative center of the Baha'i community, was completed in 1957.

In concert with the actions he took to develop the Baha'i World Centre and lay the foundations, literally and figuratively, for the further course of that development, Shoghi Effendi was also instrumental in interpreting the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and in translating them from the original Persian and Arabic into English. The Guardian had served as secretary for a number of years to 'Abdu'l-Baha and at the time of the latter's passing was a student at Oxford University. His mastery of Persian, Arabic, and English, coupled with the authority conferred upon him by 'Abdu'l-Baha as the appointed interpreter of the Baha'i writings, made him uniquely qualified to undertake their translation. He also translated a history of the Babi Faith, authored a history of the first century of the Baha'i Faith, called *God Passes By*, and wrote thousands of letters to communities and individuals around the world, elucidating passages from the writings, and thus giving direction and impetus to Baha'i activities.

#### Development of the Administrative Order

Shoghi Effendi's work in developing the Baha'i administrative order is one of the most dramatic legacies of his years as Guardian.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

The first step in this development was to encourage the organized, planned expansion of Baha'i communities in places where local and national Baha'i councils, known as Spiritual Assemblies, would eventually be established. The Guardian effected this global expansion of Baha'i communities through a series of international plans that ran for varying numbers of years, during which twelve National Spiritual Assemblies were founded.

At the time of Shoghi Effendi's sudden passing in 1957, the Baha'i community was in the middle of a global plan of expansion and consolidation called "The Ten Year Crusade." During this period, which concluded in 1963-the centenary of Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission in the Garden of Ridwan in Baghdad the goal was to open 132 new countries and major territories to the Faith and expand existing communities in 120 countries and territories previously opened to the Faith. These ambitious targets were actually exceeded by the end of the plan, in spite of the difficulties posed by the Guardian's death.

'Abdu'l-Baha, in His Will and Testament, had authorized the continuation of the Guardianship through the appointment by the Guardian of a successor from among his own sons, should he have them, or other direct descendants of Baha'u'llah. Such a designation was dependent upon the decision of Shoghi Effendi whether an individual could be named who met the demanding spiritual qualifications specified by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. Shoghi Effendi had no children and died without designating such a Guardian to follow him. He had, however, taken steps toward the election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Baha'i Faith which was to function, with him, as one of the two authorized successors provided for in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. He had also appointed a number of individual Baha'is to an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship called "Hands of the Cause of God." These individuals had been charged with the duty of protecting the unity of the faith and collaborating with the National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to ensure that the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were won. Upon the passing of Shoghi Effendi, these persons gathered together to guide the Baha'i community to the completion of the plan initiated by the Guardian and towards the first election of the Universal

## THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

House of Justice, which took place in April 1963.

Conceived by Baha'u'llah Himself, the institution of the Universal House of Justice is established on principles laid down in the Baha'i sacred writings. Its election, by the members of the 56 National Spiritual Assemblies that existed in April 1963, clearly

demonstrated the principle of unity so central to the Baha'i Faith, with the nine elected members coming from four continents and representing a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Basing itself on the authority conferred on it by the Founder of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice has stood as the acknowledged central authority in the worldwide Baha'i community since

1963. During the last thirty-five years, the Universal House of Justice has launched six global plans for the advancement of the Faith. From a worldwide population of 408,000 in 1963, the Baha'i community has grown to approximately five million members; the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies has grown from 56 to 175; and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies has increased from 3,555 to some 16,000. Baha'is live in some 235 countries and territories around the planet.

**Spiritual and Moral Teachings and Baha'i Community Life**

The force that unites this widely diverse body of people is a unity of vision gained from belief in Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God, in the social and administrative structures He established, and in the spiritual and moral teachings He propagated. Central to these spiritual teachings is the concept that there is only one God and that the major religions of the world have been established by Messengers or Manifestations of this one Divine Reality: Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad, who have been sent by the Creator progressively throughout history to deliver a divine message commensurate with humanity's stage of development. The spiritual essence of all the major religions, in the Baha'i view, is the same: that humanity has been created to know and to worship God. Only the religions' social teachings change through the process of progressive revelation. The Baha'i perspective is optimistic, seeing the cumulative benefits of progressively revealed religions as fundamental to an "ever-advancing civilization." What divides various religious communities, Baha'is believe, comes not

## THE BAHAI WORLD

from God but from humanity and its accretions to the essential religious teachings brought by each divine Messenger.

In this new stage of humanity's development, the time has come for the recognition of the unity of the human race, for the establishment of the equality of women and men, for the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, and for the realization of the age-old promise of universal peace. Likening the development of the human race to that of a child, the Baha'i writings say that we have passed through the stages analogous to infancy and childhood and are now enduring a tumultuous adolescence, on the threshold of maturity. Baha'u'llah taught that humanity is destined to come of age, but the course it takes to achieve that goal is entirely in its own hands.

To promote the development of a society in which Baha'i ideals can be fully realized, Baha'u'llah established laws and moral teachings that Baha'is are called upon to follow. Central to these is daily obligatory prayer. Study of and meditation upon the Baha'i sacred writings is also enjoined upon believers each morning and evening. Baha'is between the ages of fifteen and seventy, with certain specific exceptions, observe a nineteen-day, dawn-to-dusk fast each year. Baha'u'llah referred to prayer and fasting as the "twin pillars" of faith, an indication of their importance and the benefits to be gained from them. He also raised work to the level of worship. The main repository of Baha'u'llah's laws is a volume entitled the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, or the Most Holy Book.

There are no dietary restrictions in the Baha'i Faith, but the consumption of alcohol and the use of narcotic and hallucinogenic drugs are forbidden, as they affect the mind and interfere with spiritual growth. Baha'u'llah counseled Baha'is to be honest and trustworthy, to render service to humanity with an abundance of deeds rather than mere words, to be chaste in their relationships with others, and to avoid gossip and backbiting. He forbade lying, stealing, adultery, sodomy, and promiscuity. The importance of the family is central to Baha'i community life, as is the moral and spiritual education of children.

Baha'is often gather together in their communities to study the sacred writings of their faith and to pray, but a central feature in Baha'i community life is a meeting called "the Nineteen Day Feast,"

#### THE B AHA' I C OMMUNITY

at which all members join in worship, consult about community affairs, and socialize. For the time being, pending the further development of Baha'i communities, these meetings often occur in rented facilities, people's homes, or, in some locations, in the local Baha'i center. The Baha'i writings call for the erection in each community of a beautifully designed House of Worship, set in exquisite gardens and functioning as a spiritual center of activity. A variety of social and humanitarian institutions are also to be established around it. A Baha'i House of Worship presently exists on each continent, and sites have been purchased around the world for the construction of many more in the future. They are open to people of all faiths-or those professing no particular faith- for prayer and meditation. Services are nondenominational. There are no sermons, only readings and prayers from the Baha' i writings and scriptures of other world faiths and music by an a capella choir. This preserves for worshippers the sacredness of the experience of hearing and meditating upon the Holy Word without the interference of manmade concepts.

#### Aims, Objectives, and Activities

As the Universal House of Justice stated in a message addressed to

the peoples of the world, written in October 1985 on the eve of the United Nations International Year of Peace, "Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind ." The ultimate aim of the Baha'i Faith is the establishment of unity among all the peoples of the world, and it is because of its orientation towards unity on an international scale that the Baha'i community has been active at the United Nations since that organization's inception. Today the Baha' i International Community, an extremely active non-governmental organization (NGO) which represents the collective voice of the national Baha' i communities around the world, enjoys consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is particularly involved in addressing human rights issues, the needs of women and children, and environmental concerns, as well as pursuing sound, sustainable development policies. To coordinate its international efforts in these areas, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office

and Office of Public Information, as well as Offices of the Environment and for the Advancement of Women, collaborate with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world in various projects and representations at international gatherings.

The Baha'i International Community 's activities at the United Nations have earned it a reputation as one of the most effective religious NGOs in the UN system. Its national and international representatives have taken active roles in major international events such as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995, and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul in June 1996.

Beyond the scope of the United Nations, Baha'is look towards a day when a new international order will be established, a commonwealth to which all the nations of the world will belong. As Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1936,

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the

relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. 1

1. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahti 'u 'llah: Selected Letters*, 2d ed. (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1991 ), p. 203 .

## T H E B A H A ' I C O M M U N I T Y

Shoghi Effendi went on to describe the tremendous benefits to humanity resulting from such a world order:

The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extenuation of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race. 2

To make its aims and objectives widely known and to promote its perspective on various issues, the Baha' i International Community has been active not only in collaborating with like-minded organizations in and out of the United Nations but has also been engaged in public relations efforts designed to bring spiritual and social principles of the Faith to the attention of the generality of humankind.

Information about the Baha' i Faith was much more widely disseminated than it had been as international news media reported the persecution of the Baha'is of Iran which came in the wake of the 1979 Iranian revolution. More than two hundred members of the Faith were executed for their belief, considered as heresy by the regime, and thousands more were imprisoned, fired from their jobs, or had their homes confiscated or their pensions cut off as a result of government orders. Baha' is around the world responded in unity to the situation in Iran-the land in which their religion was born-by petitioning their governments to take action against this treatment; it is, to some degree, as a result of these efforts that the persecutions were not more extreme, although Iran's Baha'is still face the possibility of arbitrary imprisonment and execution, and are still denied fundamental rights and freedoms.

The Baha' i community has also taken a proactive approach in

promulgating its views. The statement on peace issued by the Universal House of Justice in 1985, entitled *The Promise of World*

2. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Peace, sparked a worldwide campaign of presentations and public education projects that lasted throughout the International Year of Peace and beyond and encompassed government figures and leaders of thought, as well as the general population. To mark the centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing in 1992, the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information published *Baha 'u 'llah*, a statement about the Faith's Founder, detailing His life, teachings, and mission. Events of the year itself, notably the commemoration in the Holy Land in May 1992 of the centenary of the passing of Baha'u'llah, involving some three thousand participants from all over the world, and the Baha'i World Congress held in New York City in November 1992, which attracted some 27,000 Baha'is from around the globe, brought much publicity to the Faith. In January 1995, the Office of Public Information released another major statement on social development, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, which was widely disseminated at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March of that year. In October 1995, a statement entitled *Turning Point for All Nations* was released to contribute to the discussions on the future of the United Nations that marked the organization's fiftieth anniversary.

Aside from large-scale public relations activities and the publication of statements on different themes, the Baha'i community has been continually engaged in a series of international teaching plans, and it has seen rapid expansion in different parts of the world, most notably in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where national Baha'i communities have been established in recent years following the collapse of long-standing political barriers. Communities governed by National Spiritual Assemblies now exist in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Baltic States, Belarus, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Romania, Russia, the Ukraine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Slovenia and Croatia, and the Czech and Slovak Republics have Regional Spiritual Assemblies. Elsewhere in the world, National Spiritual Assemblies have recently come into existence in Cambodia, Eritrea, Mongolia, Sicily, Moldova, and Sao Tome and Principe. The continuing development of the Baha'i community can be seen in the planned establishment of National Spiritual Assemblies in both the Czech and Slovak Republics, in Sabah and Sarawak in

#### THE B AHA'i C OMMUNITY

Malaysia, and in the reestablishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of Liberia—all to occur in 1998.

The existence and growth of the Baha' i community offers irrefutable evidence

that humanity, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work together in harmony. While Baha'is are not unaware of the turmoil in the world surrounding them, their view is succinctly depicted in the following words, taken from *The Prosperity of Humankind*:

A world is passing away and a new one is struggling to be born. The habits, attitudes, and institutions that have accumulated over the centuries are being subjected to tests that are as necessary to human development as they are inescapable. What is required of the peoples of the world is a measure of faith and resolve to match the enonnous energies with which the Creator of all things has endowed this spiritual springtime of the race. 3

The source of this faith and resolve is the message of hope offered to humanity by the teachings of Baha'u'llah. It is a message that deserves the thoughtful consideration of all those who yearn for peace and justice in the world.

3. Baha' i International Community Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind* ( 199 5). See *The Baha'i World 1994- 95*, pp. 273- 96, for the complete text of this statement.

WRITINGS

MESSAGES

BAHA'I

SACRED

WRITINGS

From the Writings of Bah a'u 'lhih

A 11 men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Say: O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him Who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have been created.

The Prophets and Chosen Ones have all been commissioned by the One True God, magnified be His glory, to nurture the trees of human existence with the living waters of uprightness and understanding, that there may appear from them that which God hath deposited within their inmost selves. As may be readily observed, each tree yieldeth a certain fruit, and a barren tree is but fit for fire.

The purpose of these Educators, in all they said and taught, was to preserve man's exalted station. Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon His precepts and hath not deviated from His true and fundamental Law. The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity... Happy they who are endued with true wisdom and understanding, who see and perceive, who read and understand, and who observe that which God hath revealed in the Holy Books of old, and in this incomparable and wondrous Tablet.

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. If any man were to meditate on that which the Scriptures, sent down from the heaven of God's holy Will, have revealed, he would readily recognize that their purpose is that all men shall be regarded as one soul, so that the seal bearing the words "The Kingdom shall be God's" may be stamped on every heart, and the light of Divine bounty, of grace, and mercy may envelop all mankind. The One true God, exalted be His glory, hath wished nothing for Himself. The allegiance of mankind profiteth Him not, neither doth its perversity harm Him. The Bird of the Realm of Utterance voiceth continually this call: "All things have I willed for thee, and thee, too, for thine own sake." If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure. Were the earth to attain this station and be illumined with its light it could then be truly said of it: "Thou shall see in it no hollows or rising hills." ...

Please God, the peoples of the world may be led, as the result of the high endeavors exerted by their rulers and the wise and learned amongst men, to recognize their best interests ...

#### B AHA'i S ACRED WRITINGS

.. I beseech God, exalted be His glory, that He may graciously awaken the peoples of the earth, may grant that the end of their conduct may be profitable unto them, and aid them to accomplish that which beseemeth their station.

Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly

character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct. If the learned and wise men of goodwill were to impart guidance unto the people, the whole earth would be regarded as one country. Verily this is the undoubted truth. This servant appealeth to every diligent and enterprising soul to exert his utmost endeavor and arise to rehabilitate the conditions in all regions and to quicken the dead with the living waters of wisdom and utterance, by virtue of the love he cherisheth for God, the One, the Peerless, the Almighty, the Beneficent. . .

Great is the station of man. Great must also be his endeavors for the rehabilitation of the world and the well-being of nations. I beseech the One true God to graciously confirm thee in that which beseemeth man's station.

The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

At the outset of every endeavor, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his rank. Thus the noisome odors of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavors of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace.

The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom . . .

The Great Being saith: The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of

## THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

these two greatest gifts. That which hath been set forth and will be revealed in the future is but a token of this Servant's ardent desire to dedicate Himself to the service of all the kindreds of the earth.

In the third Tajalli (effulgence) of the Book of Tajalliyat (Book of Effulgences) We have mentioned: "Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book in this conspicuous station."

In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner," issuing forth from His Lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before. Thus hath it been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp. In like manner, the moment the word expressing My attribute "The Omniscient" issueth forth

#### B A H A ' I S A C R E D ' W R I T I N G S

from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvelous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Know thou of a certainty that the Revelation of every other Name is accompanied by a similar manifestation of Divine power. Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha  
Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honored it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and

the power of thought. ..

O ye that have minds to know! Raise up your suppliant hands to the heaven of the one God, and humble yourselves and be lowly before Him, and thank Him for this supreme endowment, and implore Him to succor us until, in this present age, godlike impulses may radiate from the conscience of mankind, and this divinely kindled fire which has been entrusted to the human heart may never die away.

Consider carefully : all these highly varied phenomena, these concepts, this knowledge, these technical procedures and philosophical systems, these sciences, arts, industries and inventions-all are emanations of the human mind. Whatever people has ventured deeper into this shoreless sea, has come to excel the rest. The happiness and pride of a nation consist in this, that it should shine out like the sun in the high heaven of knowledge . . . And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this , that he among all

the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

How long shall we drift on the wings of passion and vain desire; how long shall we spend our days like barbarians in the depths of ignorance and abomination? God has given us eyes, that we may look about us at the world, and lay hold of whatsoever will further civilization and the arts of living. He has given us ears, that we may hear and profit by the wisdom of scholars and philosophers and arise to promote and practice it. Senses and faculties have been bestowed upon us, to be devoted to the service of the general good; so that we, distinguished above all other forms of life for perceptiveness and reason, should labor at all times and along all lines, whether the occasion be great or small, ordinary or extraordinary, until all mankind are safely gathered into the impregnable stronghold of knowledge. We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honorable is man if he arises to fulfill his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavor in the arena of civilization and justice ...

We must now highly resolve to arise and lay hold of all those instrumentalities that promote the peace and well-being and happiness, the knowledge, culture and industry, the dignity, value and

station, of the entire human race. Thus, through the restoring waters of pure intention and unselfish effort, the earth of human potentialities will blossom with its own latent excellence and flower into praiseworthy qualities ...

All blessings are divine in origin, but none can be compared with this power of intellectual investigation and research, which is an eternal gift producing fruits of unending delight. Man is ever

#### B AHA.'f S ACRED "WRITINGS

partaking of these fruits. All other blessings are temporary; this is an everlasting possession. Even sovereignty has its limitations and overthrow; this is a kingship and dominion which none may usurp or destroy. Briefly, it is an eternal blessing and divine bestowal, the supreme gift of God to man. Therefore, you should put forward your most earnest efforts toward the acquisition of science and arts. The greater your attainment, the higher your standard in the divine purpose. The man of science is perceiving and endowed with vision, whereas he who is ignorant and neglectful of this development is blind. The investigating mind is attentive, alive; the callous and indifferent mind is deaf and dead. A scientific man is a true index and representative of humanity, for through processes of inductive reasoning and research he is informed of all that appertains to humanity, its status, conditions and happenings. He studies the human body politic, understands social problems and weaves the web and texture of civilization. In fact, science may be likened to a mirror wherein the infinite forms and images of existing things are revealed and reflected. It is the very foundation of all individual and national development. Without this basis of investigation, development is impossible. Therefore, seek with diligent endeavor the knowledge and attainment of all that lies within the power of this wonderful bestowal.

... until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent.

Consequently, when thou lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages, with the attractiveness of their adornments, the freshness of their natural resources, the refinement of their appliances, the ease of their means of travel, the extent of knowledge available about the world of nature, the great inventions, the colossal enterprises, the noble discoveries and scientific researches, thou

wouldst conclude that civilization conduceth to the happiness and the progress of the human world. Yet shouldst thou turn thine eye to the discovery of destructive and infernal machines, to the development of forces of demolition and the invention of fiery implements, which uproot the tree of life, it would become evident and manifest unto thee that civilization is conjoined with barbarism. Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance by the revelations of the All-Merciful and by godly virtues, and be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom and by the outpourings of the Realm of Might.

Consider now, that the most advanced and civilized countries of the world have been turned into arsenals of explosives, that the continents of the globe have been transformed into huge camps and battlefields, that the peoples of the world have formed themselves into armed nations, and that the governments of the world are vying with each other as to who will first step into the field of carnage and bloodshed, thus subjecting mankind to the utmost degree of affliction.

Therefore, this civilization and material progress should be combined with the Most Great Guidance so that this nether world may become the scene of the appearance of the bestowals of the Kingdom, and physical achievements may be conjoined with the effulgences of the Merciful. This in order that the beauty and perfection of the world of man may be unveiled and be manifested before all in the utmost grace and splendor. Thus everlasting glory and happiness shall be revealed.

Through the ingenuity and inventions of man it is possible to cross the wide oceans, fly through the air and travel in submarine depths. At any moment the Orient and Occident can communicate with each other. Trains speed across the continents. The human voice has been arrested and reproduced, and now man can speak at long distances from any point. These are some of the signs of this glorious century. The great progress mentioned has taken place in the material world. Remarkable signs and evidences have become manifest. Hidden realities and mysteries have been disclosed. This is the time for man to strive and put forth his greatest efforts in

#### BAHA'i SACRED WRITINGS

spiritual directions. Material civilization has reached an advanced plane, but now there is need of spiritual civilization. Material civilization alone will not satisfy; it cannot meet the conditions and requirements of the present age; its benefits are limited to the world of matter. There is no limitation to the spirit of man, for spirit in itself is progressive, and if the divine civilization be established, the spirit of man will advance. Every developed susceptibility will increase the

effectiveness of man. Discoveries of the real will become more and more possible, and the influence of divine guidance will be increasingly recognized. All this is conducive to the divine form of civilization...

.. if material civilization shall become organized in conjunction with divine civilization, if the man of moral integrity and intellectual acumen shall unite for human betterment and uplift with the man of spiritual capacity, the happiness and progress of the human race will be assured. All the nations of the world will then be closely related and companionable, and the religions will merge into one, for the divine reality within them all is one reality. Abraham proclaimed this reality; Jesus promulgated it; all the Prophets who have appeared in the world have founded Their teachings upon it. Therefore, the people of the world have this one true, unchangeable basis for peace and agreement, and war, which has raged for thousands of years, will pass away.

While the religion of God is the promoter of truth, the founder of science and knowledge, it is full of goodwill for learned men; it is the civilizer of mankind, the discoverer of the secrets of nature, and the enlightener of the horizons of the world. Consequently, how can it be said to oppose knowledge? God forbid! Nay, for God, knowledge is the most glorious gift of man and the most noble of human perfections. To oppose knowledge is ignorant, and he who detests knowledge and science is not a man, but rather an animal without intelligence. For knowledge is light, life, felicity, perfection, beauty and the means of approaching the Threshold of Unity. It is the honor and glory of the world of humanity, and the greatest bounty of God. Knowledge is identical with guidance, and ignorance is real error.

Happy are those who spend their days in gaining knowledge, in discovering the secrets of nature, and in penetrating the subtleties of pure truth! Woe to those who are contented with ignorance, whose hearts are gladdened by thoughtless imitation, who have fallen into the lowest depths of ignorance and foolishness, and who have wasted their lives!

It is appropriate and befitting that in this illumined age-the age of the progress of the world of humanity-we should be self-sacrificing and should serve the human race. Every universal cause is divine and every particular one is temporal. The principles of the divine Manifestations of God were, therefore, all-universal and all-inclusive.

Every imperfect soul is self-centered and thinketh only of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen, his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still

they widen, he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection, then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will then be the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This is indicative of perfection.

Thus, the divine Manifestations of God had a universal and allinclusive conception . They endeavored for the sake of everyone's life and engaged in the service of universal education. The area of their aims was not limited- nay, rather, it was wide and allinclusive. Therefore, ye must also be thinking of everyone, so that mankind may be educated, character moderated and this world may tum into a Garden of Eden.

#### FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Baha'i Faith, was called for in the writings of Baha'u'llah, Who vested the institution with authority to "take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them." 1

While the Universal House of Justice does not have the right to nullify laws or alter teachings revealed by Baha'u'llah, it is authorized to legislate on matters not dealt with in the Baha'i writings, and it can abrogate its own laws. Abdu 'l-Baha explained this right of abrogation thus: "The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly."2 In His Will and Testament,

1. Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 68.

2. "Rahiq-i-Makhrum," vol. I, pp. 302- 04; cited in Wellsp ring of Guidance (Wilmette : Baha' i Publ ishing Trust, 1976), pp. 84-86.

#### THE BAHAI' WORLD

'Abdu 'l-Baha stated that it is "incumbent" upon members of the Universal House of Justice to "deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book" and that "Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself." 3 Consequently, since the Universal House of Justice was first elected in 1963, the Baha'i community has turned to it with respect and trust, regarding obedience to its decisions as obedience to the will of God. Observers are

struck by the energizing effect that such obedience produces. Throughout its thirty-five year existence, the Universal House of Justice has conducted a voluminous correspondence with individuals, institutions, the Baha'i community as a whole, and other organizations. It thereby provides clarification and elucidation of issues relating to the development of the Baha'i community, guidance concerning the gradual application of Baha'u 'llah's laws, encouragement to believers to arise and promulgate their Faith, and directives concerning the further development of the Baha'i administrative system. The major messages written by the Universal House of Justice in 1997-98 to Baha'i communities around the world fall mainly into the latter two categories, with perhaps the most significant announcement being the establishment of an entirely new level of Baha'i administration.

Ri~van Message (154 B.E.)

As is the case generally in the messages that it writes each April to the Baha'i world, the Universal House of Justice began its "Ric;ivan message" of 154 B.E. (21 April 1997) by reviewing a number of the accomplishments of the Baha'i community during the first year of its current global Four Year Plan regarding the growth and consolidation of the Faith.

This was a year, the House of Justice said, in which Baha'i communities and institutions around the world gave shape to national and regional plans based on the points made in its letters to eight regions of the world in 1996. 4 This planning process also

3. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu 'f-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991 ), p. 20.

4. For a summary of the contents of these letters, see The Baha 'i World 1996- 97, pp. 28- 36.

served to enhance the "collaborative relationship" between the elected and appointed arms of the Baha'i administrative system. This was also a year in which the Universal House of Justice strengthened the Baha'i community's foundations by encouraging its members to engage in focused pursuit of the major aim of the Four Year Plan-namely, movement towards ensuring sustained large-scale growth in the number of avowed believers and an accelerated program of consolidation (referred to as an advance in the process of "entry by troops"). During this short span of time the Baha'i community established nearly two hundred training institutes-many of which were already offering inaugural courses by the beginning of this year. These institutes are designed to promote systematic and programmatic training in core concepts of the Baha'i Faith and thus to develop the human resources of the community. Activity during the year also prompted the U niversal House of Justice to remark on the increasing numbers of Baha'is throughout the planet who either established residence in foreign countries and

thus became "pioneers," or who traveled and taught their Faith internationally, or who deputized others to perform this task- all resulting in the widespread promulgation of the Baha'i Faith. In the arena of community consolidation, efforts to act on the 1997 directive of the House of Justice that Local Spiritual Assemblies be elected only on the first of the twelve-day Riiivan period, "increasing endeavors to hold regular devotional meetings," and expanding efforts to utilize the arts in proclaiming the Faith to the public and in community activities were all praised.

Reviewing other accomplishments of the year, the House of Justice mentioned the acquisition of the apartment at 4 Avenue de Camoens in Paris, where 'Abdu'l-Baha stayed when He visited the city; the 14 August 1997 special session of the Federal Chamber of Deputies in Brazil, held in recognition of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the introduction of the Baha'i Faith into that country and honored by the presence of Amatu'l-Baha Rul,liyyih Khanum; and the launching of the Baha'i International Community's site on the World Wide Web in July 1996.<sup>5</sup>

5. See *The Baha'i World 1996- 97*, pp. 47- 54 for a full report on the anniversary in Brazil, and pp. 157- 60 for a story on the web site launch.

The House of Justice remarked on a number of accomplishments in connection with the construction projects underway at the Baha'i World Centre on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel: the completion of the marble colonnade of the Centre for the Study of the Texts, the rise to the seventh level of the International Teaching Centre, and the "ongoing emergence of the far-stretching features of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab." The partial lowering of the section of the public road over which the terraces will pass and the acquisition and demolition of the last building that stood as an obstruction to the construction of the lower terraces also received special note. The House of Justice praised the "incessant heroism" of "rich and poor alike" in contributing funds to support these vast construction projects.

Such an "auspicious beginning to the Four Year Plan" should, the House of Justice said, inspire confidence in all members of the Baha' i community throughout the world. A further mark of encouragement, the institution stated, was that "circumstances have made it feasible for the reestablishment this Riiivan of the National Spiritual Assembly of Rwanda," bringing the total of National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to 175-all eligible to participate in the Eighth International Baha'i Convention in Haifa in April 1998. Closing its message by referring to "the unfolding, spiritual drama of these momentous days," the Universal House of Justice asserted that "only a united and sustained effort by the friends everywhere to advance the process of entry by troops can benefit such a historic moment."

## Establishment of Regional Baha'i Councils

On 30 May 1997, a letter from the Universal House of Justice to the 175 National Spiritual Assemblies around the world heralded a new stage in the evolution of the Baha'i administrative system. Reflecting the emphasis laid by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, on developing a healthy balance between centralization and decentralization, the Universal House of Justice announced that "the time has arrived for us to formalize a new element of Baha'i administration, between the local and national levels, comprising institutions of a special kind, to be designated as 'Regional Baha'i Councils.'" They are to be established with the guidance of the

## THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Universal House of Justice in countries where conditions require and circumstances permit.

Designed to provide "a means of carrying forward the teaching work and administering related affairs of a rapidly growing Baha'i community," the Baha'i Councils represent a level of autonomous decision making "below the National Spiritual Assembly and above the Local Assemblies"-although they are not empowered to direct the work of Local Spiritual Assemblies. The Councils support their National Assemblies administratively and, within the framework established by each Assembly, can make autonomous decisions. In this way, National Assemblies devolve responsibilities regarding the expansion and consolidation of their communities and the carrying out of certain administrative activities.

In a number of countries, Local Spiritual Assembly members are involved in the choice of Council members through direct election.

In places where the Councils are appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly, the votes of the Local Spiritual Assembly members serve as non-binding recommendations for possible Council membership.

Through this method capable Baha'is who are known to believers in that region will be brought "into public service."

The new administrative level allows for the establishment of Regional Councils that can function in ethnically distinct regions of the world which cover part of two or more countries. These administrative bodies will also encourage an "increase in the capacity of the National Spiritual Assembly itself to keep fully informed" of activities throughout the length and breadth of its jurisdiction. Setting the development in historical perspective, the House of Justice pointed out that

The institutions of the Administrative Order of Baha'u'llah, rooted in the provisions of His Revelation, have emerged gradually and organically, as the Baha'i community has grown through the power of the divine impulse imparted to humankind in this age. The characteristics and functions of each of these institutions

have evolved, and are still evolving, as are the relationships between them.

While the evolution of Baha'i institutions must deal with varying exigencies of time and place, the House of Justice stated it "should

#### THE B AHA'I WORLD

strictly follow the essential principles of Baha'i administration which have been laid down in the Sacred Text and in the interpretations provided by 'Abdu 'l-Baha and the Guardian."

To be designated either as "State Baha'i Councils" or "Provincial Baha'i Councils," according to the country in which they are functioning, these bodies will "greatly enhance the ability of the Administrative Order to deal with the complex situations with which it is confronted in a number of countries at the present time."

#### Establishment or Reestablishment of National Spiritual Assemblies

A letter from the Universal House of Justice on 20 February 1998 announced the decision to establish three new National Spiritual Assemblies and to reestablish another National Assembly in May 1998. The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Sabah, with its seat in Kota Kinabalu, and the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Sarawak, with its seat in Kuching, were to be formed in Malaysia, and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Slovakia, based in Bratislava, was to be formed in Europe. (The former Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Czech and Slovak Republics, with its seat in Prague, would then become the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Czech Republic.) The House of Justice also looked forward to the reestablishment of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Liberia, with its seat in Monrovia, in May 1998. The prolonged state of political upheaval in the country had made it impossible to hold National Conventions for that body's reelection since 1992.

#### Other Correspondence

On 11 August 1997 the Universal House of Justice wrote to all National Spiritual Assemblies regarding the launch of the human rights education program developed by the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office. This program is designed to support the United Nations in this vital issue, particularly during the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. While "building effective relations with ... governments and influencing official attitudes and policies on matters of global, rather than of strictly national, importance," the program will concentrate "on

#### THE U N I V E R S A L H O U S E O F J U S T I C E

strictly national, importance," the program will concentrate "on promoting the interests of society as a whole and not on calling

attention to a need to assist the Baha'i community."

Throughout the year, the Universal House of Justice also wrote numerous letters to National Spiritual Assemblies with regard to their participation in the upcoming Eighth International Baha'i Convention. Other major correspondence conveyed information concerning the situation of the Baha' i community in Iran. 6

6. See pp. 51-60 for further information on the current situation of Iran 's Baha' is.

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THEBAHA'f

INTERNATIONAL

COMMUNITY

Activities 1997-98

The Baha'i International Community represents more than five million people in at least 235 countries and dependent territories, and its 175 national and regional affiliates work through a variety of fora to give practical expression to the Baha'i Faith's central principles of peace and justice. Among the wide range of issues it addresses, the Community is especially concerned at this point with four major themes: human rights, moral development, the advancement of women, and global prosperity. Whether at the local, national, or international level, these foci give shape and substance to the Baha'i International Community's activities. Both the Community's United Nations Office and its Office of Public Information play important roles in the promotion of this work. A presence at the United Nations (UN) for almost half a century, the Baha'i International Community supports the organization's programs and shares Baha'i perspectives on global issues at its meetings and conferences and with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Office of Public Information also represents the Community internationally, disseminating information

THE BAHAI WORLD

about the Baha'i Faith around the world and overseeing production of the award-winning newsletter One Country.

United Nations

The Baha'i International Community maintains offices at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, as well as representations to United Nations regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, and Santiago and to UN offices in Nairobi, Rome, and Vienna. In 1988 the Baha'i International Community established an Office of the Environment and in 1992 an Office for the Advancement of Women as departments of its United Nations Office.

As an international non-governmental organization (NGO) in

consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1970 and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) since 1976, the Baha'i International Community is able to participate in a wide range of UN activities. This status has allowed the Community to offer Baha'i perspectives on the work of the UN and its agencies and to work with other NGOs to support UN efforts. As a result it has become recognized as a leader within the NGO community at the UN.

In recent years, national Baha'i communities have become increasingly engaged in the substantive work of the UN. Through their participation in the series of global conferences held throughout the decade, they have joined in efforts to address the most pressing issues facing the global community, working at times in partnership with their governments and with like-minded organizations of civil society.

#### Human Rights

The focus for Baha'i human rights activities is twofold: to protect the right of Baha'is to practice their Faith and to promote respect for a full range of basic human rights and responsibilities. The promotion of human rights is a major concern because, in the Baha'i view, there can be little hope for peace and global order without a universal willingness to respect and safeguard the rights of all people.

Protecting the religious freedom of Baha'is throughout the world is a major aspect of the work of the Baha'i International Community office in New York and the primary focus of the office

#### BAHA'f INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

in Geneva, which work through the UN offices, commissions, and committees that monitor compliance with the various UN human rights agreements. For almost twenty years, the Baha'i International Community, working in concert with National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world, has directed international attention towards the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran.

The Community continually provides the UN and national governments with reliable information regarding the current status of the beleaguered Iranian Baha'i community. Unfortunately, despite promises of increased religious tolerance from the new President of Iran, the situation of the Baha'is in that country has not yet improved. 1

So important is the role of National Spiritual Assemblies in defending Baha'i communities that, for the second year, several National Spiritual Assemblies were invited to send representatives to a seminar on the diplomatic work related to the defense of the Baha'i community. This year's seminar, held in September 1997 in Acuto, Italy, brought together representatives of twenty-seven National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies, and representatives of

the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office, the Office of Public Information in Haifa, and the Baha'i World Centre. The primary objective of this year's seminar was to coordinate the ongoing efforts by the Baha'i International Community and certain National Spiritual Assemblies-mostly from European Union countries- to defend the Baha'i community in Iran. The gathering also provided a venue for national representatives to share experiences and exchange views.

The Baha'i International Community submitted three written statements to the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights, held March- April 1998, which were circulated as official UN documents. One addressed the protection of minorities, another the rights of the child, and the third the human rights situation of the Baha'i community in Iran. The plight of the Baha'is in Iran was also addressed in an oral intervention during

I. Developments during the past year in the human rights situation of the Baha 'is in Iran are treated at length in a separate article on pp. 5 1- 60 of this volume.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

the Commission's deliberations. The Community and other NGOs jointly presented a proposal for a World Conference to Combat Racism and offered a joint statement on the right to development. At the forty-ninth session of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, held August 1997, a combined oral statement was offered on minorities and religious intolerance.

National Spiritual Assemblies have been strong supporters of human rights in their own countries. With the approach of the fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998, Baha'i communities around the world began to consider suitable observances and initiatives. These efforts were stimulated in October 1997 by the distribution of a special packet of information on human rights, prepared by the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office. Designed to encourage Baha'i communities to participate in the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the packet offers suggestions on how to become involved in promoting human rights education.

This was part of a continuing effort to encourage Baha'i communities to raise public consciousness of the need to respect and defend the rights of all. These efforts bore fruit in Latin America in the form of regional seminars held in January 1998 in Paraguay and El Salvador to explore ways to promote human rights education.

Environment, Development and Global Prosperity

Five years after the historic Emih Summit in Rio de Janeiro, fiftythree Heads of State met in New York at the fourteenth Special

Session of the UN General Assembly to assess progress toward implementing Agenda 21, the global program for environmental protection and economic development adopted in Rio. NGOs in attendance, including representatives of three National Spiritual Assemblies and the Baha'i International Community, enjoyed significantly greater access to these proceedings (held in New York 23-27 June 1997) than at any previous session of the General Assembly. NGOs were allowed both to offer suggestions at government negotiating sessions and to address the plenary session.

The optimism that marked the Earth Summit in 1992 was, however, noticeably absent from these proceedings. Despite

#### BAHA'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

positive developments, including a continued rise in world food production, a slowdown in population growth, and a number of regional improvements in environmental quality, many of the trends and problems that faced leaders in Rio remained unabated or had actually worsened. The most serious disappointment was that the promised increase in aid from the wealthier nations of the North to the nations of the South had not materialized. In fact, the level of aid actually declined during the past five years. Although for some the frank acknowledgement by many government representatives that Rio's promises had not been realized marked this meeting as a failure, others saw reasons for hope. Chief Bisi Ogunleye of the Nigerian Countrywomen's Association declared, "It is people that can save the world, not governments." Lawrence Arhlo, Director of the Baha'i International Community's Office of the Environment, suggested that the level of honesty on the part of governments was a sign of a new level of maturity in the international system. "It is only from such a process of frank consultation," he said, "that a new level of genuine international cooperation can emerge."

Perhaps the most exciting and potentially ground-breaking meeting in which the Office of the Environment participated was the World Faiths and Development Dialogue. This gathering, convened in February 1998 at Lambeth Palace in London and cohosted by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury, brought together spiritual leaders from nine major religions and traditional development experts for two days of consultation on the relationship between material and spiritual development. 2 Other notable meetings included the International Ecology Congress, sponsored by the government of Kazakhstan in Almaty, Kazakhstan, 21-24 April 1997. Dr. Arthur Dahl, author of the book *The Eco Principle*, represented the Baha'i International Community and was one of three Baha'i speakers at this gathering, which drew some two hundred to three hundred NGO representatives and

2. The full story of this historic gathering appears on pp. 61- 70 of this volume, and one of the papers contributed by the Baha'i International Community, Valuing Spirituality in Development, can be found in its entirety on pp. 233-259.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

participants from the scientific community. The Community also attended the Commission on Social Development, held 10-20 February 1998 in New York, and the Forum on Human Solidarity,

Human Settlements and Global Ecosystems associated with the Fifth Annual World Bank Conference on Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development in Washington, DC, held 8 October 1997.

Baha'i youth continued to be active in UN fora. The Community was represented in Seoul, Korea, at the UNEP Global

Youth Forum in June 1997 and again in February 1998 at the Second Session of Consultations in Preparation for the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, scheduled for August 1998 in Braga, Portugal. Immediately after the government meeting the Community took part in the International Youth NGO Meeting held to prepare for youth participation in the Braga conference.

### Advancement of Women

This year witnessed the end of an era. Mary Power, who served as Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women since its establishment in 1992 and who worked in the Community's United Nations Office in New York for more than twenty-five years,

retired on 30 June 1997. The outpouring of love and respect showered on her at her retirement included a number of testimonials

from Baha'i colleagues and the men and women with whom she had served over the years at the UN. Ruth Bamela Engo-Tjega, Senior Liaison Officer for the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries in the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and fellow founder of the Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden on African Women Farmers, testified to the unique place Mary Power had won in the hearts of African women.

"Mary adopted Africa at the United Nations," she said. "Africans made her their 'Mother's kitchen' and believed that they owned her." Ms. Engo-Tjega captured the unifying power of Mary's presence by describing her in a poem as "consensus, respect of conflicting perspectives, part of us all." Ms. Power will continue to be involved in efforts to improve the status of women the world over.

## B AHA'I I NTE RNATIONAL C OMMUN ITY

Left to right are

Meredith  
Krashes, aide to  
the BIC's Office for  
the Advancement  
of Women,  
Mary Power,  
outgoing Director, and Bani  
Dugal Gujral,  
the Office's new  
Director.

The new Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women is Bani Dugal Gujral, who has served in the New York office since 1994 as an Alternate Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN. Ms. Dugal Gujral, a native of India, has a law degree from the University of Delhi and a master's degree in environmental law from Pace University in New York State.

Under its new director, the Office for the Advancement of Women continued to provide leadership within the NGO community, spearheading efforts to bring girls to speak on their own behalf to the Commission on the Status of Women. For the first time in its fifty-one-year history, the Commission heard testimony directly from two girls as it began to consider the issue of "the girl child," one of four themes on the agenda for its forty-second session.

Months of preparation by the Sub-Task Force on the Participation of Girls, of which the Baha'i International Community was Convenor, ensured that the girls' contributions would be heard.

Following the plenary session, "Listen to Girls," a speak-out organized by the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, was attended by an audience of several hundred, including many of the official delegates. Fifteen girls, aged thirteen to eighteen, from Armenia, Brazil, Chile, the Gambia,

Nepal, Singapore, the UK, and the USA were selected and sponsored by a number of NGOs. They spoke, sometimes through

tears, about such problems as teen pregnancy, female genital mutilation, and lack of educational opportunities for girls in their countries-and about ways governments and NGOs might make

a difference. The girls' interventions had a significant impact on delegates, bringing home the concrete realities and difficulties of life for girls from a number of regions of the world. They also underscored the urgent need for the Beijing Platform for Action to be implemented in ways that can engender positive effects in the day-to-day lives of girls.

Miriam Lyons, who facilitated the girls' speak-out, credited the democratic selection process developed by the working group with identifying extraordinary girls "as diverse in socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds as were the countries that

they had come from." She noted that "each girl arrived confident in her knowledge of what needed to be told about the situations of girls in their countries and equipped with the skills to tell it." She also remarked on the extraordinary level of cooperation and support within the group: "They wanted to listen and learn from one another and knew how to do it." A dessert reception at the Baha'i Offices provided Government representatives from the girls' countries and staff from UNICEF and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women with the opportunity to meet and converse informally with the girls.

Statements made by the Office this year included "Creating an Enabling Environment for Empowering Girls," presented to

Fifteen girls from eight different countries addressed a speak-out organized by the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF during the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, March 1998.

#### BAHA'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

the Commission on the Status of Women, and a joint statement on the family, presented at the Commission for Social Development. UNICEF requested, for publication, a paper based on the Baha'i contribution to a discussion on "Rebuilding the Community around Children: Principles, Values and Resources," which had been held in Geneva in March 1997.

In preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women, the Community attended two Expert Group Meetings: one on Adolescent Girls, held October 1997 in Addis Ababa; the other on Gender-based Persecution, held November 1997 in Toronto. The Community was also represented at the eighteenth session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and at the Seventh Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, sponsored by the South Pacific Commission, held during June 1997 in Noumea, New Caledonia.

Throughout the world, the number of Baha'i national offices and committees established to promote the advancement of women has grown steadily. In March 1998, more than forty such agencies, operating under the auspices of Baha'i National Spiritual

Assemblies around the world, received copies of the first "post-Beijing" newsletter published by the Office for the Advancement of Women. The newsletter is seen as a way for the Office for the Advancement of Women to share information about activities at the UN and for National Offices to communicate with one another about successful local and national initiatives undertaken on behalf of women.

Meetings

Meetings and UN sessions monitored by the Baha'i International

Community this year, other than those already discussed, include the following: the Commission on Human Settlements, held April-May 1997 in Nairobi; the Economic Commission for Africa, held May 1997 in Addis Ababa; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held April 1997 in Bangkok; the World Health Assembly, held May 1997 in Geneva; and the Executive Board of the World Health Organization, held May 1997 in Geneva; the Substantive Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, held June- July 1997 in Geneva; meetings of the UNICEF Executive Board, held June and September 1997 in New York; the

#### THE BAHAI.'f WORLD

fiftieth annual DPVNGO Conference: Building Partnerships, held September 1997 in New York; the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Program, held October 1997 in Geneva; the Commission on Sustainable Development in New York, both the Intersessional meeting, held February 1998, and the sixth session, held April 1998.

The Community attended the meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on the Right to Development, held September 1997 in Geneva. It followed Sub-Commission Working Groups on Indigenous Populations, Minorities, and Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and the Commission Working Group on the Drafting of a Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Much of the work of NGOs in consultative status with the UN is carried out through NGO committees and task forces that address specific issues. During this last year, the Baha'i International Community held the chairmanships of the New York NGO Committee on Human Rights and the New York CONGO (Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC) Chairs Task Force on UN Reform and Increasing Access to the UN. In Geneva the Community chaired the CONGO Sub-Committee on Freedom of Religion, Conscience, and Belief.

#### Public Information

The Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information is responsible for coordinating and stimulating the public information work of the worldwide Baha'i community. Based at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel, and with a branch office in Paris, the Office of Public Information engages in a wide range of activities. During 1997- 98 the Office continued its work of maintaining dialogue with leaders of thought, government, and industry by welcoming some 2,396 dignitaries, media representatives and other special visitors from over seventy-seven countries to the Baha' i World Centre. Among the visitors were the Prime Minister of Israel, the Vice President of Uganda, twenty-two Ambassadors to Israel

and four members of Israel's Parliament, the Knesset. Journalists, Ministers, and Parliamentarians from Albania, Armenia, Germany,

## B AHA'I I NTERNATIONAL C OMMUN ITY

Hungary, Nepal, New Zealand, and the United States also visited the Baha'i Shrines and gardens, as well as mayors from cities in Denmark, Germany, Israel, and Romania.

This year the Office of Public Information embarked on a groundbreaking effort to promote civic concord across Eastern Europe. Following the restructuring of the republic of Yugoslavia in 1995, the European Union and other European countries banded together to bridge ethnic and cultural rifts by initiating the "Royaumont Process," the purpose of which is to develop social stability and "promote good neighborliness" in southeastern Europe. By sponsoring small-scale initiatives to restore dialogue in civil society, culture, the arts, science and technology, the Process hopes to stimulate implementation of its sister initiative-the Dayton Peace Accords.

The European Union chose to draw upon the experience of the Baha'i International Community to develop the moral education component of the Process. "The Happy Hippo" television show, conceived and implemented by Baha'i journalist Shamil Fattakhov and first broadcast in Russia, 3 will serve as a flagship element of the Royaumont effort to promote moral awareness. Each show centers around a short skit involving young people facing a moral dilemma. The skit, which is performed in front of a live audience, pauses just before the dilemma is resolved. The host of the show then asks audience members how they would resolve the situation, giving them the opportunity to consult on challenging ethical concerns. Plans to produce the show throughout Royaumont member countries are in development.

One Country, the official newsletter of the Baha'i International Community, entered its ninth year of publication. Published quarterly in English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and German, it reached an estimated 33,000 subscribers in at least 180 countries. During 1997- 98, One Country won an "Award of Excellence" for its overall content and design from the Apex '97 Awards for Publication Excellence. Coverage in One Country included stories on the "World Faiths and Development Dialogue"

3. See The Baha'i World 1996- 97, pp. 229- 233 for more information about "The Happy Hippo Show."

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

held between the World Bank and major world religions at Lambeth Palace in London, and the United Nations "Earth Summit +5" meeting in New York. Major feature reports included stories

about a grassroots development work among the Karen people by the Baha'i community of Thailand, a literacy project in Cambodia that also aims to promote peace and empowerment among its participants, and a series of stories on the work of the New Era Development Institute in India, which takes a distinctive approach to vocational education by striving to instill a new vision of community service in its students. Stories also reported on the efforts of Baha'i youth around the world to promote a new vision of tolerance via the arts, and efforts by Baha'i communities to prepare for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### Conclusion

Baha'u'llah wrote, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."<sup>4</sup> The Baha'i International Community is an emblem of the unity of the Baha'i world, working simultaneously on the local, national, and international levels to further the ideals of global peace and security. By disseminating the cumulative knowledge gained from Baha'i initiatives in social and economic development, consulting with leaders of thought and governments around the world, and contributing to UN fora, the Baha'i International Community hopes to increase awareness of and help implement solutions to the multitudinous challenges facing humanity during this "age of transition."<sup>5</sup>

4. Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 286.

5. Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 170.

Update: The Situation of  
THE BAHAI'S  
IN IRAN

On 17 January 1998, an open letter from the Baha'i community of the United States to the President of Iran appeared in The New York Times and a week later, in The Los Angeles Times. The letter was a response to statements made by President Mohammad Khatami during a televised interview the previous week on CNN, in which he asserted that "religion and liberty are consistent and compatible," that "prosperous life should hinge on three pillars: religiosity, liberty and justice," and that these "are the assets and aspirations of the Islamic Revolution as it enters the twenty-first century." In their letter, the Baha'is of the United States asked if Iran's Baha'is, who constitute the country's largest religious minority, are to be included in these aspirations. The letter continued, "Your explicitly stated determination to fulfill the provisions of the

Iranian Constitution and to establish the rule of law gives us hope that the freedom of the Baha'i community in Iran openly to practice its religion will be guaranteed." Finally, the Baha'i community of the United States expressed its hope that the United Nations General Assembly Resolution calling for the "emancipation" of the Iranian Baha'i community will be implemented.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### A RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC MESSAGE OF PRESIDENT KHATAMI TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

January 13, 1998

His Excellency President Mohammad Khatami  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Tehran, Iran

Your Excellency,

We, the American Bahais, residing in more than seven thousand cities and towns across

the United States and representing all races, cultures and ethnic origins in our nation,

have listened with great interest to your words addressed to the American people, of

which we are an organic part.

Your message prompts us to address you directly, because of your expressed dedication

to the principles of freedom, justice and the rule of law - principles which, as you noted,

are cherished by the American people.

We who enjoy such freedoms hope that our co-religionists in Iran, who have been deprived of them, will be granted their full rights as law-abiding citizens of your nation.

We are particularly encouraged by your assertion "that religion and liberty are consistent and compatible." As you said, "Human experience has taught us that prosperous life should hinge on three pillars: religiosity, liberty and justice." These, you

concluded, "are the assets and aspirations of the Islamic Revolution as it enters the

twenty-first century:"

Are the Bahais of Iran- your nation's largest religious minority- included in these aspirations?

Your explicitly stated determination to fulfill the provisions of the Iranian Constitution

and to establish the rule of law gives us hope that the freedom of the Bahai community

in Iran openly to practice its religion will be guaranteed.

May we not expect, in the light of your commitment to human dignity and freedom, that the United Nations (General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/52/142), which calls for the emancipation of the Baha'i community of Iran, will now be implemented

Respectfully yours,

THE BAHAI'S OF THE UNITED STATES

Rohen Calvin Henderson  
Secretary

- NATIONAL STATE RITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHAI'S OF THE UNITED STATES  
10 NINTH STREET, N.W., SUITE 701 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20045  
202.462.1110

- The open letter to the President of Iran from the Baha'i community of the United States that appeared in the 17 January 1998 edition of The New York Times and other newspapers in the United States.

#### B AHAI'S IN I RAN

While President Khatami is broadly regarded as moderate in his views on many subjects, the Baha'i community of Iran has seen no discernible change in government policies since he took office in the summer of 1997. And in fact, the American community's open letter met only complete silence in official Iranian circles. The Iran Daily newspaper, a publication of the Islamic Republic News Agency, did quote an article from another Iranian publication that summarized the open letter and reaffirmed the standard governmental position that the Baha'i Faith is "a political group ... and is not a true religion, but a political doctrine to deviate Muslims from their true path."

To refute accusations such as these and to press for the restoration of the Iranian community's rights, over the past eighteen years the Baha'i International Community has taken its case to the United Nations and has sought to keep the situation of Iran's Baha'is before the gaze of the governments and peoples of the world. The year under review was an historic one for the Baha'i community in that forum, since it was the first time that all three bodies that monitor human rights issues—the Third Committee, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Commission—called for the emancipation of the Baha'i community of Iran.

The year began with the unprecedented call for full emancipation contained in the United Nations' Third Committee resolution passed 25 November 1997. It "calls upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran: to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. ... on religious intolerance relating to the Baha'is and to other religious minority groups,

including Christians, until they are completely emancipated." The resolution was cosponsored by 33 countries, including four new cosponsors: Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Lithuania, and the Marshall Islands. Specific mention of the Baha'i issue was included in the statements of several missions, including that given on behalf of the European Union. The result of the vote was 68 in favor and 27 against, with 49 abstentions.

I. For further details concerning the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, see *The Baha'is of the World 1995-96*, pp. 140-41.

Just a few weeks later, on 12 December, the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution with identical wording, expressing its concern "at the grave breaches of the human rights of the Baha'is." The vote in this forum was 74 in favor and 32 against, with 56 abstentions.

The fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, held from 16 March to 24 April 1998 in Geneva, heard the report of the Special Representative on Iran, Professor Maurice D. Copithorne, which states clearly that "The situation of the Baha'is continues to violate accepted international norms ... Reports of cases in which the human rights of Baha'is have been breached and of situations of discrimination and even persecution, including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detentions, refusal of entry to universities, confiscation of property, and dismissal from employment, continued to be received." The report reiterates Professor Copithorne's view that the recommendations previously made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, Professor Abdelfattah Amor, would constitute "an important first step" towards the improvement of the situation of Iran's Baha'is. Statements made by several government delegations were helpful in drawing attention to the plight of the Baha'is. Ireland spoke of "particularly vulnerable groups, such as the Baha'i community in many countries but particularly in Iran"; Norway noted, "There has been a significant increase in the number of executions and the authorities show a lack of respect for freedom of speech and freedom of religion on numerous occasions, with particular reference to the situation for members of the Baha'i community"; Canada referred to "Iran's relentless persecution of the Baha'is" as "another case of selective application of human rights, as is that country's disregard for some aspects of freedom of expression"; the U.S. delegation stated, "we urge Iran to cease its persecution of religious minorities like the Baha'is, Christians, and others"; and Australia expressed its continuing concern about the human rights situation in Iran, "including treatment of the Baha'i minority."

On 22 April 1998, the session adopted a strongly worded resolution on Iran, of which three paragraphs make direct reference to

the Baha'is. The Commission expresses its concern "At continuing grave violations of the human rights of the Baha'is" and at the

#### B Ar-rA:fs IN I RAN

death sentences against Messrs. Dhabil:m'llah Mai:trami, Musa Talibi, Bihnam Mithaqi, and Kayvan Khalajabadi. It calls upon the Iranian government "To implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance relating to the Baha'is, Christians and other minority religious groups, until they are completely emancipated" and states the Commission's intention to continue its examination of Iran's human rights situation in its next session.

#### Imprisonment and Death

The position of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Government that the Baha'i Faith "is not a true religion, but a political doctrine to deviate Muslims from their true path" is one that it has maintained since it assumed power in 1979. Such a stance has been used to justify persecution of Baha'is on a variety of pretexts. The government has been responsible for the deaths of more than two hundred followers and the imprisonment of thousands more. In other cases, governmental agencies have turned a blind eye towards the killing of Baha'is by various groups. In July 1997, for example, two Baha'is were killed because of their religious beliefs. The first, Masha'llah 'Inayati, a sixty-three-year-old resident of Tehran, was arrested under circumstances which are not clear while he was attending a Baha'i meeting in his native village of Ardistan. Taken to prison in Isfahan and held there for about a week, he was severely beaten on all parts of his body before being transferred to a hospital, where he died. On the death certificate, "cause of death" is given as "will be known later," suggesting that the doctor who filled it in might also have been under threat.

The second Baha'i killed that same month was Shahram Reza'i, a young man serving as a conscript in the Iranian army. While stationed on a military base near the city of Rasht, he was shot in the head by his superior officer and died the following day. The officer, who was responsible for weapons training, maintained that the bullets were fired in error and was released after a few days when it was determined that the dead soldier was a Baha'i. The court did not order the officer to pay the blood money usually demanded in such cases; rather, he was required only to pay the cost of the three bullets that killed Mr. Reza'i. It is understood that the new government in Iran later ordered that the officer be rearrested, but nothing further is known about the matter. This was the seventh instance of a Baha'i engaged in compulsory military service in Iran having been killed by officers or other soldiers. Aside from the threat of death, Iran's Baha'is face an increased

possibility of short-term arbitrary imprisonment. Over the past three years, more than two hundred Baha'is have been arrested and detained anywhere from forty-eight hours to six months. During 1997-98, between eleven and twenty-one Baha'is were in prison because of their beliefs; in April 1998 the number stood at fourteen. Charges against them include "Zionist Baha'i activities," apostasy, endangering the country's security by holding a children's art exhibition, enrolling a Muslim into the Faith, "continuing 'family life' meetings," and not having a work permit. Two Baha'is detained with several Muslims on charges of "misconduct" early in 1996 were sentenced to eight years in prison after refusing to recant their faith as demanded by the authorities in order to be freed. The Muslims detained with them were released soon after their arrest.

Four of those now in prison remain under the sentence of death. Messrs. Kayvan Khalajabadi, Bihnam Mithaqi, Musa Talibi, and Dhabil:m' llah Mal:Jiami have no access to their lawyers, although their counsel continues to act on their behalf. The first three, held in the Evin prison in Tehran, are permitted visits with their families once a week-and these at the discretion of the court. Their wives are now required to present proof of marriage in order to visit them. Since Baha'i marriage certificates are not considered valid by Iranian authorities, the prisoners suffer an additional hardship.

The charges of "Zionist Baha'i activities" against Messrs. Khalajabadi and Mithaqi, imprisoned since 1989, arise solely from their membership in the Baha'i community. Arrested in 1979, Mr Talibi is charged with apostasy and with teaching the Faith, for which he was sentenced in 1996. Mr. Mal:Jiami was arrested on the charge of apostasy in 1995 and sentenced in 1996, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court in January 1997.<sup>2</sup>

2. See *The Bahci 'i World* 1995- 96, p. 140 for further information regarding the case of Mr. MaJ:uami and *The Baha'i World* 1996- 97, pp. 150- 51 for additional details regarding the cases of all four men.

## B AHA'IS IN I RAN

### Other Types of Persecution

The Baha'i Faith has no clergy. Throughout the world, its community organization and governance are carried out by democratically elected administrative institutions. Since 1983, when the Iranian government outlawed these bodies, the Baha'i community in that country has been denied the right to organize and function as a viable religious community. Gradually its members have developed makeshift arrangements to worship in small groups, to conduct classes for children, and to take care of other community needs. Authorities, however, disrupt meetings and sometimes arrest teachers of the children's or "family life" classes. As of April 1998, five persons remained in prison on such charges.

Since the early years of the Islamic Revolution Baha'i youth have been barred from legally recognized institutions of higher learning. Prior to the Revolution, Baha'is had been among the best educated groups in Iran, and the erosion of the educational level of the community is obviously designed to lead to both its intellectual and material impoverishment.

To meet the educational needs of as many of its youth as its resources allow, the Iranian Baha'i community established its own higher education program in 1987. To date, several hundred youth have enrolled in it; by 1996 eleven students had graduated with the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. The security of those participating is now under question, however, since government officials temporarily seized all the student records of the open university. While no students have been arrested to date, the possibility exists that the files were copied and the authorities will use that information in some way detrimental to the community.

Regarded as "unprotected infidels" under the Iranian Constitution, Baha'is face a situation in which their rights are ignored with impunity. Baha'i marriage and divorce are not legally recognized in Iran, and Baha'is have been denied inheritance rights on the basis of their faith . Baha'is in some communities have been summoned to security offices on various specious pretexts, only to be insulted and belittled in the hope of creating fear in their families and of weakening their spirit. Travel outside and even inside Iran is often impeded or denied by authorities. Passport applicants who state on the forms that they are Baha'is are generally refused . Only

## THE BAHAI WORLD

determined persistence in the face of humiliation at the hands of officials has enabled some Baha'is to obtain passports for single trips or, in rare cases, multiple journeys. Iranian Baha'is outside Iran face similar treatment at Iranian embassies when attempting to renew their passports or secure visas, except in countries where applicants are not required to state religious affiliation on their forms.

The recent practice of arresting Baha'is on the basis that they do not have work permits is another example of the ways in which selective discriminatory treatment adversely affects the Iranian Baha'i community. While the law states that anyone who works or is self-employed must have a work permit, it is rarely enforced owing to the high unemployment rate . Requests by Baha'is for work permits are almost always denied.

Properties held by the Baha'i community, including cemeteries, holy places, historical sites, administrative centers, and other assets, were seized by the authorities shortly after the 1979 revolution and, to date, none have been returned . In fact, many have been destroyed. Most distressing has been the seizure of Baha'i cemeteries throughout the country. In 1993, for example, some fifteen

thousand graves were desecrated when the Baha'i cemetery in Tehran was confiscated to make way for a municipal cultural center. Baha'is have been relegated to areas of wasteland for the burial of their dead and are not permitted to identify grave sites. Private and business properties held by individual Baha'is have also been arbitrarily confiscated. In Kashan, a mosque was built on land confiscated from Baha'is; complaints to the government, supported by ownership documents, have brought no results. Residents have been evicted from their homes and "inspections" by government officials in several cities have resulted in the seizure of items such as computers, video recorders, televisions, a piano, and other musical equipment. Reports indicate that the majority of the Baha'is living in the city of Yazd are now prohibited from conducting any business transactions.

While property seizure is one method used to erode the economic base of the Baha'i community, another is depriving its members of the means to earn a living. More than ten thousand Baha'is were dismissed from positions in government and educational institutions in the early 1980's, solely on the basis of their religious beliefs;

#### B AHA'fs IN IRAN

their pensions were terminated- and in some cases they were required to pay back both salaries and pensions. Intimidation has been used to force Baha'is to abandon their professions; businesses have been forced to close for no reason; farmers are denied admission to cooperatives that supply credit, seeds, pesticide, and fertilizer. Many Baha'is are now unable to work and receive no unemployment benefits.

#### Other International Action

While Iran's Baha'i community is still oppressed and circumscribed, its sister communities around the world remain active in their efforts to restore its rights and secure its freedom. The letter from the Baha'i community of the United States to the government of Iran, cited above, is one such undertaking.

Also in the United States, the situation of Iran's Baha'is was treated in the Interim Report of the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. The Committee, which comprises twenty religious leaders and academics that reflect a diversity of beliefs and perspectives, was established in November 1996. Its mandate includes calling attention to problems of religious persecution and other violations of religious freedom abroad and advising how to address them, as well as providing information on how to bring about reconciliation in areas of conflict, particularly where religion is a factor. The initial four paragraphs of a number of press articles about the Committee's report focused on the persecution of the Baha'is and other religious minorities in Iran. The US State Department's 1997 Iran Country Report on Human Rights

Practices, released in January 1998, also included detailed descriptions of many of the human rights violations practiced against Baha'is.

On 27 January 1998 "Voice of America" broadcast an editorial expressing the policy of the United States Government with regard to President Khatami 's address to the American people and stating that his words " may ring hollow to those who suffer religious persecution in Iran- including Iran's largest religious minority, the Baha'is." The editorial went on to catalogue the list of discriminatory policies and activities against the Baha'is in that country. It concluded, "President Khatami 's words will only have meaning

## THE BAHAI WORLD

when freedom of religion becomes a reality in Iran-and the persecution of Baha'is and other minorities comes to an end."

### Conclusion

For nineteen years Iran's Baha'i community has suffered repression under the Islamic Revolutionary Government. While official executions have abated under the glare of the international spotlight, the government's recent actions continue to demonstrate that in Iran killing a Baha'i is not regarded as homicide and that the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of Baha'is is sanctioned, that their property may be seized with impunity, and their civil rights likewise disregarded. The root policy of all such actions can be found in the 1991 secret government document on "the Baha'i question." Written and approved by Iran's most senior clerical and civil authorities and adopted by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council, it directs not only that the "progress and development" of the Baha'is within Iran's borders "shall be blocked" but also that "a plan shall be formulated to combat and destroy the cultural roots which this group has outside the country." In the face of such an explicitly discriminatory policy, the worldwide Baha'i community continues to labor to keep the case of its Iranian brothers and sisters in the consciousness-and conscience- of the governments and leaders of the world. This is their only recourse.

This article reports on the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, a gathering of religious leaders and World Bank officials that took place 18- 19 February 1998 to discuss the relationship between economic and spiritual development.

ADIALOGUE on  
SPIRITUALITY  
and DEVELOPMENT

It was a diverse group that posed for a photograph on the final

day of the World Faiths and Development Dialogue. Bankers and consultants in dark suits stood shoulder to shoulder with a yellow-robed Hindu and a Christian bishop in purple clerical robes. Muslim leaders mingled with Jewish rabbis and Baha'i representatives. Sikhs in carefully wrapped turbans consorted with Taoists in high-collared gray jackets .

More remarkable, however, than the diversity of the gathering was its purpose: to explore how the World Bank, the world's largest development finance agency, could work more closely with the world's major religions to tackle the problems of global underdevelopment and world poverty. From this meeting, held 18- 19 February 1998 in London , came support for a startling idea: that economic development can be intimately linked with spiritual development. Indeed, both the meeting's occurrence and its outcome were evidence of a new consensus that successful social and economic development cannot be accomplished without an appreciation of the interconnectedness of spiritual and material progress .

#### THE BAJ-IA'f W ORLD

As World Bank President, Dr. James D. Wolfensohn, said in his final statement at the meeting, "What unites us is a deep concern for the poor of the world. It's something which the faiths have been concerned with for generations, the Bank for fifty years . But what is clear is that what has come out of this meeting is that there is a unity between us. A unity of the concern for physical livelihood but also spiritual and cultural continuity and I think it is that which certainly I have found remarkable at this meeting. There has been a total meeting of minds in terms of this linkage. And what I think has been opened up is the opportunity now for us to work together in our various ways, from the faiths and from the development institutions, to bring together our experience, our beliefs and our sense of justice, our concerns, so that together we can make the world a better place and improve the lot of poor people everywhere. "

The Dialogue, which generated not only a number of headlines around the world but also a follow-up plan for cooperative action between the Bank and the religions, will be counted as a milestone event by future historians when they consider the trends of issues such as integration and cross-sectoral consensus building that have become the hallmark of policy development in regard to global problems during the 1990's.

"For the first time in contemporary economics, the role of religion in development was not just publicly acknowledged or even acclaimed, but brought into a partnership with one of the largest and, some would argue, most vociferously secular organizations in the world," said Martin Palmer, Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC), which

played a key role in organizing the Dialogue. "The repercussions of this are that the economic world will have to take religion seriously-and vice versa."

For the Baha'i International Community, which participated in lead-up activities to the Dialogue and in the meeting itself, the event represents a significant step towards the adoption of ideas and concepts about social and economic development on which Baha'is have based their work for decades. As the opening of the paper Valuing Spirituality in Development, a Baha'i International Community

#### DI A LOGUE 0:\ S PIRIT UALITY A:-\ DD EVELOPMENT

contribution to the Dialogue, states: "Development, in the Baha' i view, is an organic process in which ' the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material.'" <sup>1</sup>

This view was affirmed at numerous points in the meeting, which took place in the eight hundred-year-old residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, who cosponsored the event with Dr. Wolfensohn. In the Dialogue's final statement, for example, the gathering proclaimed: "We are strengthened in our conviction that the definition and practice of desirable development must have regard to spiritual, ethical, environmental, cultural, and social considerations, if it is to be sustainable and contribute to the well-being of all, especially the poorest and weakest members of society. All participants in the Dialogue agreed that 'well-being' must imply the elimination of the suffering caused by absolute material poverty whilst also recognizing the importance of spiritual and cultural life. Our understanding of poverty and development has been widened and enriched by the exchange between the World Bank experts and the different faiths with their diverse interpretations of what it means to lead a fully human life."

#### High-Level Representation

The representatives of the world's religions came from perhaps the highest level yet for such an interfaith conference. Included were leaders from the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism. Between them, they represented the religious traditions followed by an estimated three billion people.<sup>2</sup>

The World Bank's main representative was Dr. Wolfensohn, along with Ismail Serageldin, Vice-President for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development, and Andrew Rogerson, the Bank's representative for the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Also in attendance were Or. Palmer of ICOREC; Wangari Maathai, a well-known environmentalist and women's rights activist from Kenya; Dr. Vandana Shiva, Director of the Institute of Science, Technology and Ecology in Delhi; Andrew Purkis, Secretary for

!See pp. 233- 259 for the full text of this statement.

2. A list of the religious representatives who attended the Lambeth meeting appears at the end of this article.

Some of the diverse participants in the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, held 18-19 February 1998, which was cosponsored by the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Public Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury; and Wendy Tyndale, a development specialist with Christian Aid.

The Dialogue itself consisted largely of an exchange of ideas. In the first session on Wednesday, 18 February, participants discussed "understandings of development." During that session, the meanings of the terms "poverty," "prosperity," and "developed" were considered, with the aim of understanding "how the gap between the present situation and the kind of societies to which we aspire" might be addressed.

The afternoon session focused on "criteria for development," in which themes relating to "participation," "sustainability," and "voice" were discussed, all in the context of how the faiths and development agencies like the Bank might cooperate to improve efforts in each area. Thursday, 19 February, was devoted largely to summarizing the Dialogue and producing a final statement.

Among those points which received wide agreement during the discussions were these: that development is a process that encompasses both the spiritual and the material aspects of life; that personal change goes hand in hand with social change, and both must be viewed as central to collective progress; that development must be guided by spiritual principles and values, and must seek to promote quality of life and human dignity; that successful development will promote family and community cohesion; that new measures of development, based on common criteria and shared principles, will be needed; that all must approach development in a spirit of

#### DIALOGUE ON SPIRITUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

true humility, love and compassion and must become active listeners/learners; and that development must be based on principles of sustainability, justice, consultation and participation.

Swami Teertha, one of the principal Hindu representatives, described the import of these ideas this way: "The significance of the

meeting is not to be underestimated. This dialogue redefined poverty, prosperity, and progress. A new atmosphere was created for new development activities which take into account the social, the environmental, and the spiritual."

The group also set forth several concrete proposals. It was decided, for example, that the religious communities will be invited to "influence the thinking of the World Bank by participating in the studies and discussions embodied in the Bank's annual World Development Reports ." A special effort will be made to get this input for the report planned for the year 2000 , which will focus on "understanding poverty."

"Until now, the main criterion in judging the success of development work has been economic growth," said Ms. Tyndale of Christian Aid, who served as an advisor to Archbishop Carey in the planning of the Dialogue. "The criteria that the faiths are suggesting focus more on the overall well-being of communities and people, of which a very important aspect is both spirituality and cultural identity. This came out of the meeting very strongly."

Most importantly, perhaps, the Bank and the faiths agreed to continue to dialogue by setting up joint working groups to explore further areas of concern. Among the themes to be considered by working groups are community building; hunger and food security; environmental sustainability; the preservation of cultural heritage, including sacred sites; violence and post-conflict reconstruction; education and social service delivery.

Beyond such specifics, among the most significant aspects of the event were the mere gathering of representatives of nine major world religions and leaders from the Bank, and the boldness of the topic. Although the idea that religion and spirituality are intimately related to the processes of social and economic development has long been promoted by religious groups, the fact that the World Bank has now given it credence means that even the most straightforward

## THE B AHA' I WORLD

programs of economic development will be more likely to consider spirituality as a component in their planning and execution. It is a concept that seems sure to affect the entire international development agenda.

"Thirty years ago, in development, nobody cared about ecology," said Dr. Thomas Lachs, a representative of the Jewish community. "Today, the environmental impact of a project is a major issue. If we can do the same thing in the spiritual/cultural values field, the impact on the non-economic lives of people will be tremendously important."

Another emergent idea was that greater involvement of religious groups in official development efforts could become an antidote to the corruption that all too often accompanies the processes of development

funding. "The moral authority of religious leaders is key in the campaign to promote good governance and transparency which Wolfensohn passionately champions in view of the high price that corruption and waste exact on poor countries," said World Bank News, a Bank publication aimed at journalists.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Vice President Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress, who attended both the Lambeth Palace meeting and a previous gathering at Windsor Palace, said the interfaith nature of the meeting was especially important. Wherever possible, he suggested, joint projects with the Bank should also be undertaken as interfaith ventures. "Projects should be managed not by one religious group but by a consortium of faiths," said Rabbi Hertzberg. Participants also committed themselves to "explore further opportunities for partnership" at the country level. Pilot projects are to be established between the Bank and the faiths, and religious representatives will be invited to speak at special staff training sessions to help Bank personnel learn more about religious beliefs and cultures as they pertain to development processes.

A former investment banker, Dr. Wolfensohn took office in June 1995 and began working almost immediately to widen the Bank's contacts with non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society. "This has involved the Bank reaching out to various groups and dialoguing with them," said John Mitchell, a Bank official who was involved in planning the Dialogue. "This event is in some ways an explicit recognition that Dr. Wolfensohn

#### DIALOGUE 0:\ SPIRITUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

feels religions are a major part of civil society. While the Bank has dialogued with them in piecemeal fashion, this event is also trying to systematically push the dialogue to a higher level-and to validate it."

#### Baha'i Participation

Through its Office of the Environment, the Baha'i International Community played an active role both in the lead-up to the Dialogue and during the sessions at Lambeth. The Community's involvement began, in a sense, with the participation of Baha'is in a previous interfaith meeting held at Windsor Palace in April-May 1995. That meeting, which was cosponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature and others, was known as the Summit on Religions and Conservation, and it sought to strengthen the then burgeoning collaboration between religions and the environmental movement by creating a new entity: the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). The lead Baha'i representative to that meeting was Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum.

From the 1995 Windsor Palace meeting, which was attended by a representative of the World Bank, grew the idea of a special meeting to bring the Bank more directly into contact and collaboration with religious leaders. This led to a preliminary meeting in May

1997 in Washington, DC, at the Bank's headquarters, when a smaller group of religious leaders gathered to discuss ways the Bank could be more sensitive to local communities and alternative values.

From left to right, Kiser Barnes, lead representative of the Balui'i International Community, Archbishop D1: George Carey, and World Bank President Dr. James Wolfensohn.

Lawrence Arturo of the Community's Office of the Environment and Mona Grieser, a development specialist who is a Baha'i, participated in that meeting and made several important contributions to these preliminary discussions, including the suggestion that the group could widen the agenda of the discussions from a focus on poverty reduction to a broader understanding of human development in a global context. In this regard, the Baha'is introduced the term "global prosperity," a concept Baha'is use to describe a whole range of links and interrelationships between the spiritual and the material, across all sectors of society, that humanity must understand and act upon if it is to create a global society where all can achieve both spiritual and material well-being. The Baha'i representatives also suggested that the group might work to develop new "indicators of prosperity"-measures that would assess development progress through the perspective of spiritual principles. This idea became a major focus of the consultations and led to the call for papers from each religion that would propose a methodology for creating such indicators and what they would seek to measure. At the Lambeth meeting, Kiser Barnes, the chief Baha'i representative, opened the session on "participation" by offering some thoughts on the spiritual values that must undergird efforts to include the active participation of all in any development endeavor. "Only development programs that are perceived as just and equitable can hope to engage the commitment of the people upon whom successful implementation ultimately depends," said Mr. Barnes. "When people trust that all are protected by standards and assured of benefits, such virtues as honesty, the willingness to work and sacrifice, moderation, and a spirit of cooperation can flourish and combine to make possible the attainment of demanding collective

goals."

Such ideas about prosperity, participation, and spiritual indicators, and the view that spiritual and material development are inseparably interlinked, ultimately became the key themes of the Dialogue. Baha'is expect to be actively involved with the Bank in the ongoing dialogue it has established with the religions and to contribute to the initiatives that were agreed upon at Lambeth Palace.

## DIALOGUE ON SPIRITUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

### Religious Representation in the Dialogue

#### Baha'i community

Kiser Barnes, International Counsellor

Lawrence Arturo, Director of the Baha' i International Community's Office of the Environment

#### Buddhist community

Nambaryn Enkhbayar, Leader of the Minority in the Parliament of Mongolia and Chairman of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party

Sulak Sivaraksa, a social activist and founder of small economy model developments in Thailand

#### Orthodox Christian community

Metropolitan John of Pergamon, representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Archimandrite Feofan, Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate

#### Protestant Christian community

Dr. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury

The Right Reverend Thomas Olmorijoi Laiser, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the Arusha Diocese

#### Roman Catholic community

His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Vatican

Monsignor Diamluid Matiin, Secretary for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Father Sergio Bernini, S. J. , Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at the Gregorian University, Rome

#### Hindu community

Swami Vibudheshwar Teerth, Head of the Sri Admar Mutt, Udipi, Karnataka, South India

Acharya Srivatsa Goswami, Head of the Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, in Vrindavan

#### Jain community

His Excellency Dr. L. M. Singhvi, Patron of the Institute of Jainology

Professor Padmanabh S. Jaini, a Trustee of the Institute of Jainology and Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California at Berkeley

#### Jewish community

Professor Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg (Conservative tradition), Vice President

Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress

Professor Rabbi Rene Sirat (Orthodox tradition), former Grand Rabbi of France, current Grand Rabbi of the Consistoire Central, Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Department of Near and Far Eastern Studies, University of Paris

Dr. Thomas Lachs (Reform tradition), former Board Member of the Bank of Austria and Head of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Bank and, in this capacity, a past Alternate Governor for Austria at the International Monetary Fund

Muslim community

His Royal Highness Crown Prince E I-J-Iassa n Bin Tal a! of Jordan

His Highness, the Aga Khan

Sikh community

Sri Singh Sahib Manjit Singh, Jathedar of Anandpur, Punjab, India

Dr. Rajwani Singh, founding member of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation

Taoist community

Zhang Ji Yu, Vice President, Vice Secretary-General of the China Taoist Association at Bai Yun Guan, Beijing

Zhang Xun Mu, an academic researching Taoism at the Religious Research Center

Tjalling Halbertsma, a Dutch national who has been working with Taoist groups in China to preserve seven major Taoist sacred mountains

During 1997 the Baha'í communities of Spain and Luxembourg marked significant milestones in the history of their growth and development, both commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'í Faith in their lands.

50th

ANNIVERSARIES

IN SPAIN AND

LuxEMBOURG

In the Tablets of the Divine Plan, written between 1916 and 1917, 'Abdu'l-Baha called upon the Baha'ís of North America to arise and settle in farflung countries and territories where there were no or very few Baha'ís. Throughout the following forty years, in response to this call, hundreds of individuals arose from their comfortable lives and travelled across the globe to settle in countries where they knew no one. There they established embryonic communities of a Faith that they believed in with total dedication. Two of the countries specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Tablets of the Divine Plan were Spain and Luxembourg. As a result of the response of two lone women who arose and settled in these countries, Baha'í communities were established on a firm foundation. In 1997-1998, these communities celebrated their fiftieth

anniversaries.

## Spain

Virginia Orbison, the first member of the Baha'i Faith to settle in Spain, arrived on 26 December 1946. An American who came via South America, Miss Orbison found Spain under the shadow of

## THE BAHAI WORLD

despotism and in the grip of economic stringency, its peoples still suffering from the wounds of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Her memoirs recount her entrance into the beautiful capital of Madrid through an "unattractive district, passing the remains of trenches, destroyed houses, and heaps of rubbish." The Palace Hotel, where she first stayed, was a sad, cold place, without sufficient light or heating. This was her introduction to a country where she knew no one and Spain's introduction to an unfamiliar new religion.

Since that time, the growth of the Baha'i community of Spain has been steady. About six months after Miss Orbison's arrival, two brothers, Jose Maria and Manuel Bazo Barea, became Baha'is. On 20 April 1948, the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Madrid was formed. The following year, the Local Assembly of the Baha'is of Barcelona was also established, with an entirely Spanish membership. By 1954, two more sister Assemblies were formed, in Murcia and Tarrasa. The Ten Year Plan, initiated by Shoghi Effendi in 1953, brought wider horizons to Spain with the opening to the Baha'i community of the Balearic Islands and Andorra, which had both been mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Four years later, at Rio de Janeiro in 1957, the first Iberian Regional Spiritual Assembly—consisting of Spain, Portugal and the Azores—was elected. Prior to the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, the Spanish Baha'i community had its own separate National Spiritual Assembly and more than two hundred believers, mostly Spanish. Close to the end of that decade, the long sought legal recognition of the Baha'i community was achieved, making public teaching and public meetings possible.

In 1997, the Baha'i community of Spain celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in the Iberian Peninsula. Half a century after the arrival of a single woman there, the Baha'i community of Spain numbers sixty-eight Local Spiritual Assemblies and over three thousand believers. Some sixteen hundred people from fifty countries joined the commemorative celebrations, which were hosted by the National Spiritual Assembly in Madrid from 25 to 27 July 1997. The honored guest at these events was Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Rul-tiyyih Khanum.

## SPAIN AND LUXEMBOURG

Fiftieth anniversary celebrations in Spain, 25- 27 July 1997. Below: Honored guest at the festivities, Hand of the Cause of God Amatu 'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum. Left: The performance of a flamenco dance was one of the many artistic presentations at the gathering.

Above: Nabil Perdu, member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, addressed the gathering.

Right: A conference highlight was a dramatic presentation about the first Baha'i pioneer to Spain, Virginia Orbison.

A representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain opened the formal inaugural session, which preceded brief addresses from representatives of the General Board of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, the Federation of Religious Evangelical Organizations of Spain, and the Federation of Israeli Communities of Spain, all warmly acknowledging the activities of the Baha'i community. Later, representatives of the National Assemblies of the Canary Islands and of Portugal spoke to the gathering. During her address, Amatu'l-Baha encouraged the Baha'is to share the Baha'i Faith with those who have not yet heard of it and to remember the spiritual nature and immortality of the human soul and the importance of educating children in moral principles. Artistic presentations played an important part in the three-day event, including the Ballet of Laura Esteve, which dramatized the coming of the Faith of Baha'u'llah to Spain, and a choral presentation of new pieces composed by Spanish Baha'is. Two photo exhibits-one on the history of the Faith in Spain and the other on Baha'i Houses of Worship-were also prepared for the occasion .

Among the artistic presentations at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in Spain was the performance of a ballet about the introduction of the Baha'i Faith to the country.

## SPAIN AND LUXEMBOURG

Speeches were made on the history and development of the Baha'i community, the role of the individual in the Baha'i community, and the upcoming challenges that face the Baha'is as the end of the century approaches. One feature of the gathering was special mention of the early Baha'is in Spain, including the first Basque and Gypsy adherents.

The closing address, given by Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum,

recalled Virginia Orbison and her enterprising spirit. Amatu'I-Baha once again stressed the need for Baha'is to share the Baha'i teachings with those who have not heard of them and to use more creative means in presenting them.

Following the celebrations, Ru~iyyih Khanum and her traveling companion Violette Nakbjavani traveled to the Alicante and Basque provinces for thirteen days. During their visit to the Basque region, they attended the Baha'i conference of Euska Herria in Vitoria, where more than one hundred believers from all parts of the area were in attendance. Amatu'I-Baha also met with the Director of the Women's Institute of the Basque Government and was interviewed by a number of journalists. In Alicante, she attended a reception given in her honor with representatives of the Baha'i community of the Levante region. She also visited the Antonio Jimenez Institute of Human Resources, where she spoke to an audience of over two hundred Gypsy Balla'is about the importance of protecting minorities and recounted Shoghi Effendi's joy upon learning of the emolment of the Gypsies in the Baha'i Faith.

#### Luxembourg

In February 1947, Honor Kempton, a British Baha'i who had been living in Alaska (a territory she had opened to the Baha'i Faith), arrived in Luxembourg- the smallest of the ten European countries with no Baha'is. There she witnessed the declaration of faith of the first Luxembourg Baha'i, Suzette Hipp, the same year as her arrival and was instrumental in establishing the first Local Spiritual Assembly, of Luxembourg-Ville, in 1949. The development of the Baha'i community continued, and in 1962 the Luxembourg National Spiritual Assembly was elected. The following year, Miss Kempton attended the first International Baha'i Convention

#### T lj\_E Bf\l::lA'f WORLD

From left to right,  
Claude Levy, one of  
the first Baha'is in  
Luxembourg, and  
Ned Blackmore, who  
was among the first  
pioneers to the country,  
recall the early days of  
the Baha'i community  
there during the fiftieth  
anniversary celebration  
at the Baha'i center in  
Luxembourg- Ville,  
November 1997.

as a delegate from Luxembourg and participated in the first election of the

Universal House of Justice.

At the time of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Luxembourg, in 1997, the Baha'i community consisted of 11 Local Spiritual Assemblies and more than 370 Baha'i adults, youth, and children. The celebration, held in November, included an evening hosted by the National Spiritual Assembly, during which some of the first pioneers and early native Luxembourg Baha'is shared their memories and impressions of the growth and development of the Baha'i Faith in the country. It also featured a photo exhibition of the development of the national Baha'i community, and a Baha'i book display.

In addition to the November

The banner displayed at the Baha'i observance, the Luxembourg center in Luxembourg-Ville during Baha'i community held a gaththefiftieth anniversary celebrations. ering at the Cercle Municipal in

#### SPAJ N AN D L UXEMBOURG

Some of the audience attending the fiftieth anniversary observance of the introduction of the Baha'i Faith to Luxembourg at the Cercle Municipal in Luxembourg- Ville, Apri/1998.

Luxembourg-Ville on 2 April 1998. Invitations were sent to Ministers of the Government, high-ranking Government officials, and other community leaders. Among the more than two hundred people attending were Grand Rabbi Joseph Sayagh and a representative of the Muslim community. Speakers presented the development of the Baha'i Faith in Luxembourg and Europe. The fiftieth anniversary celebrations were covered by the Luxemburger Wort, one of the largest newspapers in the country, and the Republicain Lorrain.

#### TH E B AIIA'f WORLD

Seven terraces below the Shrine of the Bab have now been completed, and

ork is underway on the entrance plaza of the first terrace, as well as the two terraces above it. This photo was taken in April 1998.

MOUNT

CARMEL

PROJECTS:

Progress 1997-98

In 1990 work began on the monumental construction projects now nearing completion at the Baha'i World Centre on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel. These projects include the completion of nineteen terraces, nine below and nine above the Shrine of the Bab, which have been designed to provide a formal approach to this holy place and also to enhance its beauty. The other focus of the projects is the construction of buildings to house the senior administrative institutions of the Baha'i Faith. Under construction are the Centre for the Study of the Texts, seat of a research center that assists the Universal House of Justice to fulfill its legislative function, and the International Teaching Centre, seat of the institution with global responsibility for the protection and propagation of the Baha'i Faith. The development of an underground extension to the existing Archives Building is also underway. All of the projects are scheduled for completion around the turn of the century.

During the period between Ri<ivan 154 and Ri<ivan 155 B.E. (21 April 1997 to 21 April 1998), "the construction projects on Mount Carmel maintained a dazzling momentum," with the result

that all structural work was completed in advance of the Eighth International Baha'i Convention in April 1998. 1 During this period the Mount Carmel Projects office took on additional responsibilities, managing greater parcels of the construction work and directing firsthand the purchase and supply of necessary raw materials. Although the change greatly increased pressure on Projects staff, the end result was greater economy, quality control, and flexibility in the construction program- without Preparations for the installation of the marble exterior on the International compromise either to the Teaching Centre, spring 1998. structural integrity or to the aesthetic value of the projects. The costs of alternative methods of construction were

carefully reviewed, and materials and design solutions were adopted to derive the most value from every dollar contributed-sometimes at great personal sacrifice-by Baha'is from all over the world. Seeking experienced manpower for the various disciplines involved in the work, the Mount Carmel Projects team drew on a diverse group of experts and workers from China, Romania, Turkey, France, Italy, and Canada, in addition to the large numbers of Israeli workers already engaged in the projects.

1. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Bah a 'is of the world, Ri<;!van  
154 B.E. (1997, unpublished).

## M O U N T c A R M E L P R O J E C T S

### Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab

The terraces of the Shrine of the Bab have been designed to create a majestic setting for the pathway leading to the Shrine, which Baha'is regard as one of the two holiest spots in the world. For this reason the terraces must not only display beautiful gardens set in an exquisite landscape but should conduce to an atmosphere of reverence and serenity that inspires contemplation in both pilgrims and visitors. Because of their relationship to the Shrine, the terraces effect the appearance of concentric circles emanating from it. All lines and curves direct the eye towards that central edifice, while the interplay of light, water, and ornamentation enhances the feelings of awe and reverence already inspired by the Shrine itself. Many spring flowering bulbs--carefully chosen for their color and fragrance--were newly planted this year. Nestled into the contours and along the stone paths of the outer, less formal garden areas are groupings of plants and shrubs that add to a peaceful, pleasant environment in which one can meditate and experience nature's beauty. To protect the gardens on the steep upper portion of the mountain against erosion from the winter rains, gardeners planted a wide range of ground cover and flowering plants.

One of the nearly completed terraces above the Shrine of the Bab, with the Seat of the Universal House of Justice in the background, March 1998.

During 1997- 98 , the architectural and landscaping work on terraces fifteen to nineteen above the Shrine of the Bab was completed in time for the International Convention. The structures of the twelfth , thirteenth , and fourteenth terraces were also completed, and work commenced on the eleventh terrace- the roof of the building of the Information Centre and Office of Security on the south

side of Hatzionut Avenue. The terrace on which the Shrine of the Bab stands also underwent major refurbishing. Permanent Aerial view of the Shrine of the Bab, grass was installed , irrigation Apr/1 998. lines were upgraded, ornaments were repaired or replaced , as necessary, and new plants and trees were introduced. Below the Shrine, the landscape of terraces three through nine was enhanced by new plantings and is now nearly complete. Soon after the demolition in March 1997 of the last building obstructing the construction of the first and second terraces at the foot of Mount Cannel , work commenced at these sites and their structures began to emerge.

#### Bridge over Hatzionut Avenue

Work associated with the lowering of Hatzionut Avenue and the construction of the terrace above it proceeded with full force . The most difficult part of the operation- relocation of underground services such as water lines , electricity, cable TV, and sewage was completed and the entire street was lowered , in some places by as much as five meters. The structure of the complex that will house the Information Centre and the Office of Security under terrace eleven was completed. All the precast panels on the south side of the street were installed and eighty percent of the local

#### MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

Aerial view of the Shrine of the Bab, the bridge under construction over Hatzionut Avenue, and three of the terraces above it.

stone was set in place on the north retaining wall. Following this work, the construction of the bridge spanning the street began, and by April 1998 all the concrete structures of the Mount Carmel Projects were completed.

#### Centre for the Study of the Texts/Archives Extension

With the completion of the structure of the Centre for the Study of the Texts, finishing work proceeded quickly. By June 1997 , following the construction of the circular roof over the building's entrance portico and the removal of the massive crane that had stood in the central void of the building, a large marble fountain was installed in the portico

garden area. Separating this patio from the library of the Centre for the Study of the Texts is a clear glass wall that has been specially laminated in order to eliminate most of the ultraviolet. The fountain inside the Centre for the Study of the Texts, positioned in the central portico. Water from the fountain will mask environmental noise and reflect natural light into the library that surrounds it.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

rays of the sun and to prevent fading of the library's books and furnishings.

The floor of the entrance portico, the main stairs leading to it, and the circular ring of the roof of the seventh floor were all covered in marble by July 1997. Millwork and the installation of library shelves, mahogany doors, and approximately eighty teak windows were completed by November. January 1998 saw the skylights put in place, and the walls behind the staircase in the foyer were covered in French stone. The installation of red granite on the main staircase commenced, and all levels of the interior received at least an initial coat of paint.

Arrangements for the relocation of the offices and the occupation of the building are underway. Interior millwork is well advanced and many of the office spaces have been fitted with built-in cabinets. Strategically placed light wells funnel light to even the lowest levels of the building.

tation of the building are being identified. Now that the work on the interior of the Centre for the Study of the Texts has reached such an advanced stage, the time when the excavated site appeared like a gaping crater in the heart of Mount Carmel seems like the distant past; the building has finally assumed the character of "the seat of an institution of Baha'i scholars." 2

An extension to the International Baha'i Archives has been constructed " to provide accommodation for the central office of

2. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Baha'is of the world, 31 August 1987 (unpublished).

## MO UNT cARMEL PROJECTS

the ever-growing Archives at the World Centre." 3 A significant part of this structure comprises a strong room and adjacent cold room that will serve as conservation areas for both the original Baha'i sacred writings and artifacts associated with the Founders of the Baha'i Faith. These rooms have been equipped to serve as a safe, stable conservation environment, complete with state-of-the-art mechanical and electrical systems, marble flooring, and customized steel shelving and hanging panel systems. The sixmonth process of purging the strong room and the cold room from impurities left by glue and paint products will begin shortly with the activation of the air-conditioning system.

View of the Centre for the Study of the Texts, the International Archives Building, and the Monument Gardens (foreground). The Monument Gardens contain several graves of members of Baha'u 'llah's family.

### The International Teaching Centre

To speed up the progress of work on the building of the International Teaching Centre the number of workers on site was increased by fifty percent during the year. The front entrance, which faces the Monument Gardens and includes a series of staircases leading

### 3. Ibid.

from the Gardens to the Teaching Centre building, was completed by November 1997, and the first consignment of marble for the external walls and columns arrived on site during the same period. A platform was created outside the northern perimeter of the building to serve as a casting and storage yard and as space for the large mobile crane required for the unloading and installation of the marble. Most of the finishing items, including marble and granite for the interior of the building, kitchen equipment, and wood doors and frames, were also ordered by that time.

By February 1998, the final pouring of concrete for the roof of the building was accomplished, marking the achievement of the goals of the construction program set out more than a year and a half before. As is customary, all the key participants--the contractor's site team, the Mount Carmel Projects technical team, all of the subcontractors, the Managing Director of Perez G. G. Engineers, and the Project Manager--came together to celebrate this achievement. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Perez expressed his appreciation for the excellent teamwork, saying, "Working with the Baha'is on these projects has been a great pleasure which we will treasure in our professional lives. We have worked with our Baha'i friends in the project management team as members of

Front view of the International Teaching Centre, just after installation of the marble columns, April 1998.

#### MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

one family. We hope to continue in the same spirit until the completion of the Projects."

By the time of the International Convention eight marble columns in the entrance portico of the building and twelve columns in the rear portico had been installed. Like those of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the International Baha'i Archives, the front columns of the International Teaching Centre are in the Ionic order, while the columns at the back are in the Tuscan style.

#### German Templer Colony Project

Substantial progress was achieved during the year in the restoration of the German Templer Colony, keeping pace with the adjoining terraces project. Work on the main axis through the Colony picked up momentum. The traffic circle and sections of the promenade near the junction of Hagefca Street and Ben Gurion Avenue were paved with stone, and several building facades were renovated. To highlight the significance of this project the Municipality of Haifa arranged a seminar in November 1997. Introduced by the Mayor of Haifa, the program featured an assessment of the progress made on the project, a projected timetable for completion, discussion of long-range planning and the intended purpose and use of the Templer Colony, a review of planned projects along the route and consultation concerning the integration of the restoration with the Baha'i projects. Participants included members of the Association of Architects and Engineers of Haifa, the Land Development Authority of Israel, the Historical Restoration Committee, the Steering Committee members for the restoration project, City Council members, and owners of restaurants and businesses along the axis. As a member of the Steering Committee for the development of the Gennan Colony, Mount Carmel Projects manager Fariborz Sahba made a detailed presentation on the Baha'i projects.

#### Conclusion

Baha'is all over the world, conscious that "the brief span of time before the century ends is precious beyond all telling," are arising

4. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Baha'is of the world, Rivvan 154 B.E. (1997, unpublished).

#### TITJ BAHAI WORLD

to offer their "acts of service to the unfolding, spiritual drama of these momentous days." 5 The Mount Carmel Projects team, sharing this same earnest desire to serve, continues to make strenuous efforts to expedite completion of the Projects on this holy mountain.

5. Ibid.

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REVIEW

The outstanding characteristic of the Baha'i year from 1997 to 1998 can be summed up in one word: growthdynamic growth in the range and number of activities undertaken by Baha'is worldwide, and significant growth in membership in various Baha'i communities around the globe. Most noteworthy was progress in the evolution of permanent training institutes. Since the call of the Universal House of Justice in December 1995 for the establishment of national or regional permanent institutes designed "to provide well-organized, formally conducted programs of training on a regular schedule," 1 hundreds of institutes have been founded and thousands of individuals have taken their courses.

While no brief survey such as this can do justice to the full range of diverse and stimulating endeavors undertaken by the followers of Baha'u'llah throughout the globe, it does offer a collage of the large numbers of activities undertaken by the Baha'is, their communities, and their institutions in the past year. The material is organized under

I. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Baha'is of the world, 153 B.E. (1996, unpublished).

#### THE BAHAI' [ WORLD

the following categories: Institutes and Other Training Activities, Baha'i Institutions, Sharing the Message of Baha'u'llah, Community Life, Houses of Worship, Scholarship, Involvement in the Life of Society, Social and Economic Development, Interfaith Activities, Race Unity, Contact with Prominent People, Recognition, Advancement of Women, Youth, the Special Role of Indigenous Peoples, the Arts, and Environment. Certain events are not being covered here but are reported in detail in separate articles: the gathering of religious leaders with World Bank officials at the Lambeth Conference, the fiftieth anniversaries of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Spain and Luxembourg, and a report on the progress of the construction projects on Mount Carmel.

#### Institutes and Other Training Activities

The development of human resources on a large scale requires that the establishment of institutes be viewed in a new light. In many regions, it has become imperative to create institutes as organizational structures dedicated to systematic training. The purpose of such training is to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills needed to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation, including the teaching and deepening of a

large number of people- adults, youth and children. 2

Twenty-one Baha'is from ten countries-Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela- met at the Ruhi Institute in Puerto Tejada, Colombia, from 3 to 8 November 1997 to create a unified vision of the institutes being developed in Latin America. Each session began with a discussion of basic concepts of education, during which the point was stressed that the development of human resources is an organic, dynamic process. The purpose of the institutes, their relationship to the institutions of the Faith, and the formulation of curricula and methodology were all discussed. Individuals who had helped to develop institutes in their national communities shared their experiences and the challenges they had encountered.

2. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Conference of Continental Counsellors, 26 December 1995 (Riviera Beach: Palabra Publications, 1996).

## YEAR L REVIEW \XI

A member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil gave a presentation on how to prepare a plan of action for an institute, defining its objectives and activities and producing a time line. Another speaker looked at the development of Colombia's Institute Study Groups facilitated by tutors trained at the Ruhi Institute. With the help of these tutors, small groups of believers in villages and towns throughout the country have entered the Institute's basic program and are systematically studying its courses.

Programs formulated by In Colombia, Ruhi Institute participants Germany's regional institutes address three aspects of Perico Negro in Cauca in 1997. the participants' lives: "mind, hand and heart." Started in October 1997, regional institutes throughout the country held one-year courses on "Living the Baha'i life." Topics included "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah," "the essence of a human being," "Baha'i identity," and "relating the Baha'i teachings to the problems of society." Participants felt an increase in their knowledge and their desire to serve humanity.

A ten-day training course for college students was held at the National Training Institute in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia, at the end of January 1998. Interested students who were not affiliated were invited to attend the institute training along with Baha'is. For five

days, classes were given in basic Baha'i topics and then the youth participated in workshops. The Counsellor and members of the National Spiritual Assembly visited the students, and a group of youth also entertained the participants with Baha'i songs. On the last day of the course, thirteen of the non-Baha'i students declared their belief in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

Some thirty participants from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda attended the first Institute course for trainers from East Africa, held in Nakuru, Kenya, in June 1997. A variety of study methods was used, including group discussion of the Baha'i writings, talks by facilitators, general consultations and small-group discussions of practical applications of Baha'i principles.

All three ethnic groups of Rwanda were represented at the first institute course held since the war. Twenty-six Baha'is from fourteen Local Spiritual Assemblies gathered in June 1997 at the national Baha'i center in Kigali. Participants consulted on the goals of their community with the members of the National Spiritual Assembly. In September 1997, a study class on the Four Year Plan and the institute process was held in Pohnpei, Eastern Caroline Islands. About twenty adults, five youth, and ten children participated in a program that included talks, a round of prayers, and the sharing of news from various Baha'i communities. A session was also held to train Auxiliary Board members and their assistants.

In July 1997, the Baha'i Institute of Greenland offered its first set of Baha'i courses. The overall aim was to give the participants a

Participants at the twenty-second course of the National Institute of Uzbekistan, from 28 April to 4 May 1997, held a picnic at the foot of the mountains of Ohalik.

Dances and Baha'i songs were featured at Rwanda second Baha'i Institute, held in Kigali from 6 to 12 October 1997.

greater understanding of the verities of the Baha'i Faith, with the view of enhancing their personal lives. Courses were taught in Greenlandic, Danish, and English.

Twelve participants from Kaolack, Pikine, Tataguine and other areas of Senegal attended classes held at the site of the Permanent Institute of Bambilor from 19 October to 2 November 1997. Their study focused on three booklets based on Ruhi Institute materials on the themes of prayer, life and death, and understanding the Baha'i

sacred writings. Study was conducted in the Wollof language, through participatory workshops and everyone played an active part. Some forty youth from five districts of Lesotho attended an institute course from 1 to 20 December 1997, with local youth serving as facilitators. Topics studied included Baha'i laws, the benefits of leading a chaste and holy life, and Baha'i administration. Evening programs included performing arts which contributed to the spiritual atmosphere of the occasion and the unity of the group.

Following the visit of two Baha'is to the Sudan in June 1997, the Baha'i community of that country established the "Mirza I:Iaydar-' Ali Institute." Courses that cover BaM' i administration, the history of the Baha'i Faith, methods to expand the Baha'i community, and spiritual topics have been prepared.

Meherangiz Munsiff, a long-standing Baha'i who has traveled to more than 180 countries, visited Bermuda for the first time in February 1998 to conduct two weekend courses sponsored by the Bermuda Baha'i Permanent Institute. One course focused on prayer and meditation and the second addressed two topics: the need for

#### THE BARA'f WORLD

sharing with others the message of Baha'u'llah and Baha'i administration. Other training activities included regional seminars on "Education in Human Rights," which were successfully carried out from 16 to 18 January 1998 in Asuncion, Paraguay, and from 23 to 25 January in San Salvador, El Salvador. Representatives of sixteen national communities of Latin America and the Caribbean attended the seminars to learn how to approach the work of education in human rights.

#### Baha'i Institutions

... it behooves us to reflect on the animating purpose and the primary functions of these divinely-established institutions, the sacred character and the universal efficacy of which can be demonstrated only by the spirit they diffuse and the work they actually achieve.<sup>3</sup>

The specific duties of the institution of the Hands is to protect and propagate the Baha'i Faith. During her trip to Europe, Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Rul:liyyih Khanum visited Luxembourg. Some 230 Baha'is from Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg were present at a gathering on 18 August 1997 to honor their distinguished guest Amatu'l-Baha. Prayers were read in Luxembourgish, English, and Persian, and sung by the Luxembourg Baha'i choir. In her talk, Rul:liyyih Khanum emphasized the importance of the time in which we live and urged those present to make increased efforts to teach the principles of the Baha'i Faith. The second annual meeting of the National Spiritual Assemblies of southern Latin America was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The National Assembly is an elected council in which is invested legislative, executive, and judiciary powers over its national Baha'i community. Present at this annual meeting were a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors and twenty-one members of National Assemblies from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Consultations were marked by an open and sincere flow of ideas, proposals, and achievements on aspects involving

3. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah. A Selected Letters*. 2nd ed.

(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 9.

In May 1997, local Baha'is erected a sign welcoming visitors to the Baha'i Center in Nakuru, Kenya.

the Youth Year of Service programs and the state of the institute process in each country through the sharing of materials, publications, course outlines, and methodologies applied. They also discussed issues pertaining to the growth and maturation of institutions.

On 21 May 1997 a reception was held for the authorities and people of prominence in Brasilia, Brazil, to celebrate the inauguration of the new national Baha'i center in the federal capital.

This event was attended by more than seventy leaders of thought, including Ministers of State representatives, Federal Deputies, the Director-General of the Brazilian Senate, ambassadors and diplomats, writers, artists, media representatives, and other friends of the

Faith. The ceremony included prayers, readings from sacred scriptures, and music presented by the Brasilia Baha'i Choir. The official

inauguration of the new headquarters of the Brazilian Community took place on 23 May in the presence of two hundred Baha'is representing several state and local communities. The dedication plaque,

which was uncovered for the occasion, read in part, "The Brazilian Baha'i Community dedicates this Baha'i national office to the service of God and humanity, inspired by the following words of Baha'u'llah: The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Victoria, Seychelles, was the venue for an exhibition and a conference held on 23 August to mark the Silver Jubilee of the National

Spiritual Assembly. The exhibition attracted a large crowd. The highlight of the day was a conference in the main hall of the International Conference Center, attended by more than four hundred guests including dignitaries of the island who heard a presentation about the Faith. National television and radio covered the event and excerpts were featured in both daily news broadcasts.

Ground breaking for the new local Baha'i center in the Arno community of the Marshall Islands took place on 26 July 1997 in the presence of about two hundred people, including traditional and

church leaders. Following the formal presentation, everyone joined in a feast.

Representatives of four French-speaking communities took part in a conference on Baha'i institutions held in Martinique in late 1997. The countries represented were French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Haiti, and Martinique.

Students from the Tirana School of Fine Arts performed for an audience of 150 during the inauguration of the Albanian National Baha 'i Center, held in Tirana on 10 January 1998.

The inaugural meeting of the first Regional Baha'i Councils in the United States was held in Wilmette, Illinois, from 12 to 14 December 1997.

#### Sharing the Message of Baha'u'llah

The primary reason for anyone becoming a Baha 'i must of course be because he has come to believe the doctrines, the teachings and the Order of Baha 'u 'llah are the correct thing for this stage in the world's evolution.<sup>4</sup>

In the Makira Province of the Solomon Islands, a gathering was held from 21 to 23 November 1997 to proclaim the message of Baha'u 'llah to the leaders of the community. More than fifty invitation cards were sent to traditional chiefs, religious leaders, and selected individuals. As more people than expected attended the gathering, the venue had to be changed from the Togori Baha'i Center to the open air in the shade of the palm trees. The first day of the conference featured an open discussion on progressive revelation, while the following day a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly gave an introduction to the Baha'i Faith. The highlight

4. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual Baha'i, 5 July 1947 (unpublished).

of the conference was an afternoon presentation relating the practices of the people of the Are Are region and the Baha'i Faith. The event concluded with talks on the "Vision Beyond Year 2000" and on the Mount Carmel Projects in the Holy Land.

In Denmark, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Copenhagen took advantage of public festivities in celebration of May Day to proclaim the Baha'i message. At least two hundred thousand people attended the event at a large park on 1 May 1997. Four of the six entrances to the park were staffed by Baha'is holding large banners which read "Baha'i-Global Solidarity and World Citizenship." The Local Assembly had also rented space in the tent for exhibits by non-governmental organizations, and invitations to the weekly meetings at the national center were handed out. At least two hundred invitations and about eight thousand pamphlets were taken.

The presence of the Baha'is was mentioned in several of the media

coverages of the May Day festivities.

Afemata Moli Chang, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors and a traditional chief in Samoa, visited Vanuatu in September 1997 as part of the "Ocean of Light" project, using traditional customs to teach the Faith of Baha'u'llah to Pacific Islanders.

On the island of Efate, Mr. Chang met Chief Peter Poilapa of Melli and elders of that village. Later, at a special ceremony held in the national Baha'i Center in Port-Vila, he presented the message of Baha'u'llah along with a customary gift to members of the Vaturisu Council of Chiefs. While on the island of Tanna, the Counsellor met members of the Council of Chiefs of the area, visited Middle Bush, North and East Tanna, and gave public talks in six villages.

One hundred and ten Baha'is from seven provinces in Bolivia gathered in Oruro for a two-day conference in August 1997. Following the event eight teams traveled within Oruro and North Potosi for seven days to present the Baha'i Faith to the inhabitants of these areas. Over five hundred people expressed their desire to become Baha'is. The project also received press coverage.

Fifteen European Baha'is coming mainly from Belgium, France, and Switzerland joined fifty local believers in Cote d'Ivoire to bring the message of Baha'u'llah to the Danane region in the second phase of the "Audace" project. The project, which began in the summer of 1996, resulted in the opening of more than one hundred new localities,

In the Solomon Islands, traditional chiefs attended a gathering to proclaim the message of Baha'u'llah in November 1997.

the enrollment of hundreds of new believers in the Faith, and the formation of fifty new Local Spiritual Assemblies. The purpose of the second phase, which took place from 10 July to 31 August 1997, was to follow up the previous achievements by strengthening existing Local Assemblies, deepening newly enrolled believers, and extending activities to virgin localities. At the end of this phase, the Local Assembly of Danane reported that the number of newly enrolled believers was 2,672.

A campaign to teach people about the Baha'i Faith in four regions of Seychelles brought together 108 Baha'is from Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar, India and Seychelles. During the week preceding the campaign the Faith was featured prominently on national television news, national radio news, and in the island's only daily newspaper. The two main weekly papers each carried an article on the Faith and special radio spots were aired three times daily throughout. Presentation of the Faith to the masses began on 18 August 1997. No less than four exhibitions were held daily, and several talks were given on all aspects of the Faith during the week. On 24 August, the National Spiritual Assembly announced that more than one hundred new believers had enrolled in the Faith.

In the North Caucasus Republic of Russia, a Baha'i and his friend discuss the writings of Baha'u'llah in July 1997.

In January 1998, a campaign to bring the Baha'i Faith to thirteen areas of Colombia resulted in over eight hundred people accepting the Cause of Baha'u'llah. In the departments of Atlantica, Bolivar, Cauca, Cesar, Chocó, Cordoba, Huila, La Guajira, Quindio, Santander, Sucre, Valle del Cauca, and the islands of San Andres and Providencia, 144 Baha'is took part in this campaign.

The first phase of the Angolan Peace Project, launched on 28 October 1997, ended with seventy-two new believers embracing the Cause of Baha'u'llah by the end of the month. Six full-time staff participated in the project, including one youth from Sao Tome. The first phase of the project focused on the municipality of Viana, where the full-time teachers were supported by eight part-time volunteers. The Baha'is concentrated on visiting people in their homes and inviting those interested in learning more to attend weekly meetings. About six of the newly enrolled youth joined the Luanda Baha'i Youth Workshop and Youth Choir.

Five American Baha'is of African origin visited Togo from 18 to 25 January 1998. During their stay, the team met and presented the Baha'i Faith to the President and Vice President of the National

Commission for Human Rights, the Minister of Feminine Promotion, the Minister of Justice and Human Rights, and the Director of the Cabinet for the Minister of External Affairs and Cooperation.

The American team also visited journalists from Togolese television and radio and were included in two television broadcasts-

"It's Your Word," which lasted about thirty minutes, and "Report," which lasted for fifteen minutes.

A meeting of friendship was held between the Baha'i community of Helsingborg and the Romany people of Sweden as a result of one Baha'i being inspired to contact the Romany people after watching a program on television about them. Thirty people, twelve of them Baha'is, met at the Romany Center on 9 June 1997 where the Nordic Romany Chaiman gave a presentation on the Romanies. The Baha'is, in return, talked about the Baha'i Faith. Entertainment provided by the Baha'is and the Romanies was another feature of the evening.

A Baha'i from the United States visited Kyrgyzstan from April to July 1997, visiting cities where there were no Baha'is. He attracted two thousand people to meetings where he shared the message of Baha'u'llah, gave thirteen radio and television interviews about the Baha'i Faith, had five newspaper

articles published, and helped bring 157 new believers into the Faith. In addition, he met with the nation's Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament.

In 1997, the Local Spiritual Assembly in Quelirname, Namibia, Baha'is taught the Faith of Baha'u'llah to the people of Omaruru in Mozambique launched a teaching campaign to be held September 1997.

from 12 November to 21 April 1998. The teaching campaign, named after the Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga, was aimed at familiarizing the people who live in the suburbs of the area with the principles of the Baha'i Faith. Many in the region responded positively to this initiative.

In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, six Bengali-speaking Baha'i musicians visited Middle Andaman in December 1997 to present the Baha'i Faith to the Island's residents. The Baha'is adapted a number of songs in the Bhajans/Kirtana tradition-religious songs depicting the lives of holy men- to tell the story of Baha'u'llah and His teachings.

A Baha'i from Cote d'Ivoire spent four weeks traveling through Guinea's central regions of Labe and Zerekore in late 1997 to familiarize the people of the area with the message of Baha'u'llah. In Labe, discussions were held on progressive revelation, with particular emphasis on the station of Baha'u'llah and the principles of the Faith. As a result, a total of thirty-three people embraced the Baha'i Faith. In Zerekore, an entire village attended a meeting to discuss Baha'u'llah's message. Twenty-two people declared their belief in the Baha'i Faith.

An Australian Baha'i traveling to Tajikistan gave the message of the Baha'i Faith to those he met and visited local Baha'i communities, teaching English, Persian, and Baha'i moral education classes to approximately forty children aged eight and over. The Baha'i also presented the Baha'i Faith to government officials and gave talks to six hundred students at the polytechnic institute in Dushanbe on the topics of understanding God, the history of religions, the necessity of religion, the goals of the world religions, and the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. These presentations took place from 12 September to 10 November 1997.

Over 145 participants from 13 countries together with representatives of the National Spiritual Assemblies of Cyprus, France, Italy, Sicily, and Spain discussed the results of their efforts to develop their Baha'i communities at the Mediterranean Conference, held in Sardinia, Italy, from 8 to 12 October 1997. A unique feature of this event was that two days of the conference were devoted to public meetings, held in cooperation with local and provincial resources, on themes related to work ethics. The initiative received full support

Some of the participants in a Bahá'í children's class who traveled to Kiribati to teach the Baha'i message to the people of North Tarawa in May 1997.

from the Oristano Provincial authorities and the City Council. More than three hundred people attended the event, which included topics such as "Technology and Communication: New Ethical and Scientific Frontiers," "Women and Work: New Service Economy," and "School and Entrepreneurship: New Perspectives on Training and Work."

#### Community Life

His constant hope is that the believers will conduct themselves, individually and in their Baha'i Community life, in such a manner as to attract the attention of others to the Cause. The world is not only starving for lofty principles and ideals, it is, above all, starving for a shining example which the Bahá'ís can and must provide. 5

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Budapest, Hungary, has set up a marble plaque in the garden of the National Museum at the site where the Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Ru}liyyih Khanum

5. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual Baha'i, 22 February 1945 (unpublished).

#### THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

planted a tree during her visit to Budapest in 1993 to commemorate 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Budapest eighty years previously, during which He gave a talk in the National Museum. The plaque was unveiled on 31 January 1998 in a ceremony which opened the National Spiritual Assembly's campaign marking the eighty-fifth anniversary of the Baha'i Faith in Hungary. Inscribed on the marble plaque is the following: "Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch, Baha'u'llah (1817-1892)."

The second Baha'i Education Conference was held from 13 to 20 August 1997 at the Ocean of Light International Primary School in Tonga. Thirty participants came from Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Samoa, and Tonga. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Tupouto'a officially opened the meeting and expressed interest in the outcome. Other prominent people at the opening were the Director of the University of the South Pacific Centre in Tonga, the local Director of the Red Cross, and the Australian High Commissioner and his wife. Highlights included presentations on the Virtues Project, curriculum development, Baha'i-based moral education classes in public schools, the institute process, the use of technology in education, and educational programs for students with disabilities.

About 100 Baha'ís from all around Europe gathered in Paris on 14 and 15 June 1997 for a special service to honor the memory of

Thomas Breakwell, the first Englishman to declare his faith in Baha'u'llah. He was on a visit to Paris from his work in a cotton mill in the southern United States in the summer of 1901 when he learned of the Baha'i Faith and immediately accepted it. He quickly left for Acre to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha, who asked him to remain in Paris on his return to Europe. He served the Faith there with great ardor until he died of tuberculosis a few months later, early in 1902. In recent years, after much searching, the Baha'is found the grave in which he had been buried in Pantin Cemetery, and purchased the plot. A service was held there on the morning of 14 June, after which the participants went to the Baha'i Center for further readings, prayers, eulogies, and music. They also visited the places associated with 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Paris in 1911. Twenty-four Baha'is participated in a seminar on family life sponsored by the National Committee for Baha'i Education and

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

Family Life held at the National Baha'i Center in Tenerife, Canary Islands, on 28 September 1997. Small groups studied a tablet about marriage by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Some theatrical sketches on the theme of consultation within the family were presented by the "Artesano" workshop, and those present were encouraged to perform sketches themselves.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Myanmar organized a study session on various topics relating to the Baha'i Faith from 23 to 24 November 1997 in the Mandalay Baha'i Center. Among those participating were twenty-seven Baha'is from tribes in Shan State and nine Baha'is of the Sagaing Division, as well as some native Baha'is of Mandalay.

Seasonal schools are an integral part of Baha'i community life. Spring, summer and winter schools were held around the globe, including the following :

Thirty-four participants attended a summer school in Nabran, Azerbaijan, from 26 to 29 July 1997. The program started each day with dawn prayers and ended with evening prayers and meditations. Morning classes, held in the forest, were conducted on such topics as the Baha'i sacred writings, the life of Bahci'u'llah, the effect of

Participants at the Norwegian Baha'i School, held 5- 11 July 1997 in Alta, gather for a photograph .

calamities and difficulties in the progress and development of the individual and the community, the Universal House of Justice, and the relations between the individual and the Local Spiritual Assembly. Evening programs consisted

of music, songs, dances, and games.

The summer school held in the town of Alta, in the Sami region of Norway, brought together 115 Baha'is. Mr. Bahadur Khan, viceregent of Pakistan, and the Chancellor of Baluchistan University, speaking at a ceremony held to mark the first translation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas into Urdu, and guest speakers Omid Djalili of England, Shamil Fattakhov of Russia, and Manohar Patil of India, delved into such themes as love, justice, tolerance, and unity. Two newspaper articles, two radio interviews, a letter to the editor, and a newspaper report about a one-man show by Omid Djalili which was held in a restaurant with more than one hundred people in attendance, gave great attention to the fact that so many Baha'is were gathered in the small northern town.

A four-day summer school attended by one hundred Baha'is in the Fiji Islands was held at the beginning of January 1998 on the

Members of Spiritual Assemblies of Belgium and the Netherlands receive copies of the first official Dutch translation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas in Arnhem, the Netherlands, on 18 May 1997.

Baha'is from throughout Europe gathered in Paris 14-15 June 1997 to commemorate the ninety-fifth anniversary of the passing of Thomas Breakwell, the first English Baha'i.

theme "For the Love of Baha'u'llah." The first day focused on the prophecies of all the religions foretelling the coming of Baha'u'llah. The second day covered His life and teachings. The third day was devoted to Baha'u'llah's prophecies and their fulfillment, and the final day was on the individual's responsibility to serve Him. In the beautiful mountains of Busteni, the Romanian summer school took place from 2 to 7 September 1997, attracting eighty participants. The wide range of subjects covered concentrated on the spiritual and historic nature of the Faith, as well as the development of creative talents. One of the courses motivated the participants to dedicate a twenty-four-hour period to a prayer chain in memory of Baha'i martyrs.

More than two hundred Baha'is from Canada, Estonia, Finland, Norway, and Russia gathered in Joensuu, in eastern Finland, to participate in the Finnish Baha'i Summer School held at the end of

July 1997. Seminars were conducted on "The Requirements for a Just Global Society," "Consultation-From Debate to Functioning," "Islam in the Modern World," "The Significance of Science and Religion for the Prosperity of Humankind," "World Citizenship, a

#### THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

Global Ethic for Our Future," and "The Baha'í Concept of Art." The event was covered by the district radio and local newspapers. The Botswana Summer School took place at Tlokweng from 17 to 22 December 1997 attracting about two hundred adults, youth, and children, including a large number of visitors from countries as far away as Australia and Israel. Featured in the program were traditional dance and Baha'í-inspired music, including a performance by the children and youth of Kumakwane. Baha'ís from different communities joined the Spirit of Africa choir in singing beautiful harmonies by the end of the week.

In Jizzakh, Uzbekistan, twelve young people embraced the Baha'í Faith at a youth camp and summer school held in August 1997. Classes were held on the Hidden Words, prayer, the history of the Faith, teaching, the existence of God, the soul, prophecies from the Qur'an and the Baha'í administrative system. Workshops focused on the principles of the Faith and youth problems, including drugs, morality, and crime. Picnics, games, and dancing were also a part of the festivities.

Topics such as the Covenant, sacrifice, the performing arts, and the Baha'í Fund were covered at the vacation school in Paramaribo,

In Nicaragua, children participate in a class at the national Baha'í summer school in Diriamba, held in December 1997.

A Baha'í singing group performs at the 18/11 anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah on 12 November 1997 in Khulna, Bangladesh.

Suriname, from 25 to 28 December 1997. About thirty people attended, including two Baha'ís from Barbados and Guyana.

In addition to summer and winter schools, there were special educational programs for children. In Niger, a children's camp was held in Niamey on 4 and 5 April 1998 for fifth- to eighth-year students. Twenty-two children participated in the program organized by the Baha'í National Education Committee. Topics included the life of Baha'u'llah and environmental issues.

Another part of Baha'í community life is the observance of special commemorative occasions. There are nine Baha'í holy days

each year, and each community has its own distinct way of celebrating or commemorating them. The following are a sampling of holy day observances around the world:

A service commemorating the Birth of Baha'u'llah was hosted at the House of Worship in Samoa on the evening of 11 November 1997. Guests listened to prayers read in Samoan and English and chanted in Persian prior to gathering in the ancillary building for refreshments. On the following day, another celebration took place in the grounds of the House of Worship. About seventy people attended, including many children and youth. A TV Samoa crew arrived during the festivities and interviewed the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly and some of the children about Baha'u'llah and His teachings, resulting in a four-minute telecast the next morning.

On 25 May 1997, in celebration of the Declaration of the Báb, representatives of the Chiang Mai community of Thailand presented a copy of The Kitab-i-Aqdas (Baha'u'llah's Book of Laws) and

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

On 12 October 1997, Radio Baha'i in Ecuador marked its twentieth anniversary with about two hundred people attending. Between presentations of music and dance, local dignitaries made speeches.

Other Baha'i sacred writings to more than ten officials, including the Director of Education, the Chief of the Social Welfare Department, the Head Librarian at the National Library, and Army and Air Force radio station officials. As a result, a history of the Faith and a color photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha appeared on the front page of the Chiangmai News.

Baha'i new year celebrations in Kyrgyzstan received media attention. The Baha'i community of Bishkek celebrated the Baha'i new year, also called Naw Ruz, on 21 March with a program that included prayers in different languages, a talk on the significance of the Naw Ruz celebrations, and a performance by the youth.

#### Houses of Worship

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified. 6

Nearly five hundred gathered at the Baha'i House of Worship in Panama on 26 July 1997 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the inauguration of the Mother Temple in Latin America.

The diverse assemblage was composed of Baha'is, their special guests, and members of the public, including a large number from

6. Baha 'u 'llah, Bahci 'i Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahri 'u 'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu '1-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991).

The first Northwest Regional Baha'i School in Russia was held in Petrozavodsk from 2 to 5 January 1998.

the Guaymi, Kuna, and Choco tribes. Following a devotional service at the House of Worship, the attendees gathered in the public meeting hall for a ceremony which culminated in the unveiling of a quilt dedicated to the theme "Moral Values in Diversity." The gathering was addressed by Mr. Victor Barrios, representative of the Rotary Club of Panama, and Mr. Oscar Torres on behalf of the Panamanian Baha'i community. Dr. Berta de Barretto, representing the First Lady of Panama, spoke to the gathering briefly and unveiled the quilt, which was comprised of forty-eight panels fashioned by different local organizations, students, and local Baha'i communities. A service to commemorate International Human Rights Day and the beginning of Human Rights Year was held at the Australian Baha'i House of Worship in Sydney on 7 December 1997. The guests included the Governor General, His Excellency Sir William Deane and his wife. More than six hundred Baha'is and guests took part in the ceremony including representatives of various organizations, as well as members of the Continental Board of Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assembly. Sir William was the first to read at the service. The readings were drawn from the Baha'i,

## THE B AHA' I W ORLD

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of Panamas Baha'i House of Worship was held in July 1997. A quilt dedicated to the theme "Moral Values in Diversity" was unveiled for the occasion.

Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian sacred scriptures, with a particular focus on themes relating to human rights .

A newspaper article in the Chicago Sun Times dated 27 July 1997 marked the eighty-fifth anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone

dedicating the Mother Temple of the West in Wilmette, on the shore of Lake Michigan, by 'Abdu'l-Baha. "The dedication stone of the magnificent House of Worship was laid in 1912, but doors didn't open until 1953. The years between built more than a structure; they built up the foundations of a faith," reads the article. The House of Worship in Uganda was featured on a video program on Alliance Air during flights from South Africa to the United Kingdom in 1997. The airline is jointly owned by Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa, and the program was shown as part of a profile of Uganda. An article on the Faith was also featured in *Dine Out*, a travel magazine.

Among the many dignitaries who visited the Baha'i House of Worship in Samoa during the period in review was the Vice-Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Mr. Zhu Rongji, and his wife Madam Lao An. They were received by a delegation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa and members of the Baha'i community. The distinguished visitor expressed admiration for the design of the Temple and the ideological basis of it. Baha'i literature and a framed photograph of the Temple were presented to them.

In July 1997, the Baha'i Temple of India received His Royal Highness Niranjana Shah, Prince of Nepal, who was accompanied

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

by the acting Nepalese Ambassador and the Military Attache of Nepal to England. The delegation asked several questions about the life of Baha'u'llah and the origin of the Baha'i Faith. Other distinguished visitors to the House of Worship in India included the Jordanian Ambassador, accompanied by his wife and brother; the Hungarian Ambassador and his wife; and the Zambian Ambassador. The Ambassadors of the Ukraine and the Republic of Poland, and a Counselor with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China were also received.

#### Scholarship

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. 7

About 450 participants from around the world took part in the twenty-fourth International Conference of the Society for the Sociology of Religion, held from 7 to 11 July 1997 in Toulouse, France.

Two sessions were devoted to the study of the Baha'i community, and another included a presentation of a Baha'i paper together with other papers. One session was devoted to the launching of a new volume by Dr. Will C. van den Hoonaard of the University of New Brunswick, Canada, on *The Origins of the Baha'i Community of Canada, 1898-1948*.

"Fostering Human Rights: Developing Pathways to Peace" was

the topic of the 1997 annual conference of the Association for Baha'i Studies in North America held in Washington, DC, from 14 to 16 November. More than seven hundred people from the Americas, Asia, and Europe gathered for this event. The program consisted of plenary sessions and over fifty workshops on a broad range of issues. Among those making presentations were Rep. John Porter, cochairman of the United States House of Representatives Human Rights Caucus; Payam Akhavan, legal advisor to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda; and Richard Pierre Claude of the University of Maryland and coeditor of *Human Rights Education for the 21st Century*.

7. *Tablets of Bah a 'u 'l/rih revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 51.

This year's Hasan Balyuzi Memorial Lecture was given by Dorothy W. Nelson, a senior judge of the US Court of Appeals and a member of the National Spiritual Assembly. She emphasized action in the promotion of human rights and called for national law to be placed in an international law context by judges, so that constitutional law can be augmented by human rights norms in deciding cases. The 1997 Australian Baha'i Studies Conference on the theme of "Global Governance: A Promise for Collective Security and Human Prosperity" was held at the University of Western Australia in Perth from 10 to 13 July. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University opened the conference before an audience of about 350. The opening also featured a welcome by an elder of the Nyoongar Aboriginal peoples, who spoke movingly of the experiences of the indigenous population of the region. A special Persian-language Baha'i studies session included Persian poetry and dancing, as well as scholarly presentations.

The Association for Baha'i Studies in English-Speaking Europe held its annual conference in Oxford on 1 and 2 November 1997. The conference on "Spirituality and Civilization" consisted of fourteen presentations. The keynote address by Stephen Lambden, entitled "The Baha'i Criterion of Truth," showed how the more than twenty thousand sects in the world reflected the growing increase in religion and how this was linked to the search for truth. Other presentations included "A 'Politics of Transformation' in International Education," "Striving for Excellence," and "Religion in Society." The sixth annual conference of the Association for Baha'i Studies in Japan, held at the Tokyo Baha'i Center from 19 to 21 December 1997, focused on community development and spirituality in the cultural pursuits of Japan. In addition, a case study on Baha'i community development in Kyushu was presented and the role of Japan's Daystar International School in fostering community ties and designing a curriculum for the development of capacity was

explored. The evening program featured Japanese arts. Paintings, calligraphy, and other crafts were displayed throughout the center. Musical performances included traditional songs, flute, and classical Japanese Koto music.

'Irfan Colloquia, which are devoted to Baha'i scriptural studies conducted in English and Persian, were held in the United Kingdom

and the United States in 1997, sponsored by the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund. The theme of the fourteenth session of the 'Irfan Colloquium, held in Manchester from 4 to 6 July, was "World Religions and the Baha' i Faith." An audience of thirty-five people from Europe took part in presentations on "Sectarianism and the Baha'i Faith," "The Baha'i World Centre from the Perspective of the History of Religions," and "The Baha'i Approach to Other Religions: The Example of Buddhism." In the United States, the fifteenth 'Irfan Collquium was held at the Baha'i National Center in Wilmette, Ill ino is , from 9 to 10 August. Presentations included the following:

"A Comparison of Mass Movements in Hindu Villages: Baha'i and Christian," "Ascertaining the Validity of Islamic Hadith: A Personal Perspective," and "Religion and Science in Harmony: A New Reality."

In September 1997, the Landegg Academy in Wienacht, Switzerland, established the Rabbani Chair for Baha'i History. Each year, the Chair is to hold an annual colloquium on Baha'i history to which contributors to this area of scholarship will be invited. A formal dedication ceremony, attended by Hand of the Cause Amatu' 1-Baha Ru)iyiyih Khanum, was followed by a banquet and concert.

Mr. Washington Araujo, a member of the Baha'i community of Brazil and author of several books, was invited to become a member of the Academy of Letters of the Federal District. "Considering your dedication to the high ideals of peace and brotherhood among the peoples, races and nations," the invitation letter to Mr. Araujo began, "your concern for the distribution of justice and your literary work directed towards social transformation, with a way of thinking that knows no frontier of sectarianism ... we have unanimously decided to approve your name as member of the Academy, occupying the seat which has as its patron the immortal Monteiro Lobato."

#### Involvement in the Life of Society

It is our duty and privilege to translate the love and devotion we have for our beloved Cause into deeds and actions that will be conducive to the highest good of mankind. 8

8. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 20 November 1924 (unpublished).

The Baha'i community helped organize a national condolence service on 30 December 1997 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium for the bereaved families of the passengers and crew lost on SilkAir

Flight MI-185 . The organizing committee, chaired by the former President of Singapore, comprised community, business and religious leaders. More than 8,500 attended the service, among whom were the acting President of Singapore, the Prime Minister and senior government officials as well as Ambassadors from countries that had citizens on the ill-fated flight. Following addresses from government officials, representatives from nine religions offered prayers for the solace of the bereaved families and the progress of the departed souls. After the prayer from the Baha'i representative, all present at the stadium stood up for a minute of silence before the service ended.

The second annual celebration of "Bertha Dobbins Day" was held at Vanuatu's Baha'i Center in N amburu on 17 October 1997 with more than two hundred people present. The occasion marked the forty-fourth anniversary of the arrival of Mrs . Dobbins, the first Baha'i in the islands. The environment was the theme of this year's gathering. The thirty-five dignitaries who attended included the Minister of Agriculture and the Environment; the Minister of Justice, Culture and Religion ; the Head of the Environment Unit; and the Lord Mayor of Port Vila. Part of the program included the presentation of awards to the individual and the group or organization that have made significant contributions to the conservation of the natural environment. The winners of the 1997 Bertha Dobbins awards were Sawi Kalpukai of Ifira, who has been running a very successful nursery for some years, and the community of Erangorango for its activity in a large-scale tree-planting program initiated by the Local Assembly in the area.

Diplomats, senior government officers , and representatives of citizens' groups were among the one hundred and fifty people in attendance at the fifth annual Blums' Awards presentation held at the Baha'i Center in the Solomon Islands on 14 September 1997. The awards, which were presented by the Governor General to highlight the achievements of Solomon Islanders were named in honor of the services of Alvin and Gertrude Blum, a Baha'i couple who arrived in Honiara in 1954. There were three recipients of the 1997 Blums'

Awards: a man who raised the funds to have a secondary school built in his community; a young woman who has overcome a physical handicap to organize a women's group, work with youth, and translate material into the local language of her area; and a community that is working to preserve its environment by developing a small paper industry, the profits of which are being used to improve the village infrastructure.

A symposium on "Global Unity-A Work in Progress," organized by the Office of External Affairs of the Baha'is of the Mariana Islands, was held at the University of Guam on 21 February 1998. Fifteen panelists spoke at the session, with four Baha'is serving as

moderators. The panelists included a Superior Court Judge, university professors, and business people. Forum topics focused on moral education, sustainable global prosperity, upholding the dignity of humankind, and the destiny of women. In their presentations, panelists were asked to consider questions such as whether education prepares children for global unity; which values are being taught and whether these are the ones needed to thrive in a united world; what global prosperity means to them, including its material and spiritual elements; which human rights and obligations must exist to have a stable, safe, and just society; how to promote the idea of equality of men and women; and the role of women in establishing world peace. The local National Public Radio station taped the symposium and asked a Baha'i broadcast professional to produce a thirteen-week thirty-minute radio show around the topics. Local television and a newspaper also covered the event. Approximately one thousand people in New Zealand assembled on United Nations Human Rights Day, 10 December 1997, to take part in a Unity in Diversity Rally—a Celebration of Auckland's Cultural Diversity. The event was first proposed by the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of External Affairs, and soon gained support from New Zealand's Race Relations Office, the Multicultural Society, the Peace Foundation, and the United Nations Association. Short talks were given by the nation's Race Relations Conciliator, a Member of Parliament for Central Auckland, and representatives of the Baha'i and Jewish communities, as well as other organizations that had promoted the event. Additionally, messages of support were read from about twenty prominent people,

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

In Calcutta, India, representatives of the Bahai 'i community led a procession of mourning dignitaries to St. Thomas ' Church where two wreaths of lotus and rose flowers were laid beside the body of Mother Teresa in September 1997.

including two former Governors General and a number of Members of Parliament. To supplement the 1997 United Nations Day celebration which took place on 24 October in Santo Domingo, the Baha'i community of the Dominican Republic arranged for the national representative of the United Nations, Paolo Oberti, to give a special program in the north of the country during the following week. In Santiago, Mr.

Oberti spoke at a university, was interviewed on local television, and met with the provincial Governor. In Puerto Plata, Mr. Oberti talked to the student body at a public high school explaining the role of the United Nations and responding to the students' questions. He also met with the Mayor of Puerto Plata and visited the town of La Union, where the Baha'i community is successfully working to promote social and economic development.

In Pedro Juan Caballero, Paraguay, the local Baha'i community presented several modules on moral leadership to schools. Fortytwo teachers took the introductory course; seven teachers finished the first module and began another on teaching, with the intention of continuing until graduation. As a result, other schools requested training on moral leadership for their teachers.

The launching of a moral education project took place on 29 May 1997 in Riviere des Anguilles, Mauritius. The first class was attended by sixty-five non-Baha'i participants, including thirtyfive children. Regular meetings for parents are scheduled to take place every three months. In Goodlands, a meeting with twenty-five parents was held on 1 July to make them aware of the importance of the moral education classes.

In 1997, more than thirty-five pupils attended the Baha'i religion classes at Tereora College in the Cook Islands. The class received television and radio coverage. As a result, many people requested Baha'i literature.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Cape Verde prepared a statement entitled "Consumption of Alcohol and Use of Drugs from a Baha'i Perspective" and distributed it to all schools for use during their celebration of Civic Week. One of the largest newspapers in the country, Novo Jornal de Cabo Verde, published the statement in two parts on 11 and 15 October 1997.

On 19 November 1997, the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as did other religious organizations. The purpose of the appearance of religious groups was to explain their role during the apartheid years. A statement read by the Baha'i representative received a very positive response. Following the presentation, other religious leaders approached the Baha'is and invited them to cooperate on joint ventures.

"A Healthy Family for a Healthy Society" conference, organized by the Albanian Baha'is, attracted two hundred people, half of whom were not Baha'is. Held in early December 1997, the conference consisted of seminars and workshops. Speakers addressed such topics as stress, violence, adolescence, family models, discipline, conflict resolution, and marriage. Representatives from seventeen NGOs and the Ministry of Health were present. Each participant received the Baha'i International Community's statement on the equality of

men and women.

The Baha'i community of Ireland participated in an event organized by Amnesty International to highlight the plight of refugees.

All major religions were represented at the 9 October 1997 gathering entitled "Voices for Refugees." Mrs. Alison Wortley, the Baha'i representative, read a Baha'i prayer. The event was reported on the main national evening news bulletin.

The European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF) cosponsored the "Fifth International Conference on Moral and Ethical Principles in a Social Market Economy" in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 24 to 26 October.

9. See p. 229- 232 for the complete text of this statement.

T tiJ BA1-IA' f WORLD

A choir performed  
at the Sixth Festival  
for International  
Understanding.

This event,  
organized by the  
Baha'is of Altenkirchen, Germany,  
was held on  
8 June 1997.

The gathering was attended by more than one hundred people. A member of the EBBF served as head of the organizing committee and chaired the two round-table discussions on business ethics. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Baha'i perspective on social issues received media coverage in 1997. A five-minute radio program broadcast four days a week and two live radio programs of a half-hour each on the themes of the violence-free family and the mission of Baha'u'llah were aired. Six half-hour programs entitled "Baha'i Visions" were also presented on television. The public reaction was so positive that some programs were aired twice. Articles on Baha'i views on pertinent issues were published as well.

The Baha'i booth at the Cuban International Book Fair, held from 4 to 10 February 1998, was among the most popular of the many stands. Attracting the attention of intellectuals and government officials, the Baha'i stand welcomed the Minister of Culture and the President of the Cuban Parliament. The book stand was supported by the Office of External Affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Mexico, as well as the Baha'is of Cuba. In conjunction with the Fair, the Baha'is took part in a reception for authors and publishers hosted by the Minister of Culture, they hosted a presentation by Washington Araujo on his book on the philosophy of Baha'u'llah, and they also attended a ceremony held by the Minister of Culture to present medals to prominent people who have made contributions to Cuban culture. The Baha'is

congratulated the award recipients and presented each of them with materials outlining the Baha'i vision for the advancement of society. During the week, Baha'is gave three radio interviews, one each with Radio Havana and Radio Tamie, and a forty-minute interview with Radio Rebelde.

More than twenty thousand people visited the Baha'i stand at Ethio-Book Fair '97 in Ethiopia. From the booth, the National Assembly issued more than six hundred cards inviting the visitors to a meeting at the national Baha'i Center. Many accepted the invitation.

#### Social and Economic Development

The most important role that economic efforts must play in development lies, therefore, in equipping people and institutions with the means through which they can achieve the real purpose of development: that is, laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness. 10

Over 220 people from diverse backgrounds representing almost all the regions of Guyana gathered in July 1997 at the School of the Nations in Georgetown for one week of intensive training to prepare for their role as literacy facilitators. The "On the Wings of Words" literacy project, an endeavor initiated by the Baha'i community, has gained tremendous support and publicity in its effort to increase literacy in the nation .

In Malaysia, more than 140 people of diverse backgrounds attended the launching of the Virtues Project in the presence of the Minister of National Unity and Social Development, Y. B. Datuk Paduka Zaleha Ismail , on 27 May 1997 in Petaling Jaya. The occasion was organized by the Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women in response to the call of the Prime Minister of Malaysia for religious groups and non-governmental organizations to combat social ills in the country. The Virtues Project aims at enhancing understanding of human values.

A Baha'i in the pharmaceutical business in Iceland organized a first-aid course for fishermen in his area. In his work he had often prepared boxes with medical supplies for accidents or sickness at sea, and it had occurred to him that those using the supplies would

10. The Prosperity of Humankind (Baha'i International Community: Office of Public Information, 1995), published in full in The Baha'i World 1994- 95, pp. 273- 296.

not be able to make full use of them if their knowledge was limited. Realizing that more knowledge would add to the safety of the fishermen and could even save lives, he arranged for doctors to give two courses to them. The first one attracted seventy participants-far more than expected.

Volunteers from the Dhaka Baha'i community of Bangladesh vaccinated 220 children in Fatullah and other areas in Dhaka. Medical doctors from the Baha'i community treated sixty patients, dispensing medicine and providing consultation without charge. Fatullah had not been visited by any other medical team during National Immunization Days.

In April 1997, a group of Baha'is in Liberia developed the NGO "Liberia Community Development Incorporated" to provide much needed services to the country, as well as employment and job training. Its first initiative was a program to manufacture and teach others to manufacture cement roofing sheets.

The Chilean Ministry of Education organized a day-long event attended by eighty southern Santiago school directors on 4 December 1997. The morning was dedicated to a talk and consultation on schools in general, and the afternoon focused specifically on the Nur School, a Baha'i-inspired institution. The Baha'i representative spoke openly about the Baha'i Faith, detailing five areas of consideration for the educational establishment. These included the concept that human beings are essentially noble and given unique gifts; the role of consultation in the administration and daily work of the educational community; the importance of developing a shared vision; the goal of developing fundamental capabilities in each student; and the need and techniques for concentrating efforts towards the acquisition of virtues.

From 21 to 23 November 1997, twenty-two people took part in a women's gathering in Fada Gourma, Burkina Faso. Participants representing Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Togo discussed the development of a women's project in the Sahel region. One goal resulting from this project is to provide literacy education for the women of the region so that they can read the Baha'i writings.

In Battambang, Cambodia, a course for literacy trainers was held during four weekends in 1997. The goal of the program was to train more teachers to meet the literacy needs of the area. At the time of

In Mongolia, participants in the Erdenbulgan Development Project display their harvested goods. This project is run by the Baha'i community.

the training, there were more than one hundred children between the ages of eight to sixteen taking part in literacy classes.

In a remote village of Kilalamba, seventy miles from Kampala, Uganda, the Baha'i community started the only school within walking distance for the children of pre-primary-school age. The school, which has two teachers and over one hundred students, has a roof thatched with grass and walls of wattle and daub. The children sit on sacks brought from their homes as there are no chairs or benches.

Eight Baha'is from the United States arrived in Uganda on 26 June 1997, carrying boxes of wheel chairs and leg braces to be donated to the Dr. Rodney Belcher Orthopedic Department at Mulago

Hospital. The Department is named after the late Dr. Belcher, a Baha'i pioneer who died in March 1996. 11 On arrival, the group was met by a television crew who interviewed them and also visited the hospital and the Baha'i National Center.

11. See *The Baha'i World 1995-96*, pp. 309-311 for a memorial sketch of Dr. Belcher.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

The Masrour Baha'i Vocational School in Manaus, Brazil, has over 1,400 students from grades one to five.

## Interfaith Activities

Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. 12

The Baha'i community was invited to send representatives to the Interfaith Service of Prayer for the National Day of Commemoration in Ireland. Held on 13 July 1997 in the quadrangle of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, this event was attended by members of the government, Council of State and the diplomatic corps. Also present was the President and United Nations Human Rights Commissioner designate, Mary Robinson.

For the first time, the Ukrainian Committee on Religious Affairs invited the Kiev Baha'i community to participate in a conference on "New Religions in Ukraine." At the 11 July 1997 conference, the fifteen-minute presentation about the Baha'i Faith met with great interest and respect. Baha'i literature—*The Promise of World Peace*, *Turning Point for All Nations*, and an introduction to the Baha'i Faith—was given to the conference organizers and various participants.

In Taiwan, the World Religion Exhibition, sponsored by the district government, was held in Taipei's Da An from 19 to 21 December 1997. Among the organizations participating were the Baha'i community, a Buddhist group, the Catholic church, Hare

12. *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 95.

Krishna groups, a Muslim organization, and the Taoist community. Hundreds of people attended the event. In addition to a booth, the Baha'i contribution included performances by the Ocean Waves, a dance and drama workshop.

The Baha'i Faith was covered on the weekly Guam television show "Island Focus," which explored some of Guam's non-Catholic religious groups. A full five minutes were focused on the Baha'i

Faith, featuring three local believers, two of whom talked about their attraction to the Faith and another who gave a presentation on progressive revelation.

An event to mark both Dominica's first interfaith celebration and the fiftieth anniversary of the University of the West Indies was held in Dominica. More than two hundred people were present, including the Prime Minister of Dominica and government and religious officials. The Baha'i Faith was mentioned during the presentation of the guest speaker, the Principal of the United Theological College in Jamaica, and a Baha'i prayer was also said.

On 1 April 1998, a representative of the Baha'i community took part in a radio broadcast on Austrian Radio (ORF) with members of other religious organizations, which included the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish communities. The six representatives were asked to present their points of view on "The Last Seven Words of Jesus on the Cross." The Baha'i was asked to speak about Christ's sentence: "It is done." The presentations were complemented by an oratorio by Joseph Haydn and meditative quotations from world religions.

The Prince Rupert Baha'i community in British Columbia, Canada, held a gathering to celebrate World Religion Day. Speakers delivered presentations on eight subjects: Aboriginal spirituality and the Christian influence, the Baha'i Faith, Buddhist beliefs, the Christian viewpoint on life after death, the Muslim Faith, Unitarian Faith, Sikhism, and the Zoroastrian religion. The oneness of humanity was a recurring theme throughout the presentations. A local newspaper profiled each of the topics covered, based on the World Religion Day presentations and further research.

For the first time in fifty years, an in-depth and largely accurate article on the Faith was published in a Greek newspaper. The full-page article in the national *Ethnos tis Kiriakis* on 22 March

## THE BAHAI WORLD

1998 explained the relationship of the Faith to other religions and described many of its central principles.

The *Encyclopedie des religions de l'humanite*, a French adaptation of *Religions of the World*, included an entry on the Baha'i Faith as one of the world's ten major religions. Published under the direction of Michel Malherbe, a distinguished expert in the field of religious studies, the 160-page illustrated volume has a wide distribution and is also carried by most French

libraries.

The Ministry of Justice of Equatorial Guinea invited representatives of the country's religious groups to participate in a special proclamation for justice held on 6 February In France, representatives of the Baha'i 1998 at the stadium in Mal- International Community, together with abo. The Minister of Justice, other religious groups, participated in the the Minister of Education, World Day Against Suffering (Journee Mondiale du Refus de Ia Misere) on 17 other dignitaries, and some October 1997, observed annually by the three hundred representatives ATD Quart Monde, a human rights from various religious groups organization. were present. One of the Baha'i representatives recited prayers for unity and a tablet from 'Abdu'l-Baha on peace.

### Race Unity

O ye discerning ones! Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness. 13

Some three thousand people responded to the American Baha'i community's six broadcasts of The Power of Race Unity on the Odyssey Interfaith Network from 28 March to 8 April 1998. The Power of Race Unity was developed as a collaborative effort between a group of independent Baha'i producers and the National Teaching Committee of the Baha'is of the United States. The video relates the stories of four Baha'is who are working to foster race unity in their communities.

The idea that racism destroys human dignity, and essentially impairs the perpetrator, the affected and society, was the basis of the Baha'i perspective on racism presented during a meeting in Melville, Western Australia. Sixty guests attended the gathering, "Racism, a Violation of Human Dignity," sponsored by the Local Assembly. A multicultural feast against racism, organized by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Dudelange, Luxembourg, was held on 19 October 1997. The net profit of the event was given to Dideleng Hell eft, an association that supports development projects in South America. More than two hundred people from various religious backgrounds participated in the event, which featured performances by the Diversity Dance Workshop from France and local dance groups. "Human Resources and Unity" was the theme of a race unity project in March 1998 in isafjordhur, Iceland, which is inhabited by many foreigners and refugees. The purpose of this project was to

make people realize the potential and the great human resources that exist in diverse populations and to unite and introduce the various cultures. More than five hundred people participated in this event, which included a formal program, exhibitions, information booths, and culinary dishes from various nations .

Race Unity Day events were held in various parts of South Africa. In Port Elizabeth, around 150 people attended the "One City-One Family" gathering, developed in support of the One City campaign to unite racially segregated areas of the city into one municipal entity.

13. Baha'u'llah, quoted in *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 37.

The event was attended by city officials and a representative of the new Government of National Unity's Department of Arts and Culture. Also in South Africa, about two hundred people gathered at the race unity celebrations in East London on 14 June 1997. Among the various performers were a Spanish dance group and Scottish bagpipers .

#### Contact with Prominent People

Some of the loved ones should establish ties of friendship with the notables of the region and manifest towards them the most affectionate regard. In this manner these men may become acquainted with the Bahri 'i way of life, learn of the teachings of the Merciful One, and be informed of the pervasive influence of the Word of God in every quarter of the globe. If but one of these souls were attracted to the Cause, others would quickly be similarly moved, since the people tend to follow in the footsteps of their leaders. 14

Each year the Baha'i World Centre receives a broad spectrum of society, including government ministers, diplomats, academics, and religious leaders. These visits provide opportunities to present such individuals with the history and tenets of the Baha'i Faith and acquaint them with the stature and significance of the Faith's worldwide activities. The following is a representative sampling of the prominent people received at the Baha'i World Centre from April 1997 to 1998: His Excellency Arto Tanner, the Ambassador of Finland to Israel, and staff from the Finnish Embassy; His Excellency Ibrahim M'baba Kamara, Ambassador of Sierra Leone to Israel and Ethiopia; Mr. Pjeter Anbori, a member of the Albanian parliament; a delegation from Okchin county in South Korea which included members of the City Council, businessmen, and a farmer; and a four-member film crew from Starfield Productions in the United Kingdom filming a documentary entitled "For God's Sake." Royalty and Heads of State viewed the Baha'i stand at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh from 21 to

14. 'Abdu 'l-Baha, quoted in the compilation "Teaching Prominent People," published in Teaching the Baha'i Faith (Mona Vale: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1995), p. 110.

26 October 1997. Among those who visited were His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who looked at the examples of the Baha'i social and economic development activities featured on the stand; The Princess Royal, who spoke to the Baha'i volunteers about the equality of women and men and commented favorably on the Baha'i principle of giving priority to the education of girls; the Prime Minister of Belize; and the Foreign Minister of South Africa. Towards the end of the week, Her Majesty the Queen hosted a reception for representatives of the non-governmental groups that were exhibiting at the Commonwealth meeting, which a Baha'i representative attended.

The President of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, sent a message to the nation's Baha'i community on the occasion of the 180th anniversary of the Birth of Baha'u'llah. The message, sent on 14 November, was in response to an invitation to Mr. Mandela by the Baha'i National Office of External Affairs to attend a formal reception. In the message, the President extended his regrets at not being able to attend the occasion and commended the Baha'is, saying, "Your community's pursuit of national and global unity and peace are worthy pursuits and welcome initiatives." More than one hundred prominent members of the public attended the event.

The Governor General of Jamaica, His Excellency Sir Howard Cooke, visited the National Baha'i Center for a dinner hosted by the National Spiritual Assembly on 11 October 1997. After the meal a recitation of a poem was made as a tribute to Sir Howard, and musical presentations were made by the Kingston Baha'i Youth Workshop. Following these, Sir Howard spoke about the religions of the world

In the United States, a Baha'i (leji) and the town Mayor carry a banner at the Race Unity Celebrations in Springfield, Oregon.

and their Prophets and challenged the community not only to pray and be righteous, but to serve and do more.

On 30 September 1997, the former President of the Republic of Uruguay, Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle, was honored by the Baha'i community. The event, organized by the External Affairs Department of the National Spiritual Assembly, began with a presentation by the Baha'is in appreciation of Dr. Lacalle's efforts in defending the rights of the Baha'is in Iran. In response, Dr. Lacalle praised the Baha'i community and reminisced about his visit to the Baha'i

holy places in Haifa, Israel, and the spirituality he felt in the Shrine of the Bab. Among those present at this gathering were five Members of Parliament.

The Faith was represented for the first time at the inauguration of the President of the Republic of Ireland on 11 November 1997. The National Spiritual Assembly's Chairman, Brendan McNamara, attended the event, which took place in Dublin Castle, where he was seated with other religious representatives. Later the same evening, Mr. McNamara and Patrick Dawson, representing the National Assembly, were guests at a reception hosted by the Prime Minister in honor of the newly installed President.

A representative of the United States Baha'i Refugee Office met with First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony for the Hillary Rodham Clinton Women's Park of Chicago, Illinois. This was an invitation-only gathering hosted by the Mayor of Chicago. Following the program, the Baha'i representative welcomed Mrs. Clinton to Chicago on behalf of the Baha'is of the city.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Papeete, Tahiti, held an exhibition on the Baha'i Faith in the Town Hall of Punaauia which featured four wall panels with pictures and information on the Faith. In conjunction with the exhibit, three members of the Local Assembly met with the Mayor of the town and presented him with Baha'i literature.

A Baha'i delegation, including members of the National Spiritual Assembly of El Salvador, visited the Legislative Assembly on 23 May 1997 to deliver copies of *The Prosperity of Humankind*, a statement by the Baha'i International Community. Several Legislative Assembly members warmly received the delegation, listening to the

Six representatives of the Baha'i community met with the President of the Republic of Cape Verde, His Excellency Dr. Mascarenhas Monteiro, on 7 January 1998 to extend greetings to him for the New Year and present him with Bahci 'i literature.

Baha'i presentation and welcoming receipt of the document. The remaining copies, individually addressed with a special letter to each legislator, were given to the offices of each political party. In Swaziland, Princess Genaphi, with the agreement of King Mswati III, gave a speech during the Baha'i Open Day event held

at the Mountain Inn in Mbabane on 20 September 1997. The Princess referred to the long and cordial relationship the Baha'is have had with Swaziland, starting in the time of King Sobhuza II. She stated that His Majesty King Mswati III carries on the tradition of religious tolerance. Referring to her own training as a medical doctor, the Princess acknowledged the enlightened views of King Sobhuza II regarding the changing role of women in the Kingdom, and concluded with a quotation from the Baha'i writings about the importance of women being on an equal level with men. Delegates from the National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea met with the Governor General, His Excellency Sir Silas Atopare, in early 1998 and made a presentation on the Baha'i Faith. The Baha'i representatives were warmly received by Sir Silas, who spoke highly of the efforts of the Baha'is and termed them "silent achievers." The Governor General thanked the Baha'is on behalf of the people of the country and urged them to continue their work. Representatives of the Republic of Congo's Baha'i community met with the nation's Minister of Communications in December 1997. The Baha'i delegation presented various aspects of the Baha'i Faith. During the meeting, which lasted for more than forty-five minutes, the Minister was touched by the words of Baha'u'llah, "The earth is

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

but one country and mankind its citizens," and requested Baha'i literature.

Six government leaders in the Bahamas were contacted during November 1997 and given a copy of a compilation of Baha'i writings on the subject of consultation. This was part of the National Spiritual Assembly's plan to contribute to the betterment of society and to proclaim the message of the Baha'i Faith to the people of the islands. This endeavor also included the publication of Baha'i prayers and writings in the newspaper each week, and the placement of different Baha'i writings every week on a sign read by many passersby in front of the National Baha'i Center.

#### Recognition

There can be no doubt that the progress of the Cause from this time onward will be characterized by an ever increasing relationship to the agencies, activities, institutions and leading individuals of the non-Baha'i world. 15

Pym Trueman, Baha'i non-governmental organization liaison officer for Tasmania, Australia, was recognized by the Tasmanian Human Rights Week Committee with an award for her voluntary service in the areas of peace, aboriginal reconciliation, and interfaith relations. The presentation took place during the launching of Human Rights Week on 3 December 1997. National and state dignitaries were among the 250-member audience who listened to the

Reverend Bob Faser, General Secretary of the Tasmanian Council of Churches, speak about Mrs . Trueman's involvement in the group "Tasmanians Against Racism: For Racial Harmony." The group, which was formed in 1997 to promote a vision of a racially harmonious Tasmanian society, had previously organized several activities including a march and rally for racial harmony.

A member of the Stuttgart Baha'i community in Germany, Mr. Huschmand Sabet, was honored with a Planetary Consciousness Business Innovation Prize, given by the Club of Budapest during a ceremony on 25 June 1997. Dr. Ervin Laszlo, President of the Club

15. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Balul 'is of the world, R  
i<:lvan  
1984. Published in Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963 to  
1986 (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 624.

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#### YEAR IN R EViE W

A UNESCO conference on "Society and Culture: Education for Sustainability" was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, in December 1997. Seen here is Helen Kontos, a Baha'i representative, speaking to Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO.

of Budapest, wrote to Mr. Sabet: "[This prize] recognizes ... a truly significant contribution to the evolution of the new thinking, new values, new behaviors, and the corresponding economic and business practices that are urgently needed if constructive and effective solutions are to be found to the growing problems that beset the human family. Your breakthrough innovation in the Terra Project makes you uniquely qualified to receive this Prize." The Terra Project is an outgrowth of Care and Fair, Mr. Sabet's idea for a voluntary tax system through which an economic sector of a country or region contributes to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of the country from which its products come. The Care and Fair concept has begun to be applied in the European carpet trade. The Planetary Consciousness Awards ceremony was held in the Paulus Church in Frankfurt under the auspices of the city's Mayor. During the same program, the prize for World Leadership was given to the former President of the Soviet Union, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev. Tauaasa Ta 'afaki , a Baha'i formerly of Tuvalu and now residing in Wellington, New Zealand, received the title of Officer of the

Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.) at a special function in Auckland in September 1997. The Governor-General of Tuvalu, representing Her Majesty the Queen, presented the honor. Mr. Ta'afaki served for many years as Secretary to the Government of Tuvalu, while simultaneously serving as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of that country.

In Canada, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Sudbury, Ontario, hosted its annual Volunteer Recognition Night on 12 November 1997, coinciding with the anniversary of the Birth

## THE BAHAI WORLD

of Baha'u'llah. The event was attended by three hundred people. Fourteen awards were presented to individuals who were exemplary in their volunteer services to the community. The most prestigious of these, the YMCA Canada Peace Medal, has traditionally been offered to an individual for outstanding efforts in the promotion of peace. This year, it was presented to Heidi Lakshman, a member of the Sudbury Baha'i community, in recognition of her relentless efforts in promoting the Baha'i principles of unity. In front of those assembled, Mrs. Lakshman dedicated the award to Baha'u'llah on the anniversary of His birth and spoke passionately of His teachings and the need for a united effort in achieving peace in the world.

She concluded her short speech by presenting The Promise of World Peace to the YMCA Board of Directors.

Ann Marie Danet, the first native Virgin Islands Baha'i of French descent, received the 1997 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Ms. Danet was honored at a Government House reception for presentation of her short stories, poetry, ballads, and frequent guest editorials on the culture and history of Virgin Islanders who, like herself, trace their roots to the island of Saint Barthelemy (Saint-Barth) in the French Antilles. Ms. Danet accepted the award on behalf of her people, a minority whose contributions to Virgin Islands culture have received scant attention.

American President Bill Clinton announced that Mottahedeh Development Services (MDS) would receive the 1998 Martin Luther King Day of Service grant, given by the Corporation for National Service to organizations that show exceptional ability to implement service activities that honor Dr. King's legacy of bringing

Judge Dorothy Nelson  
(right) of the United  
States was the keynote  
speaker at the Clara and  
Hyde Dunn Memorial  
Lecture in Sydney,  
Australia. Judge Nelson  
is shown here with her

husband Judge James  
F Nelson and Stella  
Cornelius of Conflict  
Resolution Network.

## YEAR L REVIEW

people together to solve community problems. MDS, established in 1992 under the aegis of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States as a non-profit agency to promote social and economic development, will use the funding to initiate "Generation 21- Raising Socially and Economically Successful Families." The project will assist refugee/immigrant women in developing the survival skills needed to build self-esteem and improve the quality of life for themselves and their families.

Beverly Banks, a Baha'i whose efforts led to the founding of Caymans Against Substance Abuse (CASA), was awarded the Cayman Islands Certificate and Badge of Honor by the Governor, John Owen. A local newspaper, The Caymanian Compass, featured Mrs. Banks in an article published on 17 June 1997. In it, Mrs. Banks discusses how she was determined to do something about the growing problem of drug abuse and describes how CASA was conceived. For more than five years, Mrs. Banks served as Vice President and member of the Executive Committee of the organization. During that time, the "Parent to Parent, Youth to Youth" and "Choose to be Drug Free" programs were established under CASA. Additionally, her involvement in community service activities includes various programs administered by the Cayman Islands government's Office of Women's Affairs and the business and professional women's programs against domestic abuse.

In 1996, the President of Botswana initiated a project called Vision 2016, the aim of which was to set a long-term vision for how Botswana should be in twenty years' time. The President then formed a task group of eminent citizens to oversee the formulation of this vision; their first assignment was to gather ideas from various groups around the country. In 1997, the task group announced that they would be touring Botswana and holding public meetings to solicit suggestions for Vision 2016. Baha'is in various towns made submissions to the task force.

### Advancement of Women

And among the teachings of Bahil 'u 'llah is the equality of women and men. The world of humanity has two wings- one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak,

### THE B AI-L.&.:\_! W ORLD

flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes

equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and p erfections, can success and prosperity be attained as th ey ought to be. 16

Roselyn Mazibuko, a Baha'i woman and the Chief Director of Primary Health Care in the Northern Province in South Africa, was awarded the 1997 Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights. This national award is presented to the person who has contributed the most to the advancement of health and/or human rights issues in the country. Ms. Mazibuko is involved with the upliftment of primary health care standards, especially through the formation of support groups promoting nutrition and income development projects.

The religious section of the Dallas Morning News on 21 March 1998 ran a front page story on the promotional tour of Layli Miller Bashir and Fauziya Kassindja for their book, *Do They Hear You When You Cry*. Mrs . Bashir, a Baha'i, defended Ms. Kassindja, a young African woman, seeking asylum in the United States after fleeing Togo to escape the ritual of female genital mutilation (FGM). Their case set legal precedent, making it possible for other women fleeing the practice of FGM to be granted asylum in the country. The article focuses on the importance that faith has played in their story.

A seminar on "Women in World Health and World Peace" was held in New Delhi, India, on 26 November 1997. This gathering, organized by the Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Population Fund, brought together forty representatives from non-governmental organizations in the field of development. Among the topics presented were "A New Global Health Policy for the 21st Century" and "When the World Would be Free of Maternal Mortality."

Women for International Peace and Arbitration, a Baha'i-inspired organization, cosponsored a seminar with the All China Women's Federation in Beijing, China, from 4 to 8 November 1997. Among the papers presented at this event were "Reflecting on the Meaning

16. Selections from th e Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 302.

#### YEAR IN REVIE W

of Profit and Sustainable Development," "Family Education for Future Generations," "Working in the Spirit of Service," and "Women's Literacy Campaign in China."

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Baha'i women took part in a march for peace on 7 March 1998. More than five thousand women of different tribes, nationalities, religions, and social groups participated. The march began with a prayer gathering, which included a Baha'i prayer on unity and ended with songs and a talk by

the chairperson of the organizing committee. A great portion of this talk was devoted to the Baha'i views on women and peace.

In Bangui, Central African Republic, a nine-day conference was held covering topics that included learning about the Baha'i view on the equality of women and men and the process of consultation.

One of the nine days was devoted to field work and was primarily concerned with data collection on the status of women.

About four thousand people visited a booth set up by the N'Djamena Baha'i Women's Group in Chad to celebrate International

Women's Week held from 1 to 8 March 1998. The display booth was located with many others in the garden of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Baha'i brochures in Arabic, English, and French were distributed, and books on various subjects concerning women, and Baha'i women in particular, were exhibited.

The Baha'i community of Mongolia took part in the "Women's Non-Governmental Organization Forum: International Women's Day," from 6 to 8 March 1998 by offering an exhibit on the Baha'i view of the status of women. More than six hundred women from throughout the country were present. The Baha'i representatives presented the Minister of Health with a compilation of Baha'i writings on women.

A long-term project aimed at bringing the subject of "Responsible Fatherhood" to the attention of all citizens was launched in September 1997 in Brasilia, Brazil. The Baha'i community, in conjunction with the Council of Women for the Federal District, announced the plan on 3 September in a ceremony held at Government Palace. This gathering was attended by representatives of the government, civil organizations, and the media. The Vice-Governor, Arlete Sampaio, introduced the Baha'i community as the partner of the Council of Women and spoke of the importance and timeliness

## THE BAHAI WORLD

of the campaign, since the number of fathers abandoning their families or pregnant women has become an alarming issue. Other speakers, including the President of the Council of Women and the President of the District Deputies Chamber, welcomed the Baha'i community's initiative. The event was covered by at least a dozen newspaper and radio reporters, including one from the most important television news journals, TV Globo, who announced the launching of the program.

Communities throughout the Baha'i world held conferences on issues related to raising the status and improving the living conditions of women. The following is a representative sampling of these conferences:

Thirty-five participants from Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey gathered together on 11 and 12 October 1997 in Nicosia, Cyprus, for a Regional Women's Gathering on "Encouragement." The program included a presentation on one of the outstanding women in the

history of the Baha'i Faith, Martha Root, as an example of courage.

On 7 June 1997 the National Women's Committee of the Baha'i community of the Solomon Islands held a conference to help prepare women to serve humanity. A highlight of the event was a session on violence-free families. Other topics included self-esteem, the education of girls, and the equality of men and women.

More than seventy adults, youth and children attended the National Women's Conference held on 25 October 1997 in Asmara, Eritrea. Among the topics presented were the "Role of Youth," "Women and Their Economic Responsibility," "Suppression of Women and Religious Tradition," "Women and the Role of Mothers," and "Marriage, Family and the Upbringing of Children." The program was further enlivened by musical presentations by the youth.

The fourth FSM [Federated States of Micronesia] Women's Conference was held in Yap State from 22 to 27 June 1997. Presentations were made on the topic of family values, looking at traditional versus current practices, the roles of women, men, and children, and the spiritual dimension of family life.

Throughout the year Baha'is were also invited to participate and provide input for gatherings organized by various agencies. In India, four representatives of the Baha'i community joined delegations from thirty parliaments from all over the world to participate in

The International Women's Forum was held in Hong Kong in 1997.

the International Conference on Women and Governance held in New Delhi from 29 September to 1 October 1997. The conference was organized by Women's Political Watch, a non-governmental organization based in New Delhi, and was cosponsored by the National Commission for Women, the United Nations System in India, and the Swedish International Development Agency.

Two Baha'i women from Dumbea, New Caledonia, represented the Baha'i International Community at the Pacific Islands Women's Conference held from 16 to 20 June 1997 in Anse-Vata, New Caledonia. During the conference, an NGO representative from Vanuatu commended the Baha'i community of Vanuatu for its work and its collaboration with women's associations and governmental agencies in Vanuatu on the Virtues Project.

India's Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women participated in a meeting sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund entitled "South and South East Asia Regional Conference on Girls' Rights: Society's Responsibilities Taking Action Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Trafficking." This event, attended by 350 delegates, was held in Mumbai from 8 to 10 December 1997. Copies of a Baha'i paper on "Moral and Ethical Concerns

of the Baha'i International Community in the Face of Widespread Sexual Exploitation of Children" were distributed to the participants.

## Youth

Aside from teaching the Cause, the greatest service the

Baha'í Youth can render is to exemplify in their lives the

teachings and especially to be promoters .. of love and harmony,

qualities so sadly lacking in these days of hatred, suspicion, vindictiveness and prejudice. 17

The local Baha'i youth committee of Murewa, Zimbabwe, organized an interreligious discussion day based on the theme "What can we as religious youth do to tackle the social issues in society?" About thirty-five people attended the 26 October 1997

event, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Education and five churches. Discussions on themes including unemployment, AIDS, and alcohol and drug abuse resulted in agreement among all attendees that there is only one God and one religion. An interreligious youth committee was formed to explore spiritual solutions to social issues in Murewa.

Baha'i youth representing the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Moldova, Portugal, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom attended the International

Youth Follow-up for Habitat II and Agenda 21 conference which took place from 14 to 21 September 1997 in Eskisehir, Turkey.

Organized by Youth for Habitat, a non-governmental organization network born of the youth caucus at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, the conference drew over five hundred participants from youth NGOs and networks to review progress to date and develop methods and implementation of activities for improved future conditions. Contributions by the twenty Baha'is attending included a performance by a Baha'í dance workshop and the facilitation of six seminars on such topics as sustainable communities, moral leadership, and world citizenship.

A Baha'i youth retreat held in Luanda, Angola, in November 1997 brought together twenty-three attendees from various communities in the province. The program organized by the youth looked

at the history and basic teachings of the Faith and the important role of young people in it. A number of small teams were organized to present the teachings through singing, dance, and theater.

The inaugural session of the new three-year Moral Leadership Certificate Program at Landegg Academy in Switzerland, held from

17. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 15 October 1944 (unpublished).

27 July to 3 August 1997, brought together a group of twenty-three youth representing twelve countries. This program focuses on what

it means to be a moral leader, to acquire the skills necessary for leadership, and to share these principles with other individuals. Before reconvening at Landegg next summer, the participants were asked to initiate projects in their home countries through which they will practice their newly acquired knowledge and skills. These projects range from local educational initiatives to national youth programs.

More than forty Ethiopian and Eritrean Baha'i youth who now live in the United States and Canada gathered for consultation at the Baha'i Center in Washington, DC, from 30 August to 1 September 1997. The purpose of the endeavor was to discuss the contribution of Ethiopian and Eritrean Baha'is, and African Baha'is as a whole, in the process of the development of the Baha'i Faith in America; to discuss the messages of the Universal House of Justice; and to overcome the barriers associated with adjusting to a new culture.

The ALCAN International Youth Training Camp, held in Anchorage, Alaska, for three weeks beginning in mid-June 1997, brought together sixty-two participants from Alaska and other places in the United States. Interactive courses included modules on sharing the message of the Baha'i Faith, Youth Workshop development, core curriculum classes for working with younger children, youth issues, and spiritual transformation. Two hours a day of service activity was performed by those attending.

Six hundred and sixty-two youth from twenty-five countries were present at the first Latin American Baha'i Youth Congress held in Santiago, Chile, from 8 to 12 January 1998. More than sixty indigenous believers from four countries took part, and the presentation of their music and folklore was a high point of the event.

Participants chose one of seven critical areas to study: artistic workshops, projects to bring Baha'u'llah's message of unity to humanity, institutes, proclaiming the Baha'i Faith in the indigenous areas, methods of deepening one's understanding of the Baha'i Faith, external affairs, and mass media.

The Spiritual Axis International Youth Conference, held in Wollongong, Australia, from 30 December 1997 to 3 January 1998,

## THE BAHAI WORLD

gathered about three hundred youth from countries as diverse as Canada, England, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Tonga, the United States, and Vietnam. The focal point of the conference was the development of the relationship between Baha'i youth residing in the Spiritual Axis. The Spiritual Axis, mentioned in the Baha'i writings, refers to the countries from Japan in the north to Australia and New Zealand in the south and reaching out to the neighboring Pacific Islands.

In July 1997, the European Baha'i Youth Council organized

"Focusing All Efforts" seminars in Jelgava, Latvia; Lille, France; Krakow, Poland; and Figueira de Foz, Portugal. All were marked with a high spirit of unity and dedication, featuring dramatic or artistic presentations and concluding with proclamation of the message of the Baha'i Faith to the communities at large.

The Institute of Trinidad and Tobago hosted a training course for the "Sparks of Peace" Project in the Caribbean. "Sparks of Peace" encourages native West Indian youth to travel and teach others about the Baha'i Faith and offers

young Baha'is the opportunity to learn more about the Caribbean. The event, held in Trinidad from 17 June to 4 July 1997, brought together youth from Guyana, St. Vincent, and Trinidad.

Following the course, the youth attended a one-week tutor-training course, then

In Port Vila, Vanuatu, the Baha'i Youth music group "United As One" performed at the annual public "Fete de la musique" in June 1997.

traveled to Barbados to further participate in the "Sparks of Peace" training and teaching program on different islands.

In the West Leeward Islands, the "Sparks of Peace" teaching group met with the Mayor of French St. Martin, who welcomed them and presented them with a medal. The group was interviewed on three radio stations and on television, where they answered many questions. The television show was aired twice on cable.

Education was the focal point of the national Baha'i youth conference held in Batouri, Cameroon, from 10 to 13 July 1997, with the participation of a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors, the National Spiritual Assembly, and more than 160 youth from twenty-six localities and five provinces. Subjects emphasized during the sessions included Baha'i laws and their importance, education, and social and economic development. Songs, dances, and traditional music, readings by women and literacy class students, and children's classes were other features.

Ninety Baha'is from all regions of Nepal attended a national youth conference held in Birendranagar, Chitwan, from 30 January to 1 February 1998. The conference, attended by three Auxiliary Board members and all nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly, emphasized what it means to be a Baha'i in this critical period of human history and how to prepare for a life of service to humanity. Other topics included Baha'i marriage, non-involvement

in politics, the equality of men and women, the role that youth must assume in this age, opposition to the Baha'i Faith, living a chaste and holy life, and the unfoldment of world civilization.

"Youth Can Move the World" was the theme of a national youth conference held from 28 to 30 April 1997 in Tskheneti, Georgia. More than one hundred youth from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participated in discussions on the role that youth can play at the turn of the century. Drama and music were an important element of the event. Held in Strasbourg, France, 26 to 31 December 1997, the May Bolles Maxwell Youth School- initiated by the European Baha'i Youth Council and organized by the National Youth Committees of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and Switzerland-was the first Europe-wide school for French-speaking youth ever held. About seventy young Baha'is attended. The program included discussions

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

about the youth year of service program, workshops, and sessions on developing methods of sharing the Baha' i Faith with others , whether by conducting questionnaires on religion, distributing balloons with Baha'i ideals written on them, or performing songs or dances in busy public places . The public was invited to attend evening "philosophical cafes" to discuss Baha' i principles in coffee houses with which the Local Spiritual Assembly of Strasbourg had made previous arrangements.

More than 550 Baha'is from 14 countries gathered in Perlis, Malaysia from 24 to 28 December for the fourth ASEAN Baha'i Youth Conference on the theme "Towards a Dynamic Youth Movement." The opening ceremony featured the Chief Minister of the State of Perlis, and topics covered at the conference included the role and standards of Baha'i youth , teaching the Baha' i Faith to others , consultation, conflict management, and music and the Faith. Panacea, a youth dance and drama workshop based at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel , participated in two European projects, one with a team in Spain from 18 July to 1 August 1997, and another in Slovenia and Croatia from 17 to 30 August. Panacea

At the Olinga Institute in the Dominican Republic, youth are taught to promote the Baha'i Faith through the arts.

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

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worked closely with the youth in these countries to help them form and develop their own Baha'i youth workshops. The local youth worked with the Panacea group from early morning through the evening, participating in prayers, study sessions on the Baha'i sacred texts, rehearsals, street demonstrations, consultations, performances, and social activities .

In 1997, the youth of Mulanje, Malawi, started an income generating project of selling carved boxes, which paid, among other things, for food offered to the four hundred people who attended a mass rally sponsored by the Local Spiritual Assemblies in the area. The youth also visited the sick, built shelters for the elderly, and taught the Faith through drama and dance .

#### Special Role of Indigenous Peoples

In the Divine Plan bequeathed to you by 'Abdu '1-Baha is disclosed the glorious destiny of those who are the descendants of the early inhabitants of your continent. 18

In May 1997, a group of Baha'is, including three members of the First Nations Peoples of Canada and one Eskimo from Alaska, visited Efate and Tanna, Vanuatu. The purpose of the tour, named "Teec11n1a"-a First Nation word meaning "that which gives life"- was to develop relations between Native Americans and Pacific Islanders. The group visited villages where they addressed the people and shared something of their own customs. A memorable feature of the trip was taking part in traditional ceremonies which demonstrated that there is much in common between the two cultures.

The mother of a Baha'i member of the Cowichan people of Vancouver Island translated a Baha'i prayer into Hal' qumi 'num, the Cowichan language. This prayer is being chanted at every gathering at which the "Honor All Nations Drum and Dance Group" performs . Kevin Locke, a traditional Lakota Indian performer and Baha'i from the United States, visited Queensland and South Australia in April 1997, accompanied by his mother, Patricia Locke, and daughter

18. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Baha'is of North America, Ri~van 153 B.E. (1996, unpublished) .

Waniya. During their visit, Mr. Locke met Australian Aboriginal elders, led two American Indian sweat lodge ceremonies, and gave performances featuring the hoop dance, the Northern Plains flute, and storytelling.

Thirty Baha'is representing seven indigenous peoples-the Aymara, Guarani, Kariri Yoco, Kiriri, Mapuche, Qom, and Quechuagathered for four days in November 1997 for the First Native Peoples Meeting of Conosur, held at the Chishi Institute in Puerto Tirol,

Chaco, Argentina. Presentations were made by each delegation on how the Faith of Baha'u'llah was embraced by their people, their history and experiences, and cultural programs. Each group left with the goal of investigating their ancestors' prophecies and histories in relationship to the Holy Prophets.

The week of 9 to 15 July 1997 was declared Indigenous Peoples Appreciation Week by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Mexico. Among those participating in activities were Mr. Washington Araujo, author of *El Olvido esta Lleno de Memoria*

[Forgetfulness is Full of Memory], which was especially dedicated to the indigenous peoples of Mexico, and Patricia Locke, a Lakota Indian and a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. Highlights of the week's activities included a visit to the School of Law at the University of the State of Oaxaca and an interview with its director to discuss the conditions in which indigenous people live; a presentation about the book at the Institute of Cultures in Oaxaca and in Guelatao de Juarez; and a reception by the Mayor.

#### The Arts

The craft of every craftsman is regarded as worship. 19

Bob Porter, an American Baha'i living in Guatemala who is best known for his compositions during the Swing Era, was honored by the Ministry of Culture and Sports with a special concert by the National Symphony Orchestra under his direction on 10 July 1997.

19. Baha'u'llah, quoted in "Extracts from the Writings concerning Arts and Crafts," published in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1 (Victoria: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), p. 1.

Approximately nine hundred people attended the performance, which received excellent national publicity. Throughout the entire program, as well as in all the publicity surrounding the event, positive reference was made to Mr. Porter's outstanding character, his Baha'i affiliation, his religious inspiration, and his service to all with whom he comes in contact.

Siona Neale, a Baha'i teacher, radio show host, and classically trained soprano, was awarded the John Holland Certificate of Recognition for the Arts by McMaster University's Ontario Peoples Research Group in Canada. She was honored for her concert of Negro Spirituals, among other performances and workshops she has developed for schools and various associations. The award, which is named after a famous black Canadian and former slave, is presented annually in recognition of African descendants who have made significant contributions through the arts to the black community in the Hamilton-Wentworth region.

"Heart to Heart-A gift from the Baha'i children of the Gold Coast," a concert given by twenty-five children of different backgrounds, was held at Somerset College on the Gold Coast, Australia, on 8 June 1997. Various virtues were presented throughout the program with a final portrayal of "unity." The concert also featured the premiere performance of the song "Sunshine and Flowers," which was specially written and recorded for the concert by well-known Australian entertainer Martin St. James. More than three hundred Baha'is and invited guests attended the event.

An international choir, the "Voices of Baha," gathered in Asia in July 1997 to begin an eight-nation tour, that took them to Malaysia,

Singapore, the Philippines, Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan. The forty-three-member group, conducted by Tom Price, came from sixteen different areas including Australia, the Czech Republic, the Faroe Islands, Germany, the Hawaiian Islands, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Switzerland, and the United States. Crowds of six hundred to more than one thousand included many prominent people and dignitaries. The group also received extensive publicity and media attention.

During a music festival held on 21 June at Fayard Park in Dumbea, New Caledonia, the Baha'i group "Crescendo" won the first prize

An Australian Aborigine playing the didgeridoo at a gathering of reconciliation of Aborigines at Rockdale, Australia, in 1997.

in traditional song and music for its song "Nengone." More than twenty groups had registered for the competition.

Two weeks prior to this event, members of "Crescendo" attended the Islands Crafts Fair held at Continent, Dumbea, where they performed Baha'i songs and dances to an audience estimated by the media to be fifteen thousand.

The Baha'i community of Dominica raised approximately EC\$2,500 for the Children's Heart Fund by hosting a piano recital on 12 July 1997. Frank Fernandes, a Baha'i from Barbados, gave the performance before a crowd of eighty at the Fort Young Hotel in Roseau. Special guests included the President and First Lady of Dominica and the Ambassador of Venezuela to Dominica and his wife. Media coverage was extensive for the event, including reports of the recital on MARPIN Television, the Dominica Television Broadcasting Service, KAIRI-FM radio, and The Mirror newspaper. Additionally, interviews were carried on radio stations, one of which featured a fifteen-minute question-and-answer segment on the Baha'i Faith.

Ten Baha'i youth from the Kombo Area in the Gambia attended a two-week course on drumming and music in early 1998, following which they performed in Larnin Village and at a Sunday morning gathering in Latrikunda-Sabiji.

Nearly five hundred people attended the three performances of a presentation about Tahirih, the most outstanding woman disciple of the Bab and a renowned poetess, by Ms. Muhtadia Rice on Maui in July 1997. Two of the shows were given on the University

of Hawaii campus, and one was given in the Maui Arts and Cultural Center. The seventy-five-minute presentation is a narrative of Tahirih's life using her own words and works, supplemented by a script written by Ms. Rice which draws parallels to historic events that occurred during Tahirih's lifetime.

A record 1,500 parents, students, and staff were present at the annual "Santitham on Stage" production held on 14 February 1998 at the Santitham School, a Baha'i-inspired school in Yasothon in northeastern Thailand. Eighteen performances involving about four hundred children were presented. This event assists in the development of good relations between the school and parents, as well as the school and community at large.

A Baha'i family from the United States traveled to Belgium, Canada, Germany, Hungary, and Taiwan to present two theatrical productions about the Baha'i Faith, *The Seven Valleys* and *The Magic Bird*. The presentations consist of music, dance, drama, and visual arts. Their European tour, which took place at the end of 1997, began in Wiesbaden, Germany. Responses to the show were favorable, with the public purchasing at the end of every performance many copies of Baha'u'llah's *The Seven Valleys*, which was the inspiration behind one of their theatrical productions.

A Baha'i arts festival held in Gomel, Belarus, on 29 and 30 November 1997 brought together some fifty participants and guests from local communities and from neighboring countries. During the festival, participants displayed their skills in a variety of artistic activities such as poetry, drama, painting, clowning, acrobatics, electronic music, pantomime, humorous monologue, embroidery, and songs. The gala performance of the festival, open to the public, attracted two hundred people.

In the United Kingdom, the Tate Gallery in St. Ives, Cornwall hosted the exhibition *A Quality of Light* in August 1997. Thousands of visitors daily were able to view the works of artists in the St. Ives area in the past century who were inspired by "light." Among the works were those of prominent Baha'i artists Mark Tobey and Bernard Leach. A caption on the wall stated that Tobey introduced Leach to the Baha'i Faith. It went further to state that Baha'u'llah wrote, "So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."

Mark Tobey's works were also exhibited at one of the world's top modern art museums in Madrid, Spain. Drawing from a range of traditional styles for his overall abstract paintings, Tobey (1890-1976) paved the way for modern abstract expressionism. The retrospective exhibition covered work from the 1920's to 1950's, and the exhibition catalogue mentioned that Tobey was a follower of the Baha'i Faith.

An art exhibition of watercolor paintings by a Baha'i artist and

her friend was hosted by the Municipality of Zografou at the Cultural Center in Athens, Greece, for one week in December 1997. Seven of the paintings were inspired by Baha'u'llah's writings entitled The Seven Valleys.

Some twenty-eight people, both Baha'is and non-Baha'is, attended an all-day workshop on Arts, Creativity, and the Baha'i Faith held on 14 June 1997 at the Baha'i Information Centre in Lagos, Nigeria. The workshop, organized by Baha'is in the Surulere community, was the culmination of a program aimed at making the principles of the Baha'i Faith known to creative people involved in the video and film industry. Three more workshops under the topic of the arts, creativity, and the Baha'i Faith are scheduled to be held during the Four Year Plan, focusing on music, media houses (television, radio, newspaper, advertising, and public relations), painting, arts and crafts, and literature.

The Light of Unity project, using the arts and culture to share the message of Baha'u'llah, continued in West Africa in December 1997. Mr. Istvan Dely, a Hungarian who learned Afro-Cuban hand drumming in Cuba before moving to Colombia where he became a Baha'i, visited Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, and the Gambia to train young people in traditional music and to help them establish artistic troupes. He received such a warm welcome in Cote d'Ivoire that he decided to stay for ten days. During a public talk on the role of traditional music in a global society, which was announced on one commercial and two national radio stations, he explained how Afro-Cuban and Latin-American music find their roots in African music. Attendees included the head of the National Music School, a cultural journalist from the national radio station, university lecturers, music teachers, intellectuals, students, and local residents. Local Baha'i drummers with a dancer performed.

#### Environment

Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is Gods Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All- Wise. 20

Baha'i representatives took part in the United Nations General Assembly Session "Earth Summit+ 5" at the United Nations headquarters in New York from 23 to 27 June 1997. Earth Summit +5, which was attended by more than fifty Heads of State and Government and seventy-five Ministers, was held to review and appraise efforts to implement Agenda 21. Baha'i representatives served as floor managers for non-governmental organization input at the governmental negotiations. As well, approximately 1,900 copies of three Baha'i statements-The Prosperity of Humankind, World

Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development, and Sustainable Communities in an Integrating World-were distributed.

A Baha'i display focusing on themes from these three statements and their relevance to Agenda 21 was also set up.

The Peace Monument in Brazil was created in 1992 as a symbol of the Earth Summit and the '92 Global Forum. The project was carried out by the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil in conjunction with the Baha'i International Community's Office of the Environment and was supported by the Mayor's Office of Rio de Janeiro. As part of the closing ceremonies of those events, soil from forty nations was deposited into a five-meter high, hourglass-shaped concrete and ceramic monument. In commemoration of the anniversary of the Earth Summit, each year on World Environment Day (5 June), soils from additional nations are added to the Peace Monument. In June 1997, samples were added from eleven countries- Antigua and Barbuda, France, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Namibia, San Marino, the Solomon Islands, and Turkmenistan-bringing the total to 104 nations and territories contributing thus far to the monument.

20. Tablets of Baha 'u 'lfah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wi lmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994) p. 142.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

The International Ecology Congress, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 21 to 24 April 1997, was attended by some 250 people from the scientific community and representatives of NGOs. The Baha'i International Community was represented by Dr. Arthur Dahl, who works for the United Nations Environment Programme. As a keynote speaker, Dr. Dahl addressed the Congress on the topic "Principles for a Sustainable Future Society." He also presented a paper during a workshop session on Baha'i activities on behalf of the environment. Hundreds of copies of publications provided by the Baha'i International Community were distributed, including copies of *The Promise of World Peace*, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, and *One Country* magazine.

For the first time, the Baha'i community of Mexico was invited to participate in the annual "Ecological Journey" held each year by the government's Department of Ecology. The event took place in Mexico City from 6 to 9 June 1997. The Baha'i contribution included a Baha'i information stand, the donation of literature to eight libraries, and a program consisting of two workshops, one for adults and one for children.

The Baha'i community of Cochabamba, Bolivia, participated in *Expotierra '97*, the fourth fair organized by *Perspectiva*, an environmental group made up of high school and university youth. More than

eighty exhibitors, mostly schools, took part in the week-long event which ended on 14 September. In addition to an exhibit on the environment, the Baha'is also contributed dance presentations—a step dance and a dance expressing the equality between the sexes.

#### The Local Spiritual

Assembly of Gombak, Malaysia,

launched a tree

planting campaign

on 11 October

1997. The first

phase consisted

of planting five

hundred trees by

the end of the year.

The Baha'i Office of the Environment in Malaysia launched a tree planting campaign on 14 November 1997 with more than 160 students, teachers, Parent-Teacher Association members, and Baha'is participating. Souvenirs and Baha'i folders were presented to the dignitaries who attended the launching, and 110 caps with the quotation "Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch" were given to students and teachers who planted trees. A conference entitled "Society and Environment: Education for Sustainable Development" was held from 8 to 12 December 1997 in Thessaloniki, Greece. Over 1,700 participants from all over the world attended, including one Baha'i representative. The gathering was organized by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in collaboration with the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development in Athens. The conference was opened by the Mayor of Thessaloniki, the Ministers of Culture, Environment, and Education, and Federico Mayor, the Secretary-General of UNESCO. The Baha'is held an exhibit on sustainable development with panels of photographs and a Baha'i literature display.

More than seventy-eight people from twenty-five countries participated in the International Baha'i Environment Conference, held from 24 to 26 October 1997 in De Poort, a Baha'i conference center in the Netherlands. Presentations were made on such topics as "Sustainable Development and the Environment in the World—An Overview," "A Baha'i Perspective on Sustainable Development," and "Environment Education for and by Baha'is." More than half of the participants were able to take part in the proceedings through the Internet. Speeches and summaries of consultations were regularly put on a website during the three days and participants responded via email with questions and comments.

On 16 December 1997, a Baha'i group in Colombo, Sri Lanka, was asked by the Institute of Human Rights, a local non-governmental

organization, to lead a workshop on environmental degradation and its impact on human beings. More than twenty officials of governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with environmental issues attended the event. Additionally, one of the Baha'is was interviewed on a live radio program about the Baha'i approach towards development and environmental issues.

EssAYS,  
STATEMENTS,  
PROFILES

This article, the revised text of a presentation given by Farzam Arbab, explores the relationship between science and religion as two great systems of knowledge that have a vital social role to play in the building of a world civilization.

KNOWLEDGE  
and CIVILIZATION:  
Implications for the Community  
and the Individual

Throughout history, humanity has depended upon science and religion as the two principal knowledge systems that have propelled the advancement of civilization, guided its development, and channeled its intellectual and moral powers. The methods of science have allowed humanity to construct a coherent understanding of the laws and processes governing physical reality, and, to a certain degree, the workings of society itself, while the insights of religion have provided understanding relating to the deepest questions of human purpose and action.

The social role of knowledge as it relates to the building of a world civilization is of immense importance. In this context, the relation between science and religion, the two great systems of knowledge, assumes vital significance, as do issues surrounding the acquisition of knowledge by the individual, since according to the Baha'i viewpoint, the highest goal of the individual is to be "a source of social good."

Material and Spiritual Civilization

According to the Baha'i teachings, there are two facets to civilization: material and spiritual. Baha'is believe that for humanity to

THE BAHAI WORLD

prosper these must be balanced. Adherence to a strictly materialistic viewpoint requires trying to understand civilization in terms of material complexity in the collective existence of the human species. In this paradigm, the complex structures of atoms and molecules and their interactions that constitute a human being and create in it

the potentialities of the mind are seen as preludes to, or building blocks of, more complex entities such as the family, the group, the community, and society. When these higher collective structures come into being, they are viewed as having the potential of certain patterns of behavior associated with civilization.

The materialistic line of thinking, regardless of how many humanistic concepts are introduced into it, dictates acceptance of the idea that the force that pushes humanity towards these higher levels of organization-and, therefore, towards civilization-is the imperative to survive. Somehow the genetic code of every human being (itself the product of physical evolution) contains instructions that oblige the individual to work for the survival of humanity as a species. Thus, the various manifestations of civilization are explained in terms of their intrinsic value for survival, whether now or at some time in the distant past during some stage of evolution.

The fact that human beings are attracted, for example, to beautiful works of art-indeed, the very fact that the concept of beauty exists in human thought-is the result of its utility somewhere in the process of physical evolution. In other words, being able to "think the concept of beauty and react to it" in certain ways must have given some members of the species advantages in the struggle for survival over others who were not able to do so.

Within a worldview of this kind, it would be hard to grant knowledge a transcendental value that would not finally be reducible to some kind of material utility. It is not surprising, then, that as society becomes more and more materialistic, knowledge is increasingly regarded essentially as a commodity. While receiving the highest praise in an age proudly associated with its expansion, knowledge is more and more identified with information, and its generation and application are increasingly ruled by the exigencies of economic growth. This process of production and consumption of goods and services is considered central to humanity's collective existence and progress.

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

The Baha'i view of civilization is very different. Just as the individual has both a spiritual and a material nature, civilization is seen as having two similar aspects. It is an expression of humanity's collective existence, the spiritual dimension of which is greater than and gives purpose to its material dimension. The Baha'i writings state that both the life of the individual and that of humanity as a species have a purpose beyond mere existence and survival. The purpose of the individual's life is to know and worship God, and the purpose of humanity's collective life is to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.

It is reasonable to believe that the generation and application of knowledge is the central process that propels the advancement

of spiritual and material civilization. Furthermore, it can be affirmed that this knowledge is basically organized in two great systems: religion and science. Neither is static; one progresses through revelation and the other through scientific investigation. The writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha shed light on this subject, as seen in the following passage:

Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set down in the holy Books. Briefly, it is demonstrable that in this life, both outwardly and inwardly the mightiest of structures, the most solidly established, the most enduring, standing guard over the world, assuring both the spiritual and the material perfections of mankind, and protecting the happiness and the civilization of society is religion. 1

Further, He says:

Creation is the expression of motion. Motion is life. A moving object is a living object, whereas that which is motionless and inert is as dead. All created forms are progressive in their planes, or kingdoms of existence, under the stimulus of the power or spirit of life. The universal energy is dynamic. Nothing is stationary in the material world of outer phenomena or in the inner world of intellect and consciousness.

Religion is the outer expression of the divine reality. Therefore,

1. The Secret of Divine Civilization (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), pp. 71-72.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

it must be living, vitalized, moving and progressive. If it be without motion and nonprogressive, it is without the divine life; it is dead. 2

About science, 'Abdu'l-Baha states:

All the powers and attributes of man are human and hereditary in origin--outcomes of nature's processes--except the intellect, which is supernatural. Through intellectual and intelligent inquiry science is the discoverer of all things. It unites present and past, reveals the history of bygone nations and events, and confers upon man today the essence of all human knowledge and attainment throughout the ages. By intellectual processes and logical deductions of reason, this super-power in man can penetrate the mysteries of the future and anticipate its happenings. Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings

and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man. The development and progress of a nation is according to the measure and degree of that nation's scientific attainments. Through this means its greatness is continually increased, and day by day the welfare and prosperity of its people are assured. 3

In sum, religion and science are the two knowledge systems that hold together the foundations of civilization. They are two forces that propel the advancement of civilization. They are two sets of practices that draw upon the higher powers of the human soul and must be in harmony. Understanding the nature of this harmony is essential if humanity is to generate and apply the kind of knowledge that will advance civilization in both its material and spiritual dimensions.

#### The Standard of Measurement

In a passage describing some of the gifts that God has vouchsafed unto humanity, such as understanding and vision, Baha'u'llah states:

2. The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu '1-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912 (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 140.
3. Ibid., p. 49.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

These gifts are inherent in man himself. That which is preeminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace. He hath, indeed, partaken of this highest gift of God who hath recognized His Manifestation in this Day.<sup>4</sup>

In the Baha'i view, divine revelation is the standard by which all understanding and all knowledge will finally have to be measured. It encompasses the knowledge of all reality and stands above the judgement of human beings, whatever the degree of their attainments. As Baha'u'llah says in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Most Holy Book:

Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested

according to its own standard, did ye but know it. 5

When religion, as a system of knowledge and practices pertaining to human beings, is in conformity with divine revelation and is not contaminated by elements such as superstition, speculation or emotionalism, then it is true religion and illuminates human understanding. It guards the individual against arrogance and conceit, which can turn knowledge into a barrier between him and God. In that way, the spirit of religion illuminates science and protects it from becoming dogmatic materialism.

Human understanding of divine revelation, as distinct from revelation itself, is innately limited, however, and can be mistaken.

4. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 195.

5. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), pp. 56- 57.

Religious belief held by individuals and communities needs, therefore, to be carefully examined in the light of scientific truth and of reason. 'Abdu'l-Baha states that "religion must be reasonable" and that "every religion which is not in accordance with established science is superstition." 6 Baha'u'llah warns that the study of religion should not result in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry and explains that the literal interpretation of divine texts when a spiritual meaning is intended leads to "false imaginings" and to straying from "the infinite mercy of Providence." Thus, in the same way that religion protects science from turning into materialistic dogma, science protects religion from turning into superstition. Not all conceptions of science and religion hold these two systems to be in harmony, however. The present widespread belief in the intrinsic conflict between science and religion arose at a time in the history of Christendom when conceptions of science and religion were highly inadequate. Baha'is believe that a new concept of religion was given to humanity by Baha'u'llah, necessitating a reformulation of previously held ideas; similarly, popular notions about science should be informed by the latest developments in the field and by advances in the philosophy and history of science. Widely held perceptions of science are based on notions that have, in recent decades, been proven either wrong or extremely inadequate. These notions are held not only by the majority of the world's peoples, who see the magical results of scientific progress, but also by those who are engaged in narrow scientific activity without feeling the necessity to reflect in any depth on the nature of science and its offspring, modern technology. Many of these notions fall within a category that has been called "naive inductivism." According to these perceptions, science begins with observation of things and occurrences. With an unprejudiced mind and with

absolute objectivity scientists faithfully record what they experience through their senses. The resulting "observation statements" form the basis from which the laws and theories of science can be derived.

The immediate results of observation are singular statements, which refer to particular events at particular times. When enough

6. Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 63 .

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

such statements are gathered on the basis of repeated observations, it is claimed, one can arrive at universal statements through a process of generalization that is entirely logical.

In order for such generalizations to be considered legitimate by the inductivist, a large number of observation statements must form the basis of each generalization, the observations must be repeated under a wide variety of conditions, and no observation statement should be found that contradicts the derived universal statement.

Induction- the process of going from a sufficiently large number of singular statements to universal statements-is not, however, ruled entirely by the laws of logic, contrary to what is often believed.

Its shortcomings are encapsulated in the story about the turkey that was fed every day at 8:00A.M. On 23 December, it decided that its observations were large enough in number to justify the conclusion reached by induction that it would always be fed at 8:00A.M. Two days later it was being served to a happy group of people as part of their Christmas dinner.

Not even the popular view of science, of course, is so naive as to depend on induction alone. With laws and theories at their disposal, scientists can derive from them various consequences that serve as explanations and predictions. These predictions and explanations are made through the process of deduction whose rationality, unlike that of induction, no one questions. For example, from the laws of planetary motion the existence of a new planet may be predicted, which, in turn, gives rise to new opportunities for experimentation that strengthen the existing theory or ask for its modification.

According to these views, then, scientific knowledge is built entirely upon observation. As the number of facts established by observation and experiment grows, and as the facts become refined through improvements in observational and experimental skills, more and more laws and theories of increasing generality and scope are constructed. The growth of science is thus continuous and cumulative.

Explanations of science such as this have led the world to the conviction that scientific knowledge is proven knowledge--objective and free of

personal opinions, preferences and speculative

imaginings. As objectively proven, it is therefore reliable. Language, however, can trick the thought processes. "Objective," "proven," and "reliable" are not value-free words. Gradually they become synonymous with "indisputably true," and "science says" becomes the final arbiter of every argument. As a consequence, science is regarded as the only source of indisputable truth; every other source of knowledge becomes less valuable, less reliable-and then valueless and unreliable. Under such conditions, who would dare to raise religion to a level at which it could be compared with science, and, further, who would dare to speak of harmony between science and religion?

Such perceptions of science are rudimentary at best. They do not stand the test of historical evidence, nor can they stand up to the results of innumerable observations made of scientific practice itself. For these reasons they must be left behind as early attempts to understand the scientific enterprise- attempts that, because they led to valuable insights, became popularized too quickly and gave rise to a general misconception of the nature of science.

#### Beyond Induction and Deduction

There are, of course, more sophisticated views of science and more valid explanations of the process of scientific investigation. Science, as a vast system of knowledge and activity, is made up of numerous components, including elements that are articles of faith-faith in the existence of order in the universe and in the ability of the human mind to make sense of that order and express it in a precise language. In the words of Einstein, " ... those individuals to whom we owe the greatest achievements of science were all of them imbued with the truly religious conviction that this universe of ours is something perfect and susceptible to the rational striving for knowledge."

In addition to observation statements, inductive conclusions, and deductive conclusions, another component of the science system consists of assumptions, some of which defy any attempt to be logically proven. They are simply acceptable to human reason and derive their value from the success of the models and theories to which they give rise. For example, for centuries people assumed that the laws governing objects on earth were different from laws

#### K KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

governing heavenly bodies. The theories that were based on this assumption proved inadequate, and today one basic assumption of science is that gravity governs the behavior of space, time and matter everywhere in the universe. For the time being, the theories that are based on this assumption seem to explain whatever has been observed, justifying its widespread acceptance.

The practice of science also calls for spiritual qualities such as love for beauty, commitment to veracity, and honesty, and is dependent on such faculties of the human soul as intuition, creativity, and imagination, which are discounted by naïve perceptions of science. This does not mean that science is not rational, for the results of the application of these faculties must finally pass the tests of rationality. Among the other components of science are the following: a highly complex language that seeks to be rational, unambiguous, and objective; mental processes such as the previously mentioned induction and deduction, as well as the construction of concepts, models and theories; rules and methods of observation that depend on the senses but are highly influenced by theory; and methods suitable to each object of study. Furthermore, scientific activity is carried out within specific research programs by scientific communities that exhibit the many complex types of behavior characteristic of communities of human beings.

Given all of these elements, the complexity and intricacy of the scientific enterprise and the need to abandon simplistic and mechanical explanations of the processes of science should be clear. This does not mean that science is haphazard and devoid of truth, or that scientific practice is arbitrary and driven by thirst for power and control as some would claim in this postmodern era. Science is a mighty system, highly structured and intimately connected to reality—a reality that exists and is not the product of imagination.

With an expanded, more comprehensive view of science, it is possible to approach the question of harmony between science and religion with little difficulty. Religion and science are clearly not the same, or it would be absurd to talk about harmony between them. But while statements about the two systems differ, everything said about science has a parallel in a similar description of religion. The language of religion, for example, does not have to be the

same as that of science. Indeed, the language in which religious truth is expressed, while at times as objective and unambiguous as scientific language, often has to transcend the limitations of such language in order to offer insights into reality through the use of poetic imagery. Moreover, religion has access to the words of the Manifestation Himself—words that speak directly to the human heart and mind in ways that no others can.

#### Harmony of Science and Religion

The harmony between science and religion should be understood as existing at more than one level. At the first level, it can be argued that the two are so distinct that there is no possibility of conflict between them. Science studies the material universe. The knowledge it generates becomes the basis for technological progress.

But technology can be used for the good of humanity or to its

detriment, for building civilization or for its destruction. Science in itself does not have the ability to determine to what use its products should be put.

Religion, on the other hand, is concerned with the spiritual dimension of human existence. It throws light on the inner life of the individual; it touches the roots of motivation and engenders the system of ethics and morality that directs human behavior. It can set the ethical framework within which technology can be developed and employed. In this sense, civilization needs both religion and science, and as long as each remains within the sphere of its own activities there is no reason to believe that they will come into conflict with each other.

This view of the harmony between science and religion is quite valid at the level of application of scientific results. Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Baha has used this depiction in His remarks to certain audiences. But most of the time He goes beyond such strict separation and presents a view of science and religion as highly interconnected. Attempts to understand the role of knowledge in the building of civilization should pay a great deal of attention to these interconnections and try to understand their nature.

In this regard, three conceptions have to be ruled out. One is of two entirely disjoint systems with nothing in common. The second is of religion with science as a subsystem, a conception that finally leads to the denial of science's own processes of knowledge generation

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

and the assertion that if one becomes spiritual enough these processes can be set aside. (According to this line of thinking, all necessary scientific knowledge can be discovered through reading religious text.) The third conception is one in which religion is a subset of science, which deals with it as a very complex social and psychological phenomenon to be respected and, if need be, used for the benefit of society.

With these three models discarded, one alternative is left: that of science and religion as two distinct but partially overlapping systems. The area of overlap covers many elements. Some are articles of faith and assumptions, although we must recognize that there are matters of faith and assumptions in each system that are distinct, sometimes simply because they are not needed in the other. These commonalities also extend to matters of method, the object of study, qualities and attitudes, and mental and social processes. This overlap is intrinsic to the two systems and originates in the fact that making a sharp division between matter and spirit is in itself impossible and undesirable. Although for many practical purposes it is possible and necessary to separate the two systems and allow their processes to run parallel to each other, attempts to deny their intimate interactions in the minds of human beings and in society

rob them both of the extraordinary powers inherent in them. In Baha'i belief, the source of all knowledge, whether scientific or religious, is God. Religion is the direct child of divine revelation. 'Abdu'l-Baha writes: "Read, in the school of God, the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favor of God."<sup>7</sup> Science also receives its impulse from the powers released by the Manifestation of God, as indicated in the following passage:

...the moment the word expressing My attribute "The Omniscient" issueth forth from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvelous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course

7. Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Bahci (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 116.

of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.<sup>8</sup>

As the source of all knowledge is God, to reach and live in His presence is the object of all search. 'Abdu'l-Baha has written:

Although to acquire the sciences and arts is the greatest glory of mankind, this is so only on condition that man's river flow into the mighty sea, and draw from God's ancient source His inspiration. When this cometh to pass, then every teacher is a shoreless ocean, every pupil a prodigal fountain of knowledge. <sup>9</sup>

#### The Individual and the Acquisition of Knowledge

For the individual believer, the acquisition of knowledge is a duty prescribed by Baha'u'l-Hi: "Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone." <sup>10</sup> It is clear from numerous passages that both human learning and the knowledge of the teachings of God are intended: "Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts." <sup>11</sup>

With so many passages in the Baha'i writings extolling the acquisition of knowledge, Baha'is are bound to pay a great deal of attention to learning, and, therefore, such questions as what to learn and how to learn are of paramount importance in the life of the individual. The first distinction that he or she must make is between knowledge and information. Facts and information are the raw materials of knowledge in the same way that sand and cement, earth, wood, metals and glass are some of the raw materials of a building. Just as these building materials do not in themselves

constitute an edifice but must be shaped into a structure, so knowledge is a structured system that includes facts and information

8. Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah , p. 142.

9. Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha, p. 116.

10. Tablets of Baha 'u 'lla.h revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette:

Baha'i

Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 51.

11 . From a Tablet of ' Abdu 'l-Baha, cited in the compilation Excellence in All Things (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1989), no. 24, p. 8.

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

but must also contain other elements such as concepts, patterns, connections, and hierarchies.

Knowledge is only meaningful if accompanied by true understanding, as Baha'u'llah explains:

Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God exalted by His glory. This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation. 12

'Abdu'l-Baha elaborates:

God's greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding. The understanding is the power by which man acquires his knowledge of the several kingdoms of creation, and of various stages of existence, as well as of much which is invisible. Possessing this gift, he is, in himself, the sum of earlier creations—he is able to get into touch with those kingdoms; and by this gift he can frequently, through his scientific knowledge, reach out with prophetic vision. 13

In exploring the connection between knowledge and understanding, it is possible to claim that the knowledge of things is somehow associated with the things themselves and that the knowledge of the universe is encoded in the universe. But understanding is a power of the human soul. Nature is bereft of it. Nature is ordered but it is not conscious of that order; it behaves according to prescribed laws but it cannot see meaning in them. Understanding, a power of the higher nature of the human being, unravels not only the knowledge of the laws and of the order, but also penetrates the meaning that underlies their existence.

12. Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah, p. 194.

13. Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911 (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 32.

This latter point merits further explanation. Seen from a strictly materialistic viewpoint, knowledge is acquired only through the senses. Stimuli are received by the senses and processed by the brain. The brain itself is, in the final analysis, material—a collection of highly specialized cells communicating with one another through complex physical and chemical interactions. Collective activities of these cells are given names, such as short- and long-term memory, cognition, and affective responses, but there is nothing transcendent about any of them. In this worldview, then, the question of understanding would have to be reducible, at least in principle, to which configuration of atoms and molecules and what set of interactions receive the generic name "understanding."

In the Baha'i view, the reality of man is his soul, which is beyond material existence. Through its power the mind understands, imagines, and exerts influence. While the mind comprehends the abstract by the aid of the concrete, the soul has additional means through which it can achieve understanding. Thus, the search for knowledge should not be concerned only with the sharpening of the mind, but also with the development of the soul's other faculties. The individual must be aware of the potentialities inherent in these other powers of the soul and have an idea of what they can accomplish. The Baha'i writings are replete with references to these faculties, such as the inner eye, the inner ear, and the heart, as found in the following passages:

[W]e must thank God that He has created for us both material blessings and spiritual bestowals. He has given us material gifts and spiritual graces, outer sight to view the lights of the sun and inner vision by which we may perceive the glory of God. 14 He has designed the outer ear to enjoy the melodies of sound and the inner hearing wherewith we may hear the voice of our Creator. 15

.. .0 brother! kindle with the oil of wisdom the lamp of the spirit within the innermost chamber of thy heart, and guard it with the globe of understanding . . . 16

14. The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 90.

15. Ibid., p. 90.

16. The Kitáb-i-Iqán (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1989), p. 61.

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

Awareness of the role that the various powers of the soul are to play in the search for knowledge and true understanding protects the individual from certain absurd dichotomies introduced in the

prevalent intellectual discourse. Of special importance is the false dichotomy between the mind and the heart. It is, of course, legitimate to call certain powers of the soul "the mind" and certain of its other powers "the heart." These designations enrich the language needed to comprehend such complex concepts as knowing, understanding, feeling, and conjuring up the will to act. But the powers of the soul cannot simply be easily separated and rigidly categorized as, for example, a mind that only thinks rationally and a heart that only feels irrational or super-rational sentiments. Such categorizations finally lead to dead ends those branches of science and philosophy that are concerned with knowledge. In daily life, too, the introduction of such concepts as "mind person" and "heart person" limits the possibilities of human interaction and stunts the development of human potential.

If it is accepted that to achieve true understanding the individual must draw on the many powers of the soul, then one of the most challenging tasks in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is to purify one's inner being. The opening passages of Baha'u'llah's central theological treatise, the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, speak to this point:

No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth. Sanctify your souls, O ye peoples of the world, that haply ye may attain that station which God hath destined for you and enter thus the tabernacle which, according to the dispensations of Providence, hath been raised in the firmament of the Bayan. The essence of these words is this : they that tread the path of faith , they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly-their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings, their hearts from worldly affections, their eyes from that which perisheth. They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen ... 17

17. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

When knowledge is accompanied by true understanding, it leads to wisdom, to which Baha'u'llah refers as humanity's unflinching protector and the foremost teacher in the school of existence. One of the characteristics of wisdom is that it connects knowledge and action in a particular way, fitting the application of knowledge to the exigencies of each situation. As 'Abdu'l-Baha advises:

Follow thou the way of thy Lord, and say not that which the ears cannot bear to hear, for such speech is like luscious food

given to small children. However palatable, rare and rich the food may be, it cannot be assimilated by the digestive organs of a suckling child. Therefore unto everyone who hath a right, let his settled measure be given . . .

First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skillful physician. 18

The Baha'i writings clearly state that the essence of wisdom is the fear of God, and the beginning of wisdom is to acknowledge whatsoever God has clearly set forth.

Acquiring knowledge and seeking wisdom are goals that every Baha'i pursues according to his or her talents and capacities. The pursuit of knowledge in a scholarly way by its members brings numerous benefits to the Baha'i community and provides the means for those who excel in a field of human endeavor to influence that field and infuse it with the light of Baha'u'llah's revelation. The Universal House of Justice has stated:

As the Baha'i community grows, it will acquire experts in numerous fields-both by Baha'is becoming experts and by experts becoming Baha'is. As these experts bring their knowledge and skill to the service of the community and, even more, as they transform their various disciplines by bringing to bear upon them the light of the Divine Teachings, problem after problem now disrupting society will be answered. 19

18. Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 281 - 82.

19. From a letter dated 21 August 1977, written on behalf of the Universal House

of Justice to an individual, cited in Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986 (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 369.

## K N O W L E D G E A N D C I V I L I Z A T I O N

Bringing the light of Baha'u'llah's teachings to bear on a certain field is not a simple task. It cannot be achieved through mere criticism, nor through superficial appeals to spirituality, nor through embracing the propositions of pseudo-science. It calls for a rigorous study of the field in question, mastery of it, and then, from a position of knowledge, effort to influence its development.

In seeking to attain knowledge, understanding and wisdom, the individual should be cognizant of the characteristics that 'Abdu'l-Baha attributes to those who are to be considered as truly learned. Certain passages from His treatise The Secret of Divine Civilization are especially significant in this respect. In them, 'Abdu'l-Baha begins by asserting that for everything

God has created a sign and symbol, and established standards and tests by which it may be known. The spiritually learned

must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God. For an unlit candle, however great in diameter and tall, is no better than a barren palm tree or a pile of dead wood. 20

'Abdu'l-Baha then goes on to cite an authoritative tradition of Islam, which says: "As for him who is one of the learned: he must guard himself, defend his faith, oppose his passions and obey the commandments of his Lord." 21

In His discourse on these various requirements that pertain to the truly learned, 'Abdu'l-Baha addresses the first, guarding oneself, in these words:

It is obvious that this does not refer to protecting oneself from calamities and material tests, for the Prophets and saints were, each and every one, subjected to the bitterest afflictions that the world has to offer, and were targets for all the cruelties and aggressions of mankind. They sacrificed their lives for the welfare of the people, and with all their hearts they hastened

20. The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 33-34.

21. Ibid., p. 34.

#### THE B AHA.'f WORLD

to the place of their martyrdom; and with their inward and outward perfections they arrayed humanity in new garments of excellent qualities, both acquired and inborn. The primary meaning of this guarding of oneself is to acquire the attributes of spiritual and material perfection. 22

His comment on the second spiritual standard, namely, that the truly learned individual should be the defender of his faith, is this:

It is obvious that these holy words do not refer exclusively to searching out the implications of the Law, observing the forms of worship, avoiding greater and lesser sins, practicing the religious ordinances, and by all these methods, protecting the Faith. They mean rather that the whole population should be protected in every way; that every effort should be exerted to adopt a combination of all possible measures to raise up the Word of God, increase the number of believers, promote the Faith of God and exalt it and make it victorious over other religions. 23

As to the third requirement, that of opposing one's passions, 'Abdu'l-Baha says:

How wonderful are the implications of this deceptively easy, all-inclusive phrase. This is the very foundation of every laudable human quality; indeed, these few words embody the light of the world, the impregnable basis of all the spiritual attributes of human beings. This is the balance wheel of all behavior, the means of keeping all man's good qualities in equilibrium. For desire is a flame that has reduced to ashes uncounted lifetime harvests of the learned, a devouring fire that even the vast sea of their accumulated knowledge could never quench. How often has it happened that an individual who was graced with every attribute of humanity and wore the jewel of true understanding, nevertheless followed after his passions until his excellent qualities passed beyond moderation and he was forced into excess. His pure intentions changed to evil ones, his attributes were no longer put to uses worthy of them, and the power of his desires turned him aside from righteousness and its rewards into ways that were dangerous and dark. A

22. Ibid., pp. 34--35.

23 . Ibid., p. 41.

## K KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

good character is in the sight of God and His chosen ones and the possessors of insight, the most excellent and praiseworthy of all things, but always on condition that its center of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base should be true moderation. Were the implications of this subject to be developed as they deserve the work would grow too long and our main theme would be lost to view.<sup>24</sup>

Finally 'Abdu' l-Baha refers to the fourth condition required of the learned, which is to be obedient to the commandments of their Lord, by saying:

It is certain that man's highest distinction is to be lowly before and obedient to his God; that his greatest glory, his most exalted rank and honor, depend on his close observance of the Divine commands and prohibitions. Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the Laws set down in the holy Books. <sup>25</sup>

Other passages in the Baha'i writings provide further insights into the characteristics of the learned. They state, for example, that the pursuit of knowledge should not lead to self-righteousness, which arises from an exaggerated regard for one's own self and should not be confused with the highly desirable quality of righteousness. In fact, righteousness requires the individual to measure him- or herself scrupulously against the standards of the divine teachings and to exert every effort to overcome his or her

shortcomings. As 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

It is my hope that you may consider this matter, that you may search out your own imperfections and not think of the imperfections of anybody else. Strive with all your power to be free from imperfections. Heedless souls are always seeking faults in others. What can the hypocrite know of others' faults when he is blind to his own?<sup>26</sup>

This injunction to measure one's own behavior in the balance of the very high standards contained in the Baha' i teachings goes

24. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

25. Ibid., p. 71.

26. The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 244.

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

hand in hand with the exhortation to show tolerance towards others. Baha'u'llah describes righteousness and tolerance as two qualities that need to complement each other:

The heaven of true understanding shineth resplendent with the light of two luminaries, tolerance and righteousness. O my friend! Vast oceans lie enshrined within this brief saying. Blessed are they who appreciate its value, drink deep therefrom and grasp its meaning, and woe betide the heedless. <sup>27</sup>

Regarding tolerance, Baha'u'llah has stated that one should not be too critical of "the sayings and writings of men" but should approach them in a spirit of open-mindedness and loving sympathy. A letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, emphasizes the importance of tolerance in all aspects of community life:

The people of the world not only need the laws and principles of the Baha'i Faith—they desperately need to see the love that is engendered by it in the hearts of its followers, and to partake of that atmosphere of tolerance, understanding, forbearance and active kindness which should be the hallmark of a Baha'i community.<sup>Z 8</sup>

Another important issue that arises regarding knowledge and wisdom concerns the individual's motivation to pursue knowledge and engage in scholarly activity. In one of His tablets ' Abdu'l-Baha observes:

Glory be to God! What an extraordinary situation now obtains, when no one, hearing a claim advanced, asks himself what the speaker's real motive might be, and what selfish purpose he might not have hidden behind the mask of words. You find, for example, that an individual seeking to further his

own petty and personal concerns, will block the advancement of an entire people. To turn his own water mill, he will let the farms and fields of all the others parch and wither. To maintain his own leadership, he will everlastingly direct the masses

27. Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 169-70.

28. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer,

5 December 1942 (unpublished).

## KNOWLEDGE AND CIVILIZATION

toward that prejudice and fanaticism which subvert the very base of civilization. 29

Motivation to pursue knowledge should not be the need to feel superior to others or the desire to advance oneself over others. Effort to distinguish oneself through deeds, words, and even through knowledge and wisdom is most praiseworthy, but there is another kind of distinction that should be avoided. Of it, Baha'u'llah wrote: "Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It has become desolate." 30 We live in a time when dominant social theories assign great value to aggression and unbridled competition. Such theories go as far as to assert that competition is the only means through which excellence can be achieved and that it is inherent in the human condition. In contrast, Baha'u'llah says: "O Son of Dust! Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother." 31 In another passage He writes: "It behoveth not, therefore, him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it, to swell with pride before God, and before His loved ones, to proudly scorn them, and be filled with disdainful arrogance." 32 An indispensable quality of the learned is true humility, beginning with humility before God and leading to humility before His creatures, who are brought into being to reflect His names and attributes.

Although thirst for knowledge in itself should impel the individual to pursue knowledge, Baha'is can never separate their goals and desires from the central theme of their lives, which is service. Seeking knowledge, true understanding and wisdom is not, for them, a mere matter of personal satisfaction; it has a definite social purpose. As the Baha'i writings state:

29. The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 103-04.

30. From an unpublished Tablet of Baha'u'llah, quoted in a letter from the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 27 March 1978, cited in the compilation The Continental Boards of Counsellors (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), pp. 59-60.

31. *The Hidden Words* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), pp. 23-24.

32. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 231.

## THE BAHÁ'Í WORLD

And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confining grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight. 33

An essential quality of the learned, then, is generosity of the soul, for without it, knowledge becomes a tool for control and even oppression.

### Conclusion

The fundamental challenge before humanity at this stage in its development is the creation of a civilization in which all peoples and cultures can participate—a civilization that represents a fusion of the material and spiritual imperatives of life. In this endeavor, both individuals and communities have vital roles to play. The scale at which knowledge must be generated and applied if humanity is to be ushered into an age of true prosperity calls for society to develop the means for all its members to have access to knowledge. In this way, everyone can become meaningfully engaged in applying knowledge to create well-being. Recognizing that religion and science, as two interacting knowledge systems and two complementary sources evolving with human society itself, constitute the main forces that impel social progress, the Baha'i worldview envisions a moderate approach, acceptable to both religion and science, in which the generation and application of knowledge form the central axis around which other processes of society are organized. Through such means all can contribute, according to their capacities, to the progress of knowledge and to "an ever-advancing civilization."

33. *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, pp. 2-3.

Ann Boyles looks at the question, "What is a 'good' education?" with particular attention to the issue of moral or character education in a global society.

## WTWORLD

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"Educated men," said Aristotle, "are as much superior to uneducated men as the living are to the dead"—a sentiment that was

echoed and amplified centuries later by Martin Luther, when he wrote, "The prosperity of a country depends, not on the abundance of its revenues, nor on the strength of its fortifications, nor on the beauty of its public buildings, but it consists in the number of its cultivated citizens, in its men of education, enlightenment, and character." Similarly, the vital role of knowledge in promoting the advancement of society resonates in Muhammad's exhortation to "seek knowledge, even unto China."

Throughout the development of civilization, great thinkers and leaders have not only emphasized the importance of education but have advanced prescriptions regarding what constitutes a "good" education. Many rated moral training as equal in the educational process to the acquisition of formal knowledge and the development of wisdom and insight. Today, at the end of the twentieth century, the same question that occupied thinkers at the local or national level-what is a proper education?-vexes us on a global scale. While it may indeed be broadly recognized that the prosperity

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

of the world depends upon the proportion of its educated, enlightened, and principled peoples-both women and men-we have not satisfactorily implemented the means to make that desired prosperity a reality.

In fact, for many of the world's peoples the question of education assumes very basic dimensions. United Nations figures for 1995 indicate that there are some eight hundred million illiterate individuals in the world-people who have not received sufficient education of any sort that would enable them to prosper materially, intellectually, or spiritually. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Secretary-General Federico Mayor, in his book *The New Page*, describes his surprise and dismay at meeting with ministers of education from various developing countries whose concern does not lie in the direction of educational policy but rather in obtaining the simplest of educational materials-paper and pens -for students in their schools. To speak about "cultivated citizens" in such conditions is, lamentably, a distant vision.

Robert Kaplan, in *The Ends of the Earth*, offers a brief, disturbing snapshot of the social implications of the collapse of the social infrastructure and particularly of the educational system in countries such as Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa. In Sierra Leone, for example, the rate of illiteracy is 54.6% for men and 81.8% for women, and the vast majority of children never see the inside of a school. Kaplan describes adolescent boys idling around shanty towns at the fringes of the larger cities, often having left their home villages, ripe for recruitment into the army or some armed gang that offers food, clothing, and

some kind of purpose, however brutal, to their existence. Young girls, in particular, suffer. With the increase in poverty brought about through civil war and other types of armed conflict, more and more of them either miss out on education altogether or drop out of primary or secondary school. Without education, they have few skills to offer and may turn to prostitution to earn money. The average woman in Sierra Leone bears six children, further exacerbating the problem of poverty. Worst of all, Kaplan says, there seems to be no hope on the part of youth in this West African nation that they might be able to change their situation in any way. "In

## WORLD WATCH

Pakistan," he notes, "I had watched the most destitute Afghan refugees organize Koranic schools with no outside help .... But here I saw only passivity, fatalistic and defeated." <sup>1</sup> In contrast to the sense of hopelessness in Sierra Leone, it is instructive to note this brief mention of the Afghan refugees' ability to set up schools to study their sacred text- surely an indication of the power of religious faith to motivate people to learn.

While governments of "developed" nations and aid agencies may provide money and supplies as band-aid solutions in countries such as those of West Africa, the real problem, as Kaplan implies, is the fact that in many places the moral underpinnings of society have collapsed. The example of Sierra Leone vividly illustrates how traditional customs and values, eroded by colonialism and internal conflict and made further irrelevant by the migration of large numbers of people from their villages to the cities, no longer serve to bind together a village or a tribe, let alone an entire country. The longer this situation continues, the farther and farther behind the rest of the world these countries will fall. The same danger exists even in countries with highly educated populations, such as Russia, where society has collapsed because of bankrupt values. Rapid population growth in many of the world's destitute countries, where numbers double every seven years, exacerbates the problem. More than half the population is now under twenty-five, and many have never been to school. As Federico Mayor writes, "Their chances of employment, of self-expression and of being real contributors to their societies have perhaps been handicapped for ever. What are we to expect of them when the despair and the suffering, and perhaps the hunger, lead to explosions of fundamentalist or terrorist rage against the 'happy few'?" <sup>2</sup>

Education is a vital means of addressing the complex web of problems that face these populations. The relationship between the education of women and declining birthrates has been well established, and it also possesses the benefit of alleviating accompanying

1. Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the*

21st Century (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 24.

2. Federico Mayor, *The New Page* (Paris: UNESCO, and Aldershot, England: Dartmouth Publishing Co. Ltd., 1995), p. 75 .

## THE BAHAI WORLD

poverty. Even simple vocational training provides people with skills to earn a living, providing them with material alternatives to joining armed gangs or violent fundamentalist groups, or resorting to prostitution. Literacy expands people's sense of the world, allowing them to see different people's points of view, cultures, values, to gain information, and to investigate truth for themselves. But it is possible to give people information and skills and for there still to be chaos and anarchy. Literacy and material education are not in themselves sufficient to meet human needs or to bring true prosperity, whether in developed or in developing countries. The materialistic assumptions underlying the planning of social and economic development activities—the primary assumption that "the purpose of development is ... the successful cultivation in all societies of those means for the achievement of material prosperity that have, through trial and error, already come to characterize certain regions of the world" <sup>3</sup>—have been proven woefully inadequate, as the gap between rich and poor widens exponentially. A statement produced by the Baha'i community comments on this situation as follows:

This unprecedented economic crisis, together with the social breakdown it has helped to engender, reflects a profound error of conception about human nature itself. For the levels of response elicited from human beings by the incentives of the prevailing order are not only inadequate, but seem almost irrelevant in the face of world events . We are being shown that, unless the development of society finds a purpose beyond the mere amelioration of material conditions, it will fail of attaining even these goals. That purpose must be sought in spiritual dimensions of life and motivation that transcend a constantly changing economic landscape and an artificially imposed division of human societies into "developed" and "developing."<sup>4</sup>

Evidence of the truth of this statement can be seen throughout the entire world. While material considerations are less extreme in developed countries, one sees there, too, a crisis in respect to

3. *The Prosperity of Humankind* (Baha'i International Community: Office of Public Information, 1995), p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3 .

## WORLD WATCH

education and prosperity. While children are literate, learn skills,

and take in knowledge at school, there is much concern about the whole purpose of schools and the educational process. "Values" are a forbidden subject, and the widespread perception is that moral impoverishment exists, even where material well-being is the norm.

American social critic Neil Postman, in *The End of School*, sees the root of this problem as a lack of a "narrative," a "god," or a story that "tells of origins and envisions a future." Such a foundation "constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and, above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose" to people. A "great narrative," he says, has "sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power" to inspire people to organize their lives around it, since it confers meaning, purpose, and direction. While there are a number of compelling narratives in the world, he concludes that religions contain the "most comprehensive" ones. 5 (One recalls again Kaplan's example of the alacrity with which Afghan refugees established their Koranic schools as an example of this point.)

In the case of American schooling, Postman says, what used to be the compelling unifying myth or narrative underlying it—America as the melting pot, which comfortably accommodated "multiple narratives," from a wide range of ethnic, racial, and religious sources—has been supplanted by the multicultural approach that emphasizes differences rather than any underlying unity or Americanness. The narrative of America as an entity able to create "one" from "many" has been discarded. Thus, Postman argues, schools are no longer places where a unified public can be formed. 6 The consequences of this are serious, particularly if one subscribes to Erasmus' view that "the main hope of a state lies in the proper education of its youth."

Although cultural pluralism was incorporated into the American narrative, Postman points out that formerly no one expected schools to provide narratives that reflected every strand of society.

5. Neil Postman, *The End of Education: Redefining the Value of School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), p. 7.

6. See Postman, pp. 13- 17.

Families, religious communities, and other social entities assumed that responsibility. Now, however, with the decline of the family and the waning influence of religion in society, schools are expected to teach all things. But they are to be taught as relative truths, and thus they lack the compelling force of the kind of narrative to which Postman refers.

Graduates of such a system become the sorts of students Allan Bloom describes at the beginning of his 1987 critique of the system of higher education in the United States, *The Closing of the American Mind*:

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative .... The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight but a moral postulate, the condition of a free society, or so they see it. Relativism is necessary to openness; and this is the virtue, the only virtue, which all primary education for more than fifty years has dedicated itself to inculcating. Openness-and the relativism that makes it the only plausible stance in the face of various claims to truth and various ways of life and kinds of human beings-is the great insight of our times. The true believer is the real danger. 7

The paradox examined by Bloom is that while universities promote the idea that they are bastions of liberal thought, they in fact promote the closing of students' minds since they are intolerant of anything except the stance of openness and relativism. Thus the whole idea of moral education becomes suspect, since if all values are relative and one should be open to all values, no specific set of moral standards can be generally acceptable.

A similar effect at the level of public school education is explored by William Kilpatrick in his book *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong*. Kilpatrick critiques a number of approaches that have been used in the American school system to promote moral education. He contends that the only "value" taught for quite a number of years now is "a generalized-and sometimes

7. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 25- 26.

## WORLD WATCH

excessive-tolerance." 8 In this climate, he says, "a constant parade of alternative 'values' tends to undermine the virtuous instinct that some things are and ought to be repugnant." 9

While the cultural relativist approach is still the norm at most Western institutions of higher learning, its limitations are being sensed more and more by parents and educators of children in public schools. Societies are increasingly appreciative of the need for a systematic nurturing of individuals whose character will be formed through the educational process and who will become "educated" in the sense intended by Socrates in his *Panathenaicus*:

Whom, then, do I call educated? First, those who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day and who possess a judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely miss the expedient course of action; next, those who are decent and honorable in their intercourse with all men, bearing easily and goodnatureedly what is

unpleasant or offensive in others, and being themselves as agreeable and reasonable to their associates as it is humanly possible to be; furthermore, those who hold their pleasures always under control and are not unduly overcome by their misfortunes, bearing up under them bravely and in a manner worthy of our common nature; finally, and most important of all, those who are not spoiled by their successes and who do not desert their true selves, but hold their ground steadfastly as wise and soberminded men, rejoicing no more in the good things which have come to them through chance than in those which through their own nature and intelligence are theirs since birth. Those who have a character which is in accord, not with one of these things, but with all of them-those I maintain are educated and whole men, possessed of all the virtues of a man.

Parents who possess the means and the leisure to contemplate such issues are now seriously pondering how to instill character and decency in their children. This is no small concern, when the social structures that once unapologetically supported moral trainingsuch as schools and religious institutions-have either abandoned

8. William K. Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can~ Tell Right from Wrong and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 90.

9. *Ibid.*

## THE BAHAI W ORLD

the pursuit in deference to the relativist approach or have become less central to people's lives. The growth in the number of private schools, many of which are operated by different religious denominations, demonstrates the concern of many parents for the moral training of their offspring.

While such evidence is in some ways encouraging, two related questions arise from it: First, do the multiple narratives one finds in these various educational institutions provide a sufficient basis for moral education at this juncture in humanity's development? And second, do they promote values that are conducive to the establishment of harmony on a global scale? Postman's use of the word narrative recalls Joseph Campbell's exploration of myth in works

such as *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.<sup>1</sup> Campbell's study led him to conclude that the many different narratives or myths found throughout the world could, in fact, be seen as variations of one "monomyth" that is common to all cultures. In this same vein, would it not be possible to look at common moral teachings that form part of the world's great religions, so as to establish a coherent global moral narrative?

Content aside, there are also conflicting schools of thought among a number of Western educational theorists regarding the

most effective methodology for addressing the problem. From some quarters comes a call for a return to firmer discipline- a repudiation of "indulgent" parenting practices. Advocates of this conservative approach promote greater regimentation, behavior modification through drilling in a set of values-what have been called "the stem virtues." The idea is that once the behavior is modified, it becomes automatic. Another approach favors an emphasis on moral reasoning, assisting students to develop "moral logic" through programs that deal with difficult social dilemmas. The argument supporting this approach is that students will develop understanding of the principle underlying their behavior. But no matter which philosophy one adopts, educators agree that the subject-often referred to as character education-must be wholly integrated into the school curriculum, every day, in every subject, in order to promote a sense

10. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Bollingen Foundation, 1949).

## WORLD WATCH

of purpose and importance to the subject and to provide a forum where values can be tested in a wide variety of subjects and relationships. Otherwise, the issue may be regarded as trivial. 11

Obviously the dilemma posed by such a choice bears no relevance to the situation of the vast majority of the world's children, many of whom must overcome great obstacles just to achieve basic literacy skills. And even in wealthier nations, the ability to choose a school that has a tailor-made character education program is limited largely to elites who can afford to purchase private schooling for their children in a consumer marketplace rather than sending them to public school. While parents of children in public schools may wish for a program with moral coherence, there are many factors working against its development. In a society that is generally adversarial, families, schools, religious communities, and agencies in the community at large often do not communicate the same values, and if moral precepts must be consistently and constantly repeated and amplified in order to take root in children's lives, such lack of coherence thwarts such growth from the outset. Again, as Postman has pointed out, the results are a society in which citizens are not equipped to deal with the moral complexities and ambiguities of contemporary life, with the community much the worse for such impoverishment.

The question of how to provide moral training for children in contemporary Western society-specifically America-is tackled by Robert Coles in his 1997 volume *The Moral Intelligence of Children*. "Generations ago," he writes, "adolescents had to struggle with the serious moral constraints imposed by (learned from) their families and of course those coming from outside the home. Today,

many teenagers have parents who are more interested in psychology than moral inquiry, and the secular society is significantly (overwhelmingly, some would insist) relativistic in its moral outlook, even as it falls back on psychology and psychiatry with ease, if not abandon." 12 Yet, he says, youth "are interested in obtaining for

11. See "The Moral Child" in the 3 June 1996 issue of U.S. News & World Report, pp. 52- 59, for a useful discussion of the debate on this topic.

12. Robert Coles, *The Moral Intelligence of Children* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 162.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

themselves certain credible moral fundamentals—a set of values that strike them as convincing and that, they hope, will give them some reliable and worthy direction." 13 He posits that a relationship based on "moral companionship" with one or two adults can work to counteract the pernicious effects of "a consumerist society ever ready to pester, entice, seduce an audience, an 'age group. '" 14 Children, he states emphatically, "very much need a sense of purpose and direction in life, a set of values grounded in moral introspection—a spiritual life that is given sanction by their parents and others in the adult world," since "moral exploration" comprises "the experience of what a human being is: the creature of awareness who, through language, our distinctive capability, probes for patterns and themes, for the significance of things." 15

Addressing the question of moral education in the public school system, and using the United States as his example, Coles writes:

Unfortunately, all too many of us in contemporary America feel troubled by the matter of religion as it connects with our children's life, in school and at home and in the neighborhood, as if the subject in some ways is puzzling, confusing, even a threat to this nation's secular society. Yet children constantly ask their whys, seek the moral reasons upon which to gird their present and future life—the heart of spirituality: to look inward in search of meaning and purpose; to seek an understanding of what truly matters and for which reasons, an activity that need not take place under formal religious or institutional purposes and that can be encouraged by reading stories and poems, by learning through scientific contemplation of this awesome, wondrously enchanting (as well as fearfully vulnerable) planet, whose many secrets still elude us. 16

Citing Ralph Waldo Emerson's assertion in his "American Scholar" address and essay that "Character is higher than intellect,"

Coles reiterates Emerson's concern that "The intellect can grow and grow ... in a person who is smug, ungenerous, even cruel.

13. Coles, p. 162.

14. Ibid., p. 164.
15. Ibid., p. 177-78.
16. Ibid., p. 178.

## WORLD WATCH

Institutions originally founded so that their graduates become good and decent, as well as broadly, deeply literate can abandon that joint mission in favor of a driven, narrow book learning, a course of study in no way designed to lead to connections between ideas and theories on the one hand and our lives as we live them on the other." 17 In other words, "knowing good" is not sufficient without "acting good." To connect intellect to character in the educational setting, Coles advocates community service, coupled with reflection and classroom discussion.

Taking a broader stage, Federico Mayor, in *The New Page*, also calls for "a way of building in the school those fundamental ethical values which have been the touchstones of so much of what is beautiful and creative in community life." 18 "Education," he says, "in its broadest sense is a way in which each of us as an individual can develop into a person, a contributor, a truth-seeker, a truth-teller who can, quite unconsciously, help each community and each society move towards a better existence." 19 He advocates the teaching of altruism, so that people can "transcend the narrowness of locality or of speciality to reach out and make a contribution towards the world." 20 Nurturing values such as dignity, self-respect, and respect for the environment will lead to the development of individuals who will become active citizens contributing to a global community. In fact, Mayor prescribes, "A global vision of humanity, in all its many cultural forms, should be presented from the earliest years of schooling." 21

Mayor sees religious and ethical values as playing a major role in building what he calls "a culture of peace," in which love and the ability to make connections in order to envision solutions to global problems are both essential:

Beginning from the basic love we feel for those closest to us and expanding it to a passion for mankind and the Earth, leadership will have to evolve from the private and short-term perceptions

17. Coles, p. 179.
18. Mayor, pp. 22- 23.
19. Ibid., p. 13.
20. Ibid., p. 22.
21. Ibid., p. 27.

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

we have learned to new notions of a global community and global commons. Educators, scientists, artists and journalists,

along with politicians and spiritual leaders, have a crucial role in revitalizing the ethics of caring and love and setting new agendas for their disciplines and their societies.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, in this quest to establish "a new civic culture for the planet," he sees the role of the world's religions as central, saying, "The equality of souls and perfectability of humanity in its quest for spiritual salvation lie at the heart of all the world's great religions and constitute one of the most powerful foundations for democracy in all cultures."<sup>23</sup>

In such a democracy, the leader is a servant promoting the growth of the minds and capacities of the people, promoting a passion for education and learning in the political sector. And in such a world, compassion fatigue is addressed by helping people see how they can make a difference and making a link between knowledge and ethical responsibility. We thus move from a "reporting society" that is good at analyzing problems and stating them but powerless to address them, to a society of "peace building" in which efforts are made "through education, culture and communication to promote a civic culture of civility that resolves conflicts through tolerance and persuasion."<sup>24</sup>

While nations attempt to come to grips with values education or character education or moral education in their school systems, if they are in a position to do so, and the United Nations and its agencies such as UNESCO wrestle with these same issues on a global scale, the problems associated with the decline of society's morals continue to multiply. The growing number of street children- homeless children who are involved in criminal activities of various sorts in an attempt to survive- will grow up to become "feral adults"<sup>25</sup> if the means are not found to educate them so that they can take initiative themselves to constructively address their own situations.

22. Mayor, p. 33.

23. Ibid., pp. 35 and 47.

24. Ibid., p. 85.

25. Ibid., p. 76.

## WORLD WATCH

The work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, outlined in his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, offers insights into how the oppressed peoples of the world can become more fully human through the process of education. Rejecting the "banking approach" to education, in which students' only responsibility is to receive, file, and store deposits of information made by their teachers,<sup>26</sup> Freire defines education as "co-intentional," engendering "acts of cognition" rather than the transfer of information.<sup>27</sup> In other words, teachers and students are both investigators of reality,

and in this process they come to know it critically and to recreate knowledge. Common reflection and action leads them to become committed to "the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human." 28 In this "liberating education," the role of the educator is to create conditions "under which knowledge at the level of the doxa [opinion, belief] is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the logos [reason]."29 "Problem-solving education," says Freire, "affirms men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future." 30

Some of the characteristics that Freire also names as intrinsic to this problem-solving, dialogic education are love, humility, faith in humanity, and hope. The outcome, he says, is mutual trust between the parties. "Dialogue," he writes, "does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not 'sloganize.'" 31 Rather, it empowers participants to create their own reality and to uncover their own deeply felt values. This recalls the "moral reasoning" approach to character education favored by contemporary Western educational theorists such as Lawrence Kohlberg. On the other hand, William Kilpatrick contends that moral reasoning, while an

26. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), p. 58 .

27. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

effective tool for adults, is ineffective and, in fact, dangerous for younger children, as it requires participants who have already formed the moral values from which they can reason. If younger children have not been taught virtues, how can they be expected to reject behavior that society would characterize as immoral? 32

It is clear from this representative sampling of views on the educational process that humanity faces a great dilemma concerning the nature of a framework of moral values to which a pluralistic world can turn. As eloquently observed by Neil Postman and numerous other commentators, we live in a climate where previously accepted moral codes and belief systems have been challenged by the rapid and sweeping changes experienced throughout the world over the past century and a half. And while the work of people such as Freire has revolutionized the approach taken to education in some corners of the world, no globally held purpose, vision,

commitment, values or standards have arisen to replace values that have been discarded. In a rapidly contracting global community where hitherto isolated cultures and peoples are now interacting with increasing intensity, the search for a unifying moral vision becomes all the more imperative.

The Baha'i Faith and its world-embracing community are well equipped to address this dilemma. Baha'is come from more than 2,100 racial, tribal, and ethnic backgrounds, yet out of such diversity they have fashioned an extremely unified global community with a single, hopeful vision regarding humanity's future. From the teachings of the Founder of their Faith, Baha'u'llah, they have derived an understanding of the forces now buffeting humanity, which is journeying towards its collective maturity. At this stage, they believe, it has traversed the period of childhood and, now in its adolescence, is being acted upon by both destructive and integrative forces. The destructive forces, while horrific, remove longstanding barriers to humanity's maturity. The integrative processes, on the other hand, are moving humanity towards the establishment of a world civilization.

To become effective, cognizant participants in this process,

32. See Kilpatrick, pp. 82- 95, for a discussion of the limitations of the "moral reasoning" approach.

Baha'u'llah taught, all should seek knowledge, the ultimate source of which is God. He wrote:

Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen-a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light. 33

Thus, in the Baha'i Faith, great importance is placed upon the acquisition of knowledge. In fact, compulsory universal education is a spiritual teaching of the Faith. As 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Son of Baha'u'llah, said:

In this new and wondrous Cause, the advancement of all branches of knowledge is a fixed and vital principle, and the friends [Baha'is], one and all, are obligated to make every effort toward this end, so that . . . every child, according to his need, will receive his share of the sciences and arts-until not even a single peasant's child will be found who is completely devoid of schooling.

It is essential that the fundamentals of knowledge be taught;

essential that all should be able to read and write. 4

Formal knowledge, beginning with basic literacy and moving beyond that to proficiency in various fields of study, is thus one object of education. Furthermore, the skills acquired by the student through the educational process will enable him or her to engage in an independent investigation of reality. The Baha'i writings state that "Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon

33. Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 39.

34. 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in *Baha'i Education: A Compilation: Extracted from the Writings of Baha 'u 'l/ah, 'Abdu 'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill, Ontario: Baha'i Community of Canada, 1977), p. 39.

everyone." 35 Pursuit of excellence is also enjoined upon those engaged in seeking knowledge, as Baha'u'llah has written that "in every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection." 36 Yet he cautions , "The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words ." 37 Knowledge, then, should equip a person to engage in meaningful work by which he or she may earn a livelihood and contribute to his or her community.

But while these functions of education are all important, there is an even more important goal, as stated by 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well behaved-even though he be ignorant-is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, illbehaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light. 38

Like Emerson, 'Abdu'l-Baha is stating essentially that "character is higher than intellect."

Baha'is, then, see education as a means to equip individuals not only to become learned but also to become servants of humanity. Addressing an audience in New York in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha made these remarks, which further reflect the importance He placed on the development of moral qualities:

I desire distinction for you. The Baha ' is must be distinguished from others

of humanity. But this distinction must not

35. Baha' u ' llah, Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah , pp. 51.

36. Baha' u ' llah, cited in Excellence in All Things , a compilation of extracts

from the Baha' i writings compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice , Baha'i World Centre. Rev. ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1989), no. 6.

37. Ibid.

38. ' Abdu'l-Baha, cited in Baha'i Education, p. 43.

depend upon wealth-that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction-that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world-for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world, for love toward every human being, for unity and accord with all people, for removing prejudices and promoting international peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you. 39

With this lofty goal in mind and in the context of the current climate, Baha'is perceive an urgent need for a moral education framework to train future generations that will become distinguished for promoting the positive transformation of society. While their community is still very young and is only beginning to address this issue in a concrete way, the following points serve as a basic framework for a Baha'i approach to moral education.

Two basic tenets of Baha'i belief serve as a foundation to the framework. First, there is an inseparable connection between individual and social progress, and second, there is a spiritual aspect to both our individual and our collective existence. As a consequence, Baha'is believe that while material education plays an important role in both individual and social development, it should not be the end goal of learning. And in turn, moral education, which addresses the spiritual aspect of life at both the individual and the collective level, is not an end goal in itself but must be manifested in action. Its ultimate objective is to lead people towards service, thus both developing individual potential and promoting the advancement of society.

39. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu 'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 190.

It is clear that to pursue this dual purpose of both personal and collective transformation, we need to develop specific "moral capabilities."<sup>40</sup> And because, in the words of one writer, "moral behavior is an expression of man's spiritual nature in the realm of material existence,"<sup>41</sup> the contents and methods of science are appropriate and, indeed, necessary in the search for educational processes to develop such capabilities. Through this systematic pursuit, individuals and communities learn how to apply both scientific methods and spiritual insights from the Baha'i teachings to the issues that confront them.

Underpinning all such endeavors and lying at the very root of moral development is the recognition that we are part of something greater than ourselves- that human existence transcends the material plane. One recalls again in this context Postman's emphasis on the necessity for a binding narrative in the transmittal of values and the building of a unified society. Belief in a divine Creator, which pervades all the world's cultures and forms the basis of the great religions, could serve as the basis of such a narrative. Postman, while recognizing the difficulties posed by his proposal to teach about the different religions in schools, advocates "making students aware of those religions that do not insist on an exclusive truth-for example, Bahai [sic], which takes the view that the prophets of all religions spoke the truth, although in different words, with meanings suitable to the times in which they spoke."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Baha'is believe that the true spirit of religion is what inspires in people the will and aspiration to act on moral principles and virtues. Belief in God, therefore, provides a firm foundation for moral education by creating a relationship that binds the individual to the collective and by giving a context for moral behavior that prevents it from degenerating into expediency. The Baha'i understanding of God is as an all-loving Creator, the force of Whose love is the generative power holding the universe

40. Lori McLaughlin Noguchi, Holly Hanson, and Paul Lample, *Exploring a Framework for Moral Education* (Riviera Beach, Florida: Palabra Publications, 1992), p. 14.

41. Farzam Arbab, Introduction to *Exploring a Framework for Moral Education* by Noguchi, Hanson, and Lample, pp. i, ii.

42. Postman, p. 155.

together and pervading all levels of existence. At the human level, the ultimate expression of this force is a limitless love for all humanity, which translates into new insights into moral values such as honesty, justice, and compassion. Baha'is also perceive a reciprocal

action between love and knowledge, the result of which is faith, defined in the Baha'i writings as "conscious knowledge in action" and viewed as a crucial element both in the development of people's individual potential and in their ability to contribute to an everadvancing civilization.

Another essential element in this framework of moral education is the reconceptualization of relationships of all types in ways that are appropriate to this stage in humanity's evolution. In our relationship to nature, for example, we need to learn to conserve and use the earth's resources rationally and to develop the means to achieve progress in harmony with nature. In the realm of individual and group relationships, which are often exemplified by racism and sexism, a Baha'i-inspired moral education program would strive to change that dynamic by teaching that personal fulfillment comes from serving others and working to create a society dedicated to the development of all its members. Underlying this approach is the concept that true individual freedom, which depends on selfdiscipline, cannot be separated from considerations of social good.

In like manner, a Baha'i paradigm of moral education would seek to reformulate relationships within the family, the fundamental institution of human civilization, as well as relationships between individuals and social institutions, in order to promote reciprocity. Institutions, instead of seeking to control populations or promote the selfish ends of a minority or particular individuals, would act as channels for the promotion of the welfare of all, and laws would be seen as guides for liberation--obedience to which leads to happiness. In short, such a moral education program would promote the "utmost degree of understanding and cooperation between society and the individual."<sup>43</sup>

Following upon the reconceptualization of relationships is the task of equipping people with the ability to establish and promote harmonious relationships in a world civilization. Ways to combat

43. Noguchi, Hanson, and Lample, p. 13.

prejudice, to identify commonalities, to help people put aside minor disagreements, to contribute to the development of a united and loving family, to interact harmoniously with nature, to behave with rectitude, to be free of self-interest, to uphold and defend victims of oppression, and to bring joy to the sorrowful and bereaved can all be taught. Towards this end, a moral education program can analyze and devise educational activities that will foster the development of qualities, attitudes, skills, abilities, knowledge, and understanding of essential moral concepts to assist students to learn how to make moral choices.

Going hand in hand with the reconceptualization of relationships and the development of the ability to promote harmonious relationships is nurturance of the capability to act with initiative.

To this end, students need to learn to identify opportunities for development, recognize people's needs and aspirations, analyze forces at play in a given situation, and overcome barriers—all in a spirit of wisdom and humility. Crucial to this process is an emphasis on cooperation in service to society and the awakening of the longing for excellence in one's work.

The specific ability to participate effectively in group decision making—consultation, in Baha'i parlance—is a vital capability that should be addressed through moral education. Fundamentally, consultation can be defined as a search for truth, which Baha'is see as the cause of unity. A keystone in the consultative process is recognition of the values underlying people's choices and the search for consensus within a moral context. To be successful, participants must recognize that reality is complex and everyone perceives a certain facet of it. Helping others to perceive different aspects leads to a more complete view of reality by the group and therefore facilitates the achievement of consensus, higher levels of group consciousness, and the multiplication of participants' creative energies. During the process opinions are received respectfully in a unified atmosphere; the use of power as a determinant of decisions and divisions into subgroups that defend their own opinions are both decried. Again, the adoption of a posture of learning is important in the practice of this activity.

The inculcation not only of abilities such as those outlined above, but of certain qualities and attitudes, is important in the task of moral education. In this regard, Baha'u'llah counsels:

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for then he is but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.<sup>44</sup>

As a basis for realizing the true inner potential of every human being, the motivation for moral development should be love, knowledge, faith, and discipline, since moral actions result from feelings of love and kindness rather than anger. Equally important is the development of trustworthiness and truthfulness, which are seen as the foundation of all other virtues and without which individual and social progress are impossible. Baha'is believe that the prosperity of society depends on developing people's capacity to perceive truth, to value it, and to act according to it.

A third quality that moral education seeks to foster is a sense of justice. Through its application an individual can learn how to perceive reality and to acquire true knowledge. While it serves as a

standard for both individual and collective behavior, it is more than a mere social necessity. Rather, it is a spiritual quality and a precondition for unity at all levels of society. At the same time, it needs to be developed in conjunction with wisdom, compassion, mercy, and generosity to avoid becoming distorted into self-righteousness and disdain for others.

Attraction to beauty and thirst for knowledge are two more qualities that moral education should seek to develop. Beauty and perfection provide standards that give direction in the arts, in ideas, in the perfection of good character, and in the search for order and meaning. Thirst for knowledge leads to the exploration of mysteries both of the physical universe and of the self. As 'Abdu'l-Baha has written:

44. Baha'u' Allah, cited in Baha'í Education, no. 9.

### THE BAHAI WORLD

There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.

To promote knowledge is thus an inescapable duty imposed on every one of the friends of God [Baha'is]. 45

Physical cleanliness, spirituality, and purity of mind, which are linked in the Baha'i teachings, are also a central concern of moral education and find expression in qualities such as freedom from decadence; chastity; the avoidance of drugs, alcohol, and other health-impairing substances; and modesty in dress, language, and amusements. In relationships, purity is expressed through honesty, detachment, sincerity, keeping promises, diligence, and faithfulness in management.

To sum up, Baha'is see the central task of moral education as an awakening of the human spirit through the development of courage, faith, and confidence which, in turn, leads to constancy and joy as individuals strive to manifest their highest potentialities. Balance is key to such development. Self-confidence, for example, while a valuable quality, must be balanced by humility, which acts as a guard against complacency and arrogance. Furthermore, 'Abdu'l-Baha counsels parents to accustom their children to hardship, saying,

Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will

benefit mankind.<sup>46</sup>

Accustoming children to hardship is not, in this sense, an act of punishment or cruelty; rather, it inculcates a sense of purpose, discipline, and initiative that is often lacking in those raised in an atmosphere of indulgence.

45. 'Abdu '1-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu '1-Baha* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 133.

46. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu '1-Baha*, pp. 136.

## WORLD WATCH

Students trained to develop all these capabilities, qualities, and attitudes in conjunction with study in the regular academic curricula will become equipped to "become a source of social good," in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha. They will also be active, cognizant participants in "an ever advancing civilization," in which there exists "a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth." 47

The time in which we live demands the evolution of such a civilization. It demands that the world's peoples develop a global vision of humanity, a civic culture for the planet that will promote a peacebuilding society and redefine the nature of true prosperity. It demands a unifying narrative or god that both accommodates and draws together humanity's tremendous diversity. It demands unapologetically upheld values that can guide the development of people's attitudes and capabilities and can be applied through a systematic process of study, consultation, reflection, and action designed to bring about consistent patterns of change. It demands the kind of cointentional education that is deeply meaningful.

It is clear that at this juncture in history, as in the past, many thinkers are profoundly concerned about the vital issue of education and the means of developing people's capacities so they can contribute to the advancement of society. Now, however, the issue has grown to planetary proportions, and thought must be given to the content and methodology appropriate to this expanded field of action. The Baha' i community, drawing upon the universal spiritual teachings of its Founder, is deeply engaged in this process, gradually conceptualizing and evolving a system to develop human resources that can meet the demands of the time in which we live. 48

47. The Universal House of Justice, from a letter written to the Baha'is of the world, 20 October 1983. Published in *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 602.

48. A number of specific moral development initiatives undertaken by Baha 'i communities around the world are discussed in a survey article entitled

"New Virtues, New Moral Standards, New Capacities," in *The Baha'i World* 1996-97, pp. 227-46.

David Bikman explores some of the ways that Baha'i communities around the world are striving to translate the Baha'i teachings on community life into reality.

## UNITY

### inACTION

#### Models of Baha'i Community Life

The practice of banding together to draw upon one another's strengths- what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "art of association"-is an essential component of the human experience. Over the millennia, humanity's unity-building capacity has evolved to the level of the nation-state, the latest incarnation of political collaboration. The increasing reliance of people all over the world on tribal and religious identities, however, rather than the ideals offered by their country, has given rise to environmental ruin, inhuman violence, and institutionalized injustice. Conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis, Hindus and Muslims, and Serbs and Croats, for example, all contribute to the fragmentation of the world, and demand the adoption of a system that can satisfy their unique needs while drawing them into the international community. Prominent thinkers now debate the merits of the nation-state itself, offering instead models based on regional and transnational networks. But whatever changes these conflicts and debates may

1. See Jurgen Habermas, "Beyond the Nation-State?", *Peace Review* 10.2 (June 1998), pp. 235-239 for a typical critique.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

bring, it is clear that the world is searching for models that can accommodate the increasing interdependence of its participants. The ability of a community, whether it be local, national, or international, to draw together in mutual trust-its ability to create and maintain "social capital"-is integral to its long-term health. The degree to which social capital exists in a society is intimately linked to its ability to create wealth, to promote civic stability and prosperity, and to advance morally and spiritually. The teachings of the Baha'i Faith are designed to stimulate the creation of social capital and regenerate the fortunes of humanity by providing a pattern of life centered around specific spiritual principles. The distinctive pattern of life found in the thousands of Baha'i communities around the world draws its inspiration from the Baha'i view that people are essentially and eternally spiritual beings who have been created to express the characteristics of divinity and contribute to

"an ever-advancing civilization." By attempting to translate the social and spiritual teachings of Baha'u'llah into reality, Baha'i communities are learning how to live in spaces defined not by exclusion and conflict, but by unity and security. In this regard, emphasis on the transcendence of nationality is an important element of Baha'i thought. As a Rwandan Baha'i refugee expresses it, "When people see my face, they ask me, 'Are you from Rwanda, are you a Tutsi? Who are you?' And I say, 'Nationality is not important to me. I just know that I am a Baha'i.'"

In almost every country of the world, members of the Baha'i Faith have for decades been engaged in the process of building social capital, experimenting with holistic techniques of economic development and struggling to root out the pernicious influences of prejudice, injustice, and ignorance. A Baha'i community is distinctive both in the way it utilizes forms of social infrastructure designed to advance simultaneously the goals of the individual and the collective, and in the way it offers its transformative pattern of community life to the world.

Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of institutions that foster community spirit and inspire the creation of social capital are indivisibly woven into the Baha'i teachings. For example, once a Baha'i month, or every nineteen days, local Baha'i communities gather to worship, consult about the affairs of the

#### COMMUNITY LIFE

community, and socialize at the Nineteen Day Feast, which forms the heart of the unique rhythm of Baha'i community life. The Feast provides a place where community members can take part in devotions, discuss issues relevant to the community, offer recommendations to the Baha'i administrative institutions, contribute to the Baha'i funds, reinforce social bonds, share news, and otherwise feel part of a growing, thriving, network of support. Activities at the Feast are designed to create new patterns of social interaction and eventually form the basis of future global cooperation. Such patterns are reflected in the words of a Baha'i refugee from the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, who recounts his experience with the local Baha'i community in these words: "I'm alone; no parents, no brothers, no sisters, no uncles; everyone's gone. They were killed ... The problems I've had could have made me want to kill myself, but with the writings of Baha'u'llah, with the community, I've been comforted and I have hope in life again. And I hope that if this message of Baha'u'llah is shared with everyone, it will change the world."

Celebrations commemorating Baha'i holy days are other sources of shared joy and reflection. The sponsorship of children's classes, literacy education, rural health care, environmental advocacy and clean-up, activities for youth, arts performances, efforts to promote

race unity, the advancement of women and human rights, academic education, and the development of agricultural technology serve to bring Baha'i communities together in collective service. These many different acts are all expressions of the perspective that humanity is undeniably on the path to a lasting world peace, but that social action- no matter how deliberate, well planned, or sophisticated-cannot be completely effective when uninspired by spiritual principles. Through the Nineteen-Day Feast, service projects, celebrations of Baha'i holy days, participation in social and economic development projects, and educational activities, Baha'is all around the world are constantly reminded that their fellow believers are committed to creating livable, sustainable, evolving communities.

#### The Baha'i Administrative System

The goal of the Baha' i system of administration, as explicitly outlined in the Baha'i writings, is to canalize the spiritual forces released by the advent of religious revelation into structures that can best ensure both the spiritual and material prosperity of mankind. The Baha'i system is flexible enough to be responsive to the needs of the individual but sufficiently robust to govern a united civilization.

On the local and national levels, the Baha'i community's affairs are governed by annually elected councils called Spiritual Assemblies, whose deliberations are conducted using the cooperative, non-adversarial decision-making process of consultation. On the international level, the Universal House of Justice directs and coordinates the affairs of the entire Baha'i world.

The Baha'i administrative system also consists of complementary appointed institutions that are charged with counseling, encouraging, and assisting individual Baha'is and elected bodies. The men and women who are chosen to perform this essential service are appointed on the basis of their experience and maturity. The elections of local, national, and international Baha'i governing bodies are viewed as sacred events, and include time for group consultation and socialization. The Baha'i teachings forbid campaigning, electioneering, or even the nomination of candidates; all Baha'is aged twenty-one and over are eligible to be elected.

Voting takes place by secret ballot after a period of prayer and meditation; eligible members of Baha'i institutions are chosen according to their spiritual qualities, capacities, and experience. Participants in the Baha'i system pledge themselves to obey the decisions of its institutions and to bend their energies towards the furtherance of their shared goals .

In war-torn central Africa, Local Spiritual Assemblies administer communities that have seen more than their share of tribal and political violence. So little social stability remains after years

of war, famine, and political upheaval that Baha'is there, by building new systems of collective functioning, have literally had to recreate their culture. Baha'is gathered in the refugee camps have laid a firm basis for the well-being of their Baha'i communities by electing Local Spiritual Assemblies, meeting for the Nineteen-Day Feast and early-morning devotional meetings, and participating in development projects- all within the confines of the refugee camp.

## C OMMUNITY LIFE

A Baha'i working in the camps recounts recent victories in the work of rebuilding their community as follows, "We begin to get letters [from the other refugee camps] saying, 'We have started activities again; we have formed our local communities, we have dawn prayers again, we have cleared our village of brush': really exciting news!" Speaking about the growing role that consultation is playing among refugees , she says: "When there are problems between people-because when people are from all over there are bound to be differences- they often come to the Baha'is asking for help. They say, 'There's this group of people there, they say they are Baha'is, can they share their advice with us?'"

### Love and Service as Builders of Civilization

Ghana, while more politically stable than some of its neighbors, must still address such problems as poverty, the inferior social status of women, and age-old tribal conflicts. According to local legend, the town of Bawdie (pronounced Bode-iay), close to the edge of Ghana's rainforest, was founded as the result of a conflict between two brothers. Today, however, solidarity and unity form the backbone of the town's daily life. Relationships tend to be strong; people of all backgrounds are comfortable with each other, and many townspeople work together in agricultural development projects. "It's visible," says one resident of Bawdie 's atmosphere of unity, "it's not something that you need to search, or you need to look for. You see it, and when you come to this community, you always carry something with you, to go and apply to your community." About ten percent of the town's residents are Baha'is, giving the Baha'i system ample opportunity to demonstrate its efficacy. People often bring their personal problems for resolution to the Local Spiritual Assembly. One resident, Prince Abadu, says, "I like this community because of one unique thing: they love to come to work together as a group-as a team-and to do everything in common. They have come together to put up a [Baha'i] center; they have come together to make a community farm; and they have come together also to make a nursery, from which [local] people come and buy things to plant, like seedlings, at a moderate rate." The town has just begun a comprehensive literacy campaign, called "Enlighten the Hearts," which uses traditional music, dances, and

## THE BAHAI WORLD

drama to educate children, men and women. In addition to literacy, classes often focus on moral development and the art of consultation. One participant says of Bawdie, "Whatever these people learn from the Baha'i teachings, they try to translate it into action."

### The Advancement of All People

Any effort at promoting global prosperity that ignores humanity's potential for unity in diversity will not succeed, for people will not participate in a system that does not make room for their unique cultural contributions. Rather than proving a source of discord, it is the complexity and diversity of the human race that allows its members to realize their potential as spiritual beings. Race unity, the advancement of women, and the development of youth are integral to the future health of every local, national, and global community.

Baha'i efforts to combat racial prejudice are pursued all over the world. One notable initiative is currently underway in the United States, where the Baha'i community is lending its weight to a nation-wide campaign aimed at helping eradicate racial prejudice within the country. Meetings held in the homes of Baha'is and in Baha'i centers to discuss race unity are bolstered by local, regional, and national broadcasts of a documentary video (called *The Power of Race Unity*), a web site, and a toll-free phone number to call for more information. Thousands of requests for further information about the Baha'i Faith have been received.

As the future inheritors of the affairs of humanity, the youth of the world must be systematically educated to work for race unity and greater cultural tolerance. Any scheme that is designed to draw youth away from gangs or other exclusive alliances and to counter the present racial divide must offer them the sense of community, solidarity and purpose they find with their peers. The first Baha'i "youth workshop" was founded in Los Angeles in the 1970's to assist in filling that need. In a single workshop, youth of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds can be found performing and serving their community together. Baha'i youth workshops are now operating in over fifty countries, with over one hundred in the United States alone.

Workshops and other youth activities are integral to the overall pattern of Baha'i community life. The workshop centers on the

## COMMUNITY LIFE

principle of service to humanity and aims to create a supportive, loving climate within which that service can be performed. Within guidelines established by Baha'i institutions, workshop participants are given a generous hand in forming the character and atmosphere of their own group, thereby creating an environment that speaks

directly to their personal concerns and aspirations. Service projects, academic study, devotional activities, and frequent travel for performances in schools, auditoriums, and outdoor venues are some of the activities common to Baha'i youth workshops. Performances feature dynamic modern dances--often choreographed by the youth themselves--which address ideas related to race unity, drug abuse, the advancement of women, and cultural diversity. Baha'i youth workshops seem to inspire audiences wherever they go. The sincerity and sophistication of the dances are often profoundly inspiring, moving many audiences to tears, laughter, and enthusiastic applause.

A youth workshop performing in a small town in eastern Germany found itself challenged one evening by the presence of a group of skinheads--young people who shave their heads to demonstrate their belief in racial and ethnic separation. The skinheads taunted the workshop members and their message of racial unity throughout the evening, and returned the next day to a workshop-sponsored seminar to heckle them further. But later, after one of the workshop members approached the skinheads with an attitude of friendliness and warmth, some of the skinheads let down their guard and engaged in a dialogue with the workshop youth, sharing their fears about the economic depression of their town and the changing reality of ethnic relations in Europe. Over the next few days, the skinheads became the workshop's greatest supporters, cheering the loudest during their dance performances and encouraging their friends to join the audience.

But youth aren't the only ones to benefit from Baha'i-inspired development. The Baha'i Counsellors in Europe are sponsoring a continent-wide campaign to promote the advancement of women. For a number of years Baha'is on that continent have been organizing and hosting series of women's gatherings as part of this campaign. The gatherings are designed to stimulate awareness among women about the unique role they can play in establishing social stability and world peace and to empower them to improve the health of

their community, which, according to Baha'i belief, is dependent on the full equality of men and women. <sup>2</sup> The seminars include segments where women can give topical presentations to the group

and participate in small workshops, where they study writings from psychology, philosophy, and the various religions concerning the advancement of women. The readings in turn guide consultation about issues related to the upliftment of humanity and challenges and victories in their personal lives. The transformation one Romanian facilitator, Bitia Zerbes, sees in the participants, she says, has been a source of "radiant joy," "unbelievable," and "inspiring."

The women describe their experience in similar terms: "An excellent opportunity to validate ourselves as human beings and meet with our true reality as women," says one participant. The seminars

conclude with each participant making a commitment to perform a concrete act of service for her community in the near future. One woman reacted to the seminar by saying, "God grant that all which we have spoken here will not remain empty words and theories but rather will be put into practice in our daily lives!" Often the women choose to host a women's gathering in their own home. In this way, the seminars are spreading all over Europe.

#### Training Institutes: Vehicles for Spiritual and Material Advancement

By regularly offering European women the opportunity to practice skills such as public speaking and consultation, the women's seminars function as a kind of training, increasing the capacity of the women to take advantage of opportunities for social advancement that greater equality brings. In like manner, Baha'is in such far-flung places as Papua New Guinea are using the tool of the formally established training institute to stimulate grassroots human resource development, thereby advancing the social, economic, and spiritual life of their community.

2. The advancement of women has received special attention in the Baha'i writings, even going so far as to link the advancement of women to the evolution of global politics. 'Abdu'l-Baha says, "So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease."

#### C O M M U N I T Y L I F E

The islands of Papua New Guinea are thick with rain forest, low-lying marshland, and dotted with volcanic mountains, making the construction of roads almost impossible and restricting long-distance travel to the air. Communities live in general isolation, each village nearly a society unto itself. Many communities lie as much as a full day's walk away from their neighbors, and violent clan rivalry restricts travel even further. Villages like Kunaia in the district of Mt. Brown, however, are working together to create environments animated by the principles of justice and unity, using the training institute as their primary tool. By organizing their entire daily routine around the pattern of Baha'i life, these Baha'i communities are witnessing a startling transformation in the quality of their community life.

Every morning before beginning the work of the day, the Baha'i population of Kunaia gathers in the Baha'i Center to worship. Men, women, and children all read and sing passages from the Baha'i writings and consult about affairs affecting the village. Kunaians are finding that by fostering feelings of unity and interdependence, the act of their gathering together promotes the community's spirit of service and ability to resolve conflicts. Baha'i training institutes

normally include a devotional component (such as Kunaia's morning prayer gatherings), academic study circles for adults and youth, children's classes, and social and economic development projects on subjects such as farming technology, health care, and literacy. Omu Abie, a Christian Deacon in a nearby village whose congregation attends classes at the Baha'i training institute in Kunaia, says, "I find it interesting that the Baha'is teach adults to read as well as children. I want to thank the Baha'is for bringing us all together." By acquiring the necessary skills to improve their spiritual and material life through systematic, participatory learning, the participants of the training institutes hope to advance the fortunes of their entire country. Kunaia's Baha'i Center sits on the highest hill of the village, surrounded by lovingly tended gardens composed of star-shaped hedges, trimmed lawns, and flower-lined footpaths. Papua New Guineans travel from all over the district to visit them. Another village now attracting attention is Maruta, located in a remote region of Oro province. Maruta was traditionally a scattered community; people lived in the bush without a formal village

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

structure and under very difficult conditions. Baha'is from the Mt. Brown area of the neighboring province decided to share their community-building experiences with the people of Maruta. The people of Maruta were eager to listen and improve their living conditions, and their resolute adherence to Baha'i beliefs succeeded in effecting a profound transformation in nearly every area of their lives. They eventually moved out of the forest to live together in a united village, erecting houses, planting gardens, and lining the walkways with flowers. As a result, their story soon spread throughout the region.

A group of people visited one day from the mountains of Oro, skeptical that the stories of transformation they had heard were possible. They arrived while the village was rallying around an agricultural development project sponsored by the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Maruta. The visitors were welcomed with traditional hospitality, but the next day the villagers excused themselves to continue with their work in the gardens. One visitor stopped an elderly Marutan on his way to the gardens one morning, telling him that his advanced age allowed him to stay home. The man happily replied that he was feeding his spirit by working with his community and continued on his way. One of the women of the village, who cooked for the guests every morning, explained that in her work she was obeying the request of the Spiritual Assembly and emphasized that her service was helping her spiritual growth. She then excused herself and left to contribute her share to the work in the gardens. The visitors commented that they had never seen such community spirit as they had in Maruta.

## The Role of Material Advancement in Spiritual Civilization

The people of Maruta and Mt. Brown understand that the twin tasks of advancing the spiritual and the physical well-being of a civilization sustain, build upon, and inspire each other. 'Abdu'l-Baha says, "For man two wings are necessary. One wing is physical power and material civilization; the other is spiritual power and divine civilization. With one wing only, flight is impossible." 3 The

3. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 12.

### c OMM UNI TY LIFE

Universal House of Justice states, "The oneness of mankind, which is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal of [Baha'u'llah's] Revelation, implies the achievement of a dynamic coherence between the spiritual and material requirements of life on earth."<sup>4</sup> This is the guiding principle of Baha'i social and economic development work, which strives to integrate material progress with spiritual and moral advancement. In the Baha'i view, development must give rise to systems that can effectively insure the application of justice, and, by promoting an atmosphere of trust in the community, provide space for individual spiritual development.

To date, there are over 1,700 separate Baha'i-sponsored projects of social and economic development around the world. They range in size from the very large to the very small and include moral education classes for children, literacy education for adults, vaccination campaigns, the acquisition of clean water, the construction and operation of community learning centers, assisting rural women to be economically self-sufficient through indigenous crafts such as rug weaving, and Baha'i-operated high schools, colleges and hospitals. Such activities build bonds of trust, interdependence, and unity among the participants and the people and institutions of society at large. Social and economic development is inextricably woven into the process of community development, and its wholehearted pursuit evidence of the distinctiveness of the Baha'i community.

#### Examples of Baha'i-Inspired Development

The Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences (FUNDAEC, in its Spanish acronym) was created in Colombia in order to integrate traditionally separate endeavors in education, science, technology, and rural development. In the words of its founders, "During the late 60's and early 70's, it was becoming increasingly evident that development, defined mostly in terms of industrialization, was failing many of its basic objectives and was not improving the living conditions of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the developing countries." In the case of Colombia,

4. The Universal House of Justice, from a letter written to the Baha'is of the

world, 20 October 1983. Published in Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963 to 1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 602.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

traditional forms of development had failed in the goal of creating unified, diverse communities based on justice, sustainability and grassroots participation. In 1974 a group of scientists and professionals chose to serve their community by developing programs of education and rural development that took into account the capacities and aspirations of the typical rural Colombian.

The Tutorial Learning System, developed by FUNDAEC, began with a very small number of students in the North Cauca region of Colombia, was gradually accepted among various educational institutions throughout the 1980's, and has recently been adopted by the Colombian Ministry of Education as an alternative secondary education option for rural areas of the country. Based on a close relationship between the students and teachers and great flexibility in structure and curriculum, this educational system was designed to help stem the flow of country-dwellers to the city and stimulate the development of social capital in rural Colombia. The exodus of youth moving from their birthplaces in the country to the larger cities creates overcrowding and increased poverty in the city and a lack of qualified people to run the vital institutions of rural communities. Rural cities have had to import people from outside their community in order to operate their libraries, pharmacies, post offices, hospitals, and schools. The Tutorial Learning System is designed to train rural people so they can create economic opportunity in their home community, rather than having to seek it elsewhere. The developers of the System decided that curricula imported from urban areas was inadequate for the needs of the rural population, so they developed their own.

The Learning System is continually improved in the light of experience, and now includes ten private and public institutions teaching nearly 15,000 students. "I have worked with young people most of my life and I have never seen a group of rural students so energized," says James Mitchell, a Catholic priest who uses the curriculum. "It's not just an education program by itself and isolated from everything else. It is part of a whole development process." Small towns all over Colombia are now beginning to see their youth stay to work in town and enrich the community, rather than fleeing to the cities. The program's emphasis on community participation has, in the words of one facilitator, "greatly strengthened the process

## COMMUNITY LIFE

of participation and the cultural identity of the community in those rural communities where it is offered."

Inspired by the work of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, FUNDAEC established its own microfinance network for Colombian farmers in 1989. Called the "Solidarity Production System," and instituted after many years spent researching alternative microfinance systems, the program operates under the conviction that rural development will succeed only when local communities are encouraged to let moral and ethical values—not market values—guide the life of their community.

Under the Solidarity Production System, small groups of farmers are trained in technical and administrative matters and participate in programs of ethical education: virtues such as trustworthiness, honesty, truthfulness, service, and the ability to consult are all seen as integral to the success of a group-driven project. After receiving their loans (microfinance credits are usually between \$50 and \$500), farmers are linked to a group of three to five other farmers who are working within the system. All the members are coresponsible for each other's credit, thus avoiding the need for collateral.

Baha'is view their efforts as successful only when those who are to receive its benefits are given control of their destiny; progress, if it is to be sustained and ultimately valuable, must be driven by natural movement among the grassroots. In an area of the world where excessive attachment to market ideals has damaged traditional cultural ties, the Solidarity System has great potential for formalizing trust and reestablishing bonds based on shared goals and experiences, and is an example of the Baha'i desire to create vibrant, supportive communities.

#### Conclusion

A community is more than a haphazard grouping of like-minded people. It is, as the Universal House of Justice writes, "a comprehensive unit of civilization composed of individuals, families and institutions that are working ... in an unremitting quest for spiritual and social progress" as "originators and encouragers of systems, agencies and organizations" that advance these goals. 5 Clearly, then,

5. The Universal House of Justice, letter to the Baha'is of the world, Ri<;lvan 153 B.E. (1996, unpublished).

the role envisioned for the individual is one of mindful participation in local and global affairs alike—neither a slavish devotion to the state nor an uncompromising deification of the self. Community development is not an easy process; varying degrees of maturity among the Baha'is, civil strife and ethnic conflict, natural disasters, and conditions of crushing poverty are challenges that need to be continually and creatively overcome. Encouraged by the idea that community-building is an evolving process, however, Baha'is all around the world persist in their efforts, convinced that peace on earth is "not only possible, but inevitable." 6

6. The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre Publications, 1985) p. 1.

PROFILE:

THE NEW ERA  
DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTE,  
INDIA

"Our aim is that the individual has a new vision, a new heart, has a desire to give service, has increased self-confidence, and has understood the connection between his service and his growth. And further, that he has gained a trade by which he can earn an income and has learned a few skills that can be of service to his community." This statement by Sherif Rushdy, director of the New Era Development Institute (NEDI), reflects the vision of individual transformation that the Institute has for each person it trains.

NEDI, located in Panchgani, India, is a development training institute of the country's Baha'i community. Evolving out of local development initiatives started by the New Era High School in 1975, it was formally established as a national training center in 1987. In the past decade, over eight hundred rural youth have been trained at NEDI, and currently over two hundred students are trained each year, nearly half of whom are Baha'is.

The fundamental purpose of the New Era Development Institute is to learn about development and then translate this learning into appropriate training programs. NEDI does so by involving its

staff and students in the life of a large number of the communities in its immediate vicinity and in selected target areas around the country. Such involvement facilitates experimentation with innovative approaches to community development, which is then translated into an improved training program—a highly dynamic mutual interaction.

NEDI's primary activity is conducting the Integrated Vocational Training Program, which is aimed at producing a group of capable and energized individuals who can return to their villages and,

while supporting themselves, undertake and encourage local sustainable development efforts. The Integrated Vocational Training Program is composed of a multifaceted core curriculum and a technical or professional training track, which varies for each course.

The core curriculum, at the heart of NEDI's educational program, is a combination of classroom, dormitory, campus, and village level activities which complement, build on, and reinforce each other. It includes putting students into mixed groups, called NEDI families, which learn to function as a community, planning and undertaking various service activities. There are also classes on the nature, dynamics, and skills of development and on a variety of practical

skills useful at the community level. These classes provide the initial exposure, awareness-raising, knowledge, and basic skills for all other activities and are the forum in which activities are planned and experiences are processed and evaluated. Another program

AtNEDI's  
Panchgani  
campus,  
students  
in the  
motorcycle  
repair program work  
on a  
scooter.

#### NEW ERA DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

NEDI has a year-long program in computer science. Like all programs, it includes a core curriculum of moral education which focuses on equipping students with the tools to engage in community development work once they return to their homes.

One component is individual and group study of the Baha'i sacred writings and selected quotations on virtues, followed by a process of decision making, action, and evaluation of the improvement of students' character and behavior. Also in the curriculum is a variety of cultural and artistic activities and performances, both on campus and in the villages.

In these, students learn to appreciate their own and other cultures and to convey educational messages through the arts, such as theater.

"We teach the basic principles of religion, principles that are common to all the world's religions—we don't teach the Baha'i Faith per se," said Dr. Radha Rost, the Institute's core curriculum coordinator, "At the same time, however, most of the main elements of the curriculum are drawn from the Baha'i teachings."

Vocational and professional skills in NEDI's training program include motorcycle or automobile repair, repair and maintenance of audiovisual materials, animal husbandry, secretarial and office management, rural electronics, refrigeration and air conditioning, tailoring and home science, and pre-primary and primary teacher training. Courses vary in their duration, entry requirements, and technical components, but all share the common core curriculum, in

which all students participate regardless of their vocational interest. Most courses at the certificate level are one year in duration, while the primary teacher/developer course is a two-year diploma course.

Training pre-primary school teachers is one of the programs offered at NED!. Shown is a class of students working with pre-primary school children who attend a small model school on the NED! campus.

NEDI also selects the most suitable and experienced graduates of its certificate courses and enrolls them in a diploma-level apprenticeship program through which they become facilitators and trainers for regional development.

"In this way, our aim is that each student should leave with some service skill-how to promote health, hygiene, literacy, and the like; some spiritual skills-so they know why they are doing these things; some vocational skills-so they can get some money to support themselves; and some cultural skills, meaning training in tolerance and diversity and the arts-so they have the confidence and the capacity to be leaders, and so they are able to convey development messages through the arts," says Mr. Rushdy.

On average, about forty percent of NEDI's graduates have established their own business or school in a rural area and another thirty percent have found employment in their trade or profession. Others have chosen to continue their education or have found employment in unrelated areas .

## NEW ERA DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

A preliminary agreement for formal collaboration between NED! and Telemark College :S Department of Teacher Training in Notodden, Norway, was signed on 2 July 1997. Shown here are Arvid Gjengedal (left), Dean of the faculty of Telemark College, and Sherif Rushdy (right), Director of NED!.

Manahar Birari is one of the many successful graduates emerging from the NEDI program. A 1995 graduate with a pre-primary teaching certificate, Mr. Birari is the director of the Baha'i hostel in Bhisya in the Dang Region. The hostel provides free room and board, as well as daily moral education classes, to about twentyeight students aged ten to fifteen. The hostel is crucial as it allows students to stay in the region for their schooling while their parents work outside the district. Mr. Birari and his wife are essentially full-time volunteers at the hostel, receiving only room and board and a small allowance. Mr. Birari 's goal since graduating has been to assist in the work of community development.

NEDI provides a living tutorial in inspired, holistic, sustainable action. As with all Baha'i development projects, it strives to create a pattern of living that releases individual potential and simultaneously

promotes the collective good.

This statement prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States of America outlines the Bahá'í perspective on the important principle of the equality of women and men.

TwoWINGS  
OFA BIRD:  
THE EQUALITY OF  
WOMEN AND MEN

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is essential to human progress and the transformation of society. Inequality retards not only the advancement of women but the progress of civilization itself. The persistent denial of equality to one-half of the world's population is an affront to human dignity. It promotes destructive attitudes and habits in men and women that pass from the family to the work place, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. On no grounds, moral, biological, or traditional, can inequality be justified. The moral and psychological climate necessary to enable our nation to establish social justice and to contribute to global peace will be created only when women attain full partnership with men in all fields of endeavor. The systematic oppression of women is a conspicuous and tragic fact of history. Restricted to narrow spheres of activity in the life of society, denied educational opportunities and basic human rights, subjected to violence, and frequently treated as less than human, women have been prevented from realizing their true potential.

Age-old patterns of subordination, reflected in popular culture, literature and art, law, and even religious scriptures, continue to pervade every aspect of life. Despite the advancement of political and civil rights for women in America and the widespread acceptance of equality in principle, full equality has not been achieved.

The damaging effects of gender prejudice are a fault line beneath the foundation of our national life. The gains for women rest uneasily on unchanged, often unexamined, inherited assumptions. Much remains to be done. The achievement of full equality requires a new understanding of who we are, what is our purpose in life, and how we relate to one another an understanding that will compel us to reshape our lives and thereby our society.

At no time since the founding of the women's rights movement in America has the need to focus on this issue been greater. We stand at the threshold of a new century and a new millennium. Their challenges are already upon us, influencing our families, our lifestyles, our nation, our world. In the process of human evolution,

the ages of infancy and childhood are past. The turbulence of adolescence is slowly and painfully preparing us for the age of maturity, when prejudice and exploitation will be abolished and unity established. The elements necessary to unify peoples and nations are precisely those needed to bring about equality of the sexes and to improve the relationships between women and men. The effort to overcome the history of inequality requires the full participation of every man, woman, youth, and child.

Over a century ago, for the first time in religious history, Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, in announcing God's purpose for the age, proclaimed the principle of the equality of women and men, saying: "Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God." <sup>1</sup> The establishment of equal rights and privileges for women and men, Baha'u'llah says, is a precondition for the attainment of a wider unity that will ensure

1. Baha' u 'llah, from a tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Baha' u 'llah*. 'Abdu 'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha' i's of Canada, 1986), no. 54.

#### EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

the well-being and security of all peoples. The Baha'i writings state emphatically that "When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed." <sup>2</sup>

Thus the Baha'i vision of equality between the sexes rests on the central spiritual principle of the oneness of humankind. The principle of oneness requires that we "regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form," <sup>3</sup> and that we foster an unshakable consciousness that "if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest." <sup>4</sup>

Baha'u'llah teaches that the divine purpose of creation is the achievement of unity among all peoples:

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. <sup>5</sup>

The full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life is essential to social and economic development, the abolition of

war, and the ultimate establishment of a united world. In the Baha'i scriptures the equality of the sexes is a cornerstone of God's plan for human development and prosperity:

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in

2. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 175.
3. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 39.
4. Ibid.
5. Baha'u'llah, *The Hidden Words* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 20.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. When the two wings ... become equivalent in strength, enjoying the same prerogatives, the flight of man will be exceedingly lofty and extraordinary.<sup>6</sup>

The Baha'i writings state that to proclaim equality is not to deny that differences in function between women and men exist but rather to affirm the complementary roles men and women fulfill in the home and society at large. Stating that the acquisition of knowledge serves as "a ladder for [human] ascent,"<sup>7</sup> Baha'u'llah prescribes identical education for women and men but stipulates that when resources are limited first priority should be given to the education of women and girls. The education of girls is particularly important because, although both parents have responsibilities for the rearing of children, it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively diffused throughout society. Reverence for, and protection of, motherhood have often been used as justification for keeping women socially and economically disadvantaged. It is this discriminatory and injurious result that must change. Great honor and nobility are rightly conferred on the station of motherhood and the importance of training children. Addressing the high station of motherhood, the Baha'i Writings state, "O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind ...."<sup>8</sup> The great challenge facing society is to make social and economic provisions for the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of life while simultaneously reinforcing the critical functions of motherhood.

Asserting that women and men share similar "station and rank" and "are equally the recipients of powers and endowments from

6. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375.

7. Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*, (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 51.

8. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 146.

## EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN

God," 9 the Baha'i teachings offer a model of equality based on the concept of partnership. Only when women become full participants in all domains of life and enter the important arenas of decision making will humanity be prepared to embark on the next stage of its collective development.

Baha'i scripture emphatically states that women will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration.

"So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it." 10

The elimination of discrimination against women is a spiritual and moral imperative that must ultimately reshape existing legal, economic, and social arrangements. Promoting the entry of greater numbers of women into positions of prominence and authority is a necessary but not sufficient step in creating a just social order.

Without fundamental changes in the attitudes and values of individuals and in the underlying ethos of social institutions, full equality between women and men cannot be achieved. A community based on partnership, a community in which aggression and the use of force are supplanted by cooperation and consultation, requires the transformation of the human heart.

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals ... an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced. 11

9. Baha'u'llah, from a tablet translated from the Persian and Arabic, quoted in *Women*, no. 2; 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 300.

10. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 135.

11. 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in Wendell Phillips Dodge, "Abdu'l-Baha's Arrival in America," in *Star of the West* (April 28, 1912), no. 3, p. 4.

Men have an inescapable duty to promote the equality of women. The presumption of superiority by men thwarts the ambition of women and inhibits the creation of an environment in which equality may reign. The destructive effects of inequality prevent men from maturing and developing the qualities necessary to meet the challenges of the new millennium. "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities," the Baha'i writings state, "so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs ." 12 It is essential that men engage in a careful, deliberate examination of attitudes, feelings , and behavior deeply rooted in cultural habit, that block the equal participation of women and stifle the growth of men. The willingness of men to take responsibility for equality will create an optimum environment for progress: "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!" 13

The long-standing and deeply rooted condition of inequality must be eliminated. To overcome such a condition requires the exercise of nothing short of "genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort." 14 Ultimately, Baha'u'llih promises, a day will come when men will welcome women in all aspects of life. Now is the time to move decisively toward that promised future.

12. ' Abdu 'l-Baha, Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu 'l-Baha in Paris in 1911, 12th ed. (London: Baha 'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 136.

13. Ibid., p. 171.

14. Shoghi Effendi, Th e Advent of Divine Justice, p. 40.

This statement was presented by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 19 November 1997.

A PATHWAY to  
PEACE and JusTICE

T he National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa, on behalf of all the Baha'is we represent, is grateful for this opportunity to share with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission an understanding of the position and activities of the Baha'i Community in South Africa during the apartheid years. To understand the nature of the response of the Baha'is to apartheid, it is necessary to understand the character of the Baha'i community, the overall aims and objectives of the Baha'i Faith, its modus operandi, and the global context in which it operates. The Baha'i Faith, which is the most recent of the independent world religions, originated in Iran in 1844. Today the Baha'i Faith

enjoys a world-wide following in excess of five million people, representing more than 2,100 indigenous tribes, races and ethnic groups residing in more than 120,000 localities, in more than 200 countries and independent territories around the world.

In South Africa, Baha'is reside in some nine hundred communities. Although records indicate that the first Baha'is to reside in

South Africa arrived in 1911, there was little significant growth until the 1950's. During the mid 1950's a number of Baha'i families came

to this country from the United States, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and England to settle and to introduce the Baha'i Faith to South Africans.

The hallmark of the Baha'i community is its diversity-a characteristic which is highly prized and actively pursued. The essential teachings of the Baha'i Faith focus on unity--of God, of religion, and of humanity. The pivot around which all other Baha'i teachings revolve is that of the oneness of the human race. We believe that this is an essential reality of creation. Its acceptance and application by the generality of the peoples of the world is not only attainable in this age but is the sole basis for sustainable peace and the security of humanity-the very Kingdom of God on earth as promised by all the Divine Revelations of the past.

Baha'is firmly believe that this kingdom will take the form of a global society in which all the races, creeds and classes of the world are united as a single family. The building of this global society is not a mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of a vague and pious hope. It moves beyond a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and goodwill among men, and the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and cultures. This pursuit calls for an organic change in the structure of our present day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.

And it is towards this goal that the Baha'i Faith has been working globally since its inception over 153 years ago-and in South Africa since the 1950's. Our actions were and remain based on an unshakable acceptance of the spiritual nature of the individual and thereby the community and that "religion is the greatest of all means for the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein."

True to this teaching, our approach has been and remains to build communities which strive to put into daily practice fundamental spiritual aspirations such as love, honesty, moderation, humility, hospitality, justice, morality, trustworthiness and-above all-unity, thereby influencing change from the ground up. Without the infusion of these values into society, no community, however economically prosperous or intellectually empowered or technologically advanced, can endure.

Abhorring all forms of prejudice and rejecting any system of

## PEACE AND JUSTICE

segregation, the Baha'i Faith was introduced on a one-to-one basis and the community quietly grew during the apartheid years, without publicity. Despite the nature of the politics of that time, we presented our teachings on unity and the oneness of humankind to prominent individuals in politics, commerce and academia and leaders of thought including State Presidents. Approaches to individuals and prominent persons were pursued in order to offer to South Africa a pathway to peace and justice for all its citizens.

During the apartheid years, both individual Baha'is and our administrative institutions were continually watched by the security police. The surveillance and investigation by the police was due to the racially integrated nature of the Baha'i community and its activities. However, it would appear that our numbers were too small and our activities too peaceful to be perceived as a real threat to the government of the day.

Our activities did not include opposition to the previous government, for involvement in partisan politics and opposition to government are explicitly prohibited by the sacred texts of our Faith as revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Prophet-Founder of our Faith, even though that government be suspicious of and ill disposed to the aims and activities of the Baha'is, as was the case in this country.

During the time when the previous Government prohibited integration within our communities, rather than divide into separate administrative structures for each population group, we opted to limit membership of the Baha'i administration to the black adherents who were and remain in the majority of our membership and thereby placed the entire Baha'i community under the stewardship of its black membership. Happily, such policies were eased and we were able once again to have racially integrated administrative bodies which were and are democratically elected by and from the entire body of adult adherents of the Baha'i Faith.

In the nearly five decades since the Baha'i Faith was established in South Africa, through strict adherence to the principles of our Prophet-Founder we have forged ahead and made a modest beginning toward realizing our vision of unity for South Africa by creating a model which can be studied and scrutinized and from which we believe valuable lessons can be learned. The systematic development of our human resources was and is a result of great

## THE BAHAI WORLD

emphasis on spiritual, moral and ethical aspects of individual and community life. These include the sanctity of the family unit, the importance of rendering service to the community in pursuit of a craft or a profession which contributes towards prosperity and lends momentum to the elimination of extremes of poverty and

wealth, and the obligation to educate one's children. The fundamental belief in the equality of men and women, stemming from our teachings on the oneness of humankind, has meant that women in the Baha'i community have always taken an active role in all aspects of the work of the Faith, including national leadership positions. The pursuit of our objectives of unity and equality has not been without costs. The "white" Baha'is were often ostracized by their white neighbors for their association with "non-whites." The black Baha'is were subjected to scorn by their black compatriots for their lack of political action and their complete integration with their white Baha'i brethren. The most tragic loss to our community was the brutal execution of four of our adherents at our places of worship, three in Mdantsane and one in Umtata.

As we move towards the new millenium, our objective remains unchanged and our vision remains undimmed. However, our sense of urgency to realize this vision is more acute. Whatever unfolds in the years ahead in South Africa and the world, the Baha'is will continue to endeavor to establish global and national unity through the infusion of spiritual values at all levels of society. By developing unified communities throughout the land, we offer the model for establishing peace in our country.

Again we thank you for giving us this opportunity.

#### THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHA'IS OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Baha'i International Community  
presented this concept paper to the World  
Faiths and Development Dialogue,  
held at Lambeth Palace, London,  
18-19 February 1998.

#### VALUING

#### 8 PIRITUALITY

#### IN DEVELOPMENT:

Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation  
of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development

#### I. A Baha'i Perspective on Development

Development, in the Baha'i view, is an organic process in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material." <sup>1</sup> Meaningful development requires that the seemingly antithetical processes of individual progress and social advancement, of globalization and decentralization, and of promoting universal standards and fostering cultural diversity, be harmonized. In our increasingly interdependent world, development efforts must be guided by a vision of the type of world community we wish to create and be animated by a set of universal values. Just institutions, from the local to the planetary level, and systems of governance in which people can assume

responsibility for the institutions and processes that affect their lives, are also essential.

1. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks, Addresses Given in Paris in 1911*, 12th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 9.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Baha'u'l-hih teaches that recognition of the fundamental spiritual principle of our age, the oneness of humanity, must be at the heart of a new civilization. Universal acceptance of this principle will both necessitate and make possible major restructuring of the world's educational, social, agricultural, industrial, economic, legal, and political systems. This restructuring, which must be ordered by an ongoing and intensive dialogue between the two systems of knowledge available to humankind—science and religion—will facilitate the emergence of peace and justice throughout the world.

Communities that thrive and prosper in this future will do so because they acknowledge the spiritual dimension of human nature and make the moral, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of the individual a central priority. They will guarantee freedom of religion and encourage the establishment of places of worship. Their centers of learning will seek to cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness and will pursue as a major goal the participation of all peoples in generating and applying knowledge. Remembering at all times that the interests of the individual and of society are inseparable, these communities will promote respect for both rights and responsibilities, will foster the equality and partnership of women and men, and will protect and nurture families. They will promote beauty, natural and man-made, and will incorporate into their design principles of environmental preservation and rehabilitation. Guided by the concept of unity in diversity, they will support widespread participation in the affairs of society, and will increasingly turn to leaders who are motivated by the desire to serve. In these communities the fruits of science and technology will benefit the whole society, and work will be available for all. Communities such as these will prove to be the pillars of a world civilization—a civilization that will be the logical culmination of humanity's development efforts over vast stretches of time and geography. Baha'u'llah's statement that all people are "created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization,"<sup>2</sup> implies that every

2. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 215.

## SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

person has both the right and the responsibility to contribute to this historic and far-reaching, collective enterprise, whose goal is

nothing less than the peace, the prosperity, and the unity of the entire human family.

Baha'is are optimistic that such a future is inevitable and, indeed, already beginning to emerge. They are also realistic, understanding that progress toward this future will require of mankind an enormous amount of perseverance, sacrifice, and change. The precise speed and cost of this progress will be determined largely by the actions, in the years immediately ahead, of governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector, organizations of civil society, and key individuals. In striving toward this future, all concerned must clearly understand what they are working for and must be ever vigilant through self-reflection and self-evaluation if they are to become constructive participants in this process. Therefore, clear goals, meaningful policies and standards, identified programs, and agreed-upon indicators of progress are necessary if advancement toward humanity's common future is to be charted and regular corrections to that course determined and carried out. While each of these elements-relevant goals, policies, standards, programs and indicators- is critical to efforts to craft such a future, this paper focuses on the importance of creating spiritually based indicators to assess and, ultimately, to help guide development progress.

## II. Development Indicators:

### Their Value and Use

The concept of indicators is defined in various ways, and the terms "criteria," "benchmark," and "indicator" are often used interchangeably, although they don't necessarily mean the same thing. For the purpose of this paper the term "indicator" will be used to refer to "a quantitative, qualitative, or descriptive measure that, when periodically .. monitored,"<sup>3</sup> can show the quality, direction, pace, and results of change.

3. The Intergovernmental Seminar on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, 19- 22 August, 1996, Helsinki, Finland; Background Report no. 3, p. 17. 197.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Indicators can be assembled in various ways. For instance, topically related indicators measuring progress in health, education or agriculture might be grouped into a table of measures (a set of indicators). The same indicators might be compiled into an index and then presented as a single, composite measure such as a health profile index, an education index, or a food security index.<sup>4</sup> Or, a broad spectrum of indicators related to various phenomena may be expressed in a single measure, such as the "infant mortality rate."<sup>5</sup> Rarely can an indicator stand alone as a meaningful source of information.<sup>6</sup> Progress is not an event or a statistic, but a process a trend

made up of numerous factors. It cannot be expressed by one measure or by reference to a single point in time. Indicators must, therefore, be placed in a specific temporal context and correlated with measures of other related factors. 7

Throughout the world, indicators are used by various actors, from United Nations (UN) agencies, governments, and community groups, to businesses, educational institutions, policy groups, and academicians. Indicators do not change reality, but they do help to shape the way we perceive it, and they serve to forge a common understanding of development. They are, therefore, of fundamental importance to a complex and rapidly changing world. For instance, they can be used to graph trends and indicate relationships, thereby helping to define issues and clarify challenges that

4. See, for example, the Human Development Report 1997 by the United Nations Development Programme.

5. This indicator, besides directly measuring infant deaths, also tends to reflect measures of income, education, and public health expenditures, among others.

6. For example, an indicator that measures years of schooling will, alone, reveal

little of the benefit of such schooling to society. As a case in point, a well-schooled person lacking in morals will tend to be harmful to the community, whereas a person with little or no formal education but with a strong sense of morality will, by and large, prove to be beneficial to society (of course, better

that the individual be both formally educated and morally trained).

7. Another way to view the interrelationship of factors is through the analogy of medical symptoms- such as fever, chills, and swelling-that, individually, might mean many different things. It is only when seen together in a particular identifiable pattern by a competent physician that they can be diagnosed as a specific condition and a reasonable treatment can be prescribed.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

confront a particular society. They provide information that may indicate a need for adjustments and corrections to policies, goals, priorities, programs, attitudes, and behaviors. Indicators can be used to draw attention to particular issues, to create public awareness, commitment, and activism around specific needs and

challenges. They can suggest a more equitable allocation of limited resources, or trigger a shift of resources from one area to another where there is an identified, pressing need. Hence, in a real sense, "indicators don't just monitor progress; they help make it happen." 8

On the other hand, there are numerous shortcomings and pitfalls associated with indicators. For instance, statistics, which serve as the basis of most indicators, can be subject to various configurations and interpretations. Many indicator sets are time

static; others are very narrow in focus, yet they are taken to represent a community's state of well-being and progress. Furthermore, too often indicators are not paired with goals nor are they viewed through the lens of historical process.

#### The State of Development Indicators Today

Today, there are numerous notable efforts, many of which are still conceptual in nature, to extend the boundaries of what is valued and measured, to make development indicators more reflective of what actually constitutes individual and community progress. These efforts, which involve a diversity of organizations, institutions, and individuals at all levels of society, are attempting to define and measure progress in terms of such concepts as human capital, social capital, culture, social integration, and community well-being. For example, the annual Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with its Human Development Index, has been instrumental in broadening the range and scope of development indicators that are considered within the UN system and by governments around the world. 9 The global action plans that came out of the major UN conferences of

8. The Community Indicators Handbook: Measuring Progress Toward Healthy and Sustainable Communities, 1997, Tyler Norris Associates, Redefining Progress and Sustainable Seattle, p. I.

9. The Human Development Report first appeared in 1990.

#### THE BAHAMAS: A WORLD

this decade have helped shift the dominant view of development from that of a top-down, largely technically and economically driven process to one in which people and communities increasingly define and take responsibility for their own progress. 10 These action plans have called for the creation and use of indicators that capture this emerging focus on people and communities. 11

In a series of Joint Occasional Papers recently issued by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the concept of cultural indicators, including individual and social well-being, and the ability of people to live together, is explored within various frameworks. 2 The World Bank itself has been at the forefront of developing the concept of

10. These include the 1990 World Summit for Children (the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990's); the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21); the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action); the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (the

Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development); the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action); the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action); and the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements- Habitat II (the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda).

11. Work on these indicators by governments, UN commissions and agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is proceeding. Such efforts are taking place, for example, under the aegis of many national governments and various UN bodies, such as the UN Centre for Human Settlements, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission for Social Development, and the Commission on the Status of Women. NGOs and NGO coalitions are contributing to this work and are also undertaking their own initiatives in this regard.

12. UNRISD News No. 16, Spring/Summer 1997, pp. 14-15. The three joint occasional papers referred to are: Towards a World Report on Culture and Development: Constructing Cultural Statistics and Indicators; Cultural Indicators of Well-Being: Some Conceptual Issues; and Cultural Indicators of Development.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

social capital and of seeking ways to measure it. 13 Moreover, NGOs, foundations, and community groups have initiated various indicator projects that seek to measure, and thus value, people- and community-centered development; these projects often involve the community in conceiving and developing indicators. 14 As important as such efforts are, they are only preliminary steps in the process of charting a new direction for the human family. Not only do these efforts need to be greatly expanded, but new approaches to conceptualizing and measuring both the tangible and the intangible aspects of development need to be explored and developed. Notions of what constitute efficacious measures of development need to be closely examined to determine the extent to which they take into account that which is central to human purpose and motivation.

In the following sections, one such approach-developing spiritually based indicators for development-is considered.

While the present tense is used in this section, it should be borne in mind that these indicators have yet to be constructed. Moreover, this paper is intended only as an initial exploration of some of the elements of such indicators, not as an attempt to fully construct them.

#### III. Spiritually Based Indicators for Development: Initial Considerations

The idea of developing spiritually based indicators for development is timely. The initial ground is being prepared, in part, by a growing

13. For an excellent exposition on social capital, see chapter 6, "Social Capital: The Missing Link?" in *Expanding the Measure of Wealth: Indicators of Environmentally Sustainable Development*, Environmentally Sustainable Development Studies and Monographs Series No. 17, The World Bank, Washington, DC. See also, *Confronting Crisis: A Comparative Study of Household Responses to Poverty and Vulnerability in Four Poor Urban Communities*, Caroline O. N. Moser, Environmentally Sustainable Development Studies and Monographs Series No. 8, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

14. These initiatives include the *Community Indicators Handbook: Measuring Progress Toward Healthy and Sustainable Communities*; the *Bellagio Principles*; and the *New Indicators* project of the New Economic Foundation.

#### THE BAI--IA'f WORLD

number of efforts to have spiritual values and principles seriously considered in development. 15 Moreover, the concept of spirituality and spiritual values, once almost taboo in most UN development-related deliberations, is now being articulated at the highest levels.

Spiritually based indicators assess development progress as a function of the application of spiritual principles. 16 These indicators are based on universal principles which are essential to the development of the human spirit and, therefore, to individual and collective progress. These measures emerge from a vision of development in which material progress serves as a vehicle for spiritual and cultural advancement.

Spiritually based indicators help to establish, clarify, and prioritize goals, policies, and programs. At the heart of their conceptualization is the understanding that human nature is fundamentally spiritual and that spiritual principles, which resonate with the human soul, provide an enormous motivational power for sacrifice and change. Therefore, the peoples of the world will be much more inclined to support policies and programs that emerge from the development of indicators based on spiritual principles than they would be to endorse objectives and initiatives which are based on a purely material conception of life. The use of these measures

15. These efforts include the work of numerous NGOs focusing on spiritual values and principles as foundational to progress, the ethical and spiritual values initiatives within the World Bank, and a number of research projects. Published reports include *Global Consciousness Change: Indicators of an Emerging Paradigm* (Duane Elgin and Coleen LeDrew, *Awakening Earth*, 1997); *Culture, Spirituality, and Economic Development: Opening a Dialogue* (William F. Ryan, S.J., International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada, 1995); and the *World Values Survey, 1981- 1984 and 1990- 1993* (Principle Investigator, World Values Study Group, Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan,

1994).

16. Spiritual principles, the Baha' i writings state, are those essential truths given to mankind by that 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 love, to comprehend reality, and to achieve social progress.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

could, thus, help to transform not only the vision but the actual practice of development.

The components of a spiritually based indicator include a vision of a peaceful and united future; the selected principle(s) crucial to the realization of that future; the policy area addressed by the principle(s); and the goal toward which the measure assesses progress. The indicator is quantitatively or qualitatively measurable and verifiable, and it is adaptable within a wide diversity of contexts without violating the integrity of the principle(s) involved.

The following section explores briefly five principles that might be used in constructing spiritually based indicators of development.

#### IV. Spiritually Based Indicators:

##### Five Foundational Principles

Based on the vision of a just, united, and sustainable global civilization, five spiritual principles that are foundational to the realization of such a future are presented. 17 While they are by no means the only principles necessary to consider, it is felt that these five contain a sufficient diversity of concepts to serve as starting point for this effort. In some cases, two closely related principles are paired.

As the intent of this section is merely to suggest some principles that might be explored, each is only cursorily treated. However, since these principles are the very basis of the indicators that would be constructed, it would be extremely important to clearly define them in the initial stage of the work. The five principles are:

1. unity in diversity;
2. equity and justice;
3. equality of the sexes;
4. trustworthiness and moral leadership; and
5. independent investigation of truth.

##### 1. Unity in Diversity

Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it [the principle of the oneness of humanity] seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict

17. Two spiritual principles that might be part of an extended list are beauty and service.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity... 18

The concept of unity in diversity is a way of expressing the principle of the oneness of humanity, as espoused by the Baha'i teachings. Unity in diversity stands in contrast to uniformity. It cherishes the natural diversity of temperament and talents among individuals as well as humanity's variegated experiences, cultures and viewpoints, inasmuch as they contribute to the human family's progress and well-being. Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the development of the human race which is experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that enriches us all and that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. Acceptance of the concept of unity in diversity, therefore, implies the development in the individual of a global consciousness, a sense of world citizenship, and a love for humanity as a whole. In this regard, each individual needs to understand that, since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a trust of the whole and that the advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole.

18. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), pp. 41-42.

## SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

### 2. Equity and Justice

Justice and equity are twin Guardians that watch over men. 19  
From them are revealed such blessed and perspicuous words as are the cause of the well-being of the world and the protection of the nations.<sup>20</sup>

Equity is fairness, the standard by which each person and group

is able to maximize the development of their latent capacities. Equity differs from absolute equality in that it does not dictate that all be treated in exactly the same way. While everyone is endowed with talents and abilities, the full development of these capacities may require different approaches. It is equity that ensures that access and opportunity are fairly distributed so that this development might take place.

Equity and justice are the twin guardians of society. Equity is the standard by which policy and resource commitment decisions should be made. Justice is the vehicle through which equity is applied, its practical expression in the life of the individual and society. It is only through the exercise of true justice that trust will be established among the diverse peoples, cultures and institutions of an increasingly interdependent world.

The Baha'i teachings state that the pillars of justice are reward and punishment. Those who act justly deserve reward, whether tangible or intangible, for such behavior. Those who act unjustly are in need of appropriate sanction both to arrest the injustice and to safeguard their own spiritual well-being.

### 3. Equality of the Sexes

The world of humanity is possessed of two wings: the male and the female. So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly. Until womankind reaches the

19. In the Baha'i writings, "Man is a generic term applying to all humanity". See 'Abdu 'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu 'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 76.

20. Baha 'u 'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 13.

same degree as man, until she enjoys the same arena of activity, extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized; humanity cannot wing its way to heights of real attainment. 21

The principle of the equality of the sexes is fundamental to all realistic thinking about the future well-being of the earth and its people. It represents a truth about human nature that has waited largely unrecognized throughout the long ages of humankind's childhood and adolescence. Whatever social inequities may have been dictated by the survival requirements of the past, they clearly cannot be justified at a time when humanity stands at the threshold of maturity.

The denial of equality perpetrates injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial

can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which peace can emerge and a just and united world civilization develop and flourish. Therefore, a deep commitment to the establishment of equality between men and women, in all departments of life and at every level of society, will be essential to humanity's advancement.

#### 4. Trustworthiness and Moral Leadership

... in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking? Of what consequence can they be? What benefit or advantage can they confer? 22

Of the manifold virtues in Baha'i scriptures which the individual is exhorted to cultivate, trustworthiness is of the first rank.

21. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375.

22. 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in "Trustworthiness," *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 2 (Mona Vale: Baha' i Publications Australia, 1991), p. 340.

#### SPIRITUALITY I N D EVELOPM ENT

Baha'u'llah states that the tranquility and security of the world, the stability of every affair-of every human transaction, of every contract negotiated, of every endeavor promulgated- depend on it.

Whether in the home, at work, in the community, or in business or political affairs, trustworthiness is at the heart of all constructive interaction and engagement. It is key to the maintenance of unity between diverse peoples and nations . Therefore, every development effort must include as a prime objective the inculcation of trustworthiness in the individuals, communities, and institutions involved.

Those who wield authority bear a great responsibility to be worthy of public trust. Leaders-including those in government, politics, business, religion, education, the media, the arts, and community organizations- must be willing to be held accountable for the manner in which they exercise their authority. Trustworthiness and an active morality must become the foundation for all leadership if true progress is to be achieved. Moral leadership, 23 the leadership of the future, will find its highest expression in service to others and to the community as a whole. It will foster collective decision-making and collective action and will be motivated by a commitment to justice, including the equality of women and men, and to the well-being of all humanity. Moral leadership will manifest itself in adherence to a single standard of conduct in both public and private life, for leaders and for citizens alike.

#### 5. Independent Investigation of Truth

... all the nations of the world have to investigate after truth independently and turn their eyes from the moribund blind imitations of the past ages entirely. Truth is one when it is independently investigated, it does not accept division. Therefore the independent investigation of truth will lead to the oneness of the world of humanity. 24

23 . For an exploration of this concept, see *Moral Leadership*, 1997, the Global Classroom, Washington, DC, originally published as *Liderazgo Moral*, 1993, Universidad Nur, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

24. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Japan Will Turn Ablaze: Tablets of 'Abdu 'l-Baha, Letters of Shoghi Effendi and Historical Notes about Japan* (Osaka: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 35.

## THE BAHAI'f WORLD

There is no contradiction between true religion and science. 25

Reality is one, and when truth is investigated and ascertained, it will lead to individual and collective progress. In the quest for truth, science and religion- the two systems of knowledge available to humankind-must closely and continuously interact. The insights and skills that represent scientific accomplishment must look to the force of spiritual commitment and moral principle to ensure their appropriate application.

Spiritual development involves investigating truth for one's self. Continual reflection, based on experience in applying this truth, is critical to the process of spiritual development. For collective investigation of truth and group decision making, consultation, which draws on the strength of the group and fosters unity of purpose and action, is indispensable. 26 Institutions and those in positions of authority would do well to create conditions amenable to the meaningful investigation of truth, while fostering the understanding that human happiness and the establishment of peace, justice and unity are the ultimate goals of this investigation.

### V. Spiritually Based Indicators:

#### Five Priority Areas

This section briefly examines five policy areas in which the principles identified above might be applied to generate goals and, eventually, spiritually based indicators to measure progress toward these goals. As with the spiritual principles discussed, these policy areas are interconnected and, in some cases, overlapping. Therefore, initiatives in one area will require action in others. The five areas briefly considered below are:

25. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, p. 145.

26. Consultation requires that individual participants strive to transcend their

respective points of view in order to function as members of a body with its

own interests and goals. In consultation, where views are exchanged with both candor and courtesy, ideas belong not to the individual who presents them, but to the group as a whole, to take up, discard, or revise as seems to best serve the goals pursued. Consultation succeeds to the extent that all participants support the decisions arrived at. Under such circumstances, an earlier decision can be readily reconsidered if experience exposes any shortcomings.

## SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

1. economic development;
2. education;
3. environmental stewardship;
4. meeting basic needs in food, nutrition, health, and shelter; and
5. governance and participation.

### 1. Economic Development

Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor—in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society—its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.<sup>27</sup>

Central to the task of reconceptualizing the organization of human affairs is arriving at a proper understanding of the role of economics. The failure to place economics into the broader context of humanity's social and spiritual existence has led to a corrosive materialism in the world's more economically advantaged regions, and persistent conditions of deprivation among the masses of the world's peoples. Economics should serve people's needs; societies should not be expected to reformulate themselves to fit economic models. The ultimate function of economic systems should be to

27. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette: Baha'i

Publishing

Trust, 1990), pp. 24-25.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

equip the peoples and institutions of the world with the means to achieve the real purpose of development: that is, the cultivation of the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness. Society must develop new economic models shaped by insights that arise from a sympathetic understanding of shared experience, from viewing human beings in relation one to another, and from a recognition of the central role that family and community play in social and spiritual well-being. Within institutions and organizations, priorities must be reassessed. Resources must be directed away from those agencies and programs that are damaging to the individual, societies, and the environment, and directed toward those most germane to furthering a dynamic, just, and thriving social order. Such economic systems will be strongly altruistic and cooperative in nature; they will provide meaningful employment and will help to eradicate poverty in the world. 2

### 2. Education

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time. 29

The development of a global society calls for the cultivation of capacities far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. The challenges ahead will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge on the part of individuals and

28. Each individual has the right to meaningful work and the responsibility to support his or her family and to contribute to the well-being of the community. By engaging in an occupation or craft in a spirit of service, the individual contributes something of value to society. For its part, society recognizes the value of its members by creating opportunities for each to earn a livelihood and to make a contribution to the common good, thus assisting the individual's spiritual development. For, it is by contributing to the common good that an individual acquires true spiritual maturity.

29. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 109.

## SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

organizations alike. Universal education will be an indispensable contributor to this process of capacity building, but the effort will

succeed only to the extent that both individuals and groups in every sector of society are able to acquire knowledge and to apply it to the shaping of human affairs. 30

Education must be lifelong. It should help people to develop the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills necessary to earn a livelihood and to contribute confidently and constructively to shaping communities that reflect principles of justice, equity, and unity. It should also help the individual develop a sense of place and community, grounded in the local, but embracing the whole world.

Successful education will cultivate virtue as the foundation for personal and collective well-being, and will nurture in individuals a deep sense of service and an active commitment to the welfare of their families, their communities, their countries, indeed, all mankind. It will encourage self-reflection and thinking in terms of historical process, and it will promote inspirational learning through such means as music, the arts, poetry, meditation, and interaction with the natural environment.

### 3. Environmental Stewardship

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions. 31

Baha'i scriptures describe nature as a reflection of the sacred. 32 They teach that nature should be valued and respected, but not

30. The Baha'i teachings state that when it is impossible for a family to educate all its children- a condition that should be eradicated in the future priority should be given to education of the girl since mothers are the first educators of future generations.

31. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, to an individual believer, dated 17 February 1933 (unpublished).

32. "Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world." Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 142.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

worshiped; rather, it should serve humanity's efforts to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. However, in light of the interdependence of all parts of nature, and the importance of evolution and diversity "to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole,"<sup>33</sup> every effort should be made to preserve as much as possible the earth's bio-diversity and natural order.

As trustees, or stewards, of the planet's vast resources and

biological diversity, humanity must learn to make use of the earth's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability and equity into the distant reaches of time. This attitude of stewardship will require full consideration of the potential environmental consequences of all development activities. It will compel humanity to temper its actions with moderation and humility, realizing that the true value of nature cannot be expressed in economic terms. It will also require a deep understanding of the natural world and its role in humanity's collective development-both material and spiritual. Therefore, sustainable environmental management must come to be seen not as a discretionary commitment mankind can weigh against other competing interests, but rather as a fundamental responsibility that must be shouldered-a pre-requisite for spiritual development as well as the individual's physical survival.

#### 4. Meeting Basic Needs in Food, Nutrition, Health and Shelter

In such a world society [t]he economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated. ..

The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources

33. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1997), pp. 304-5.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

of the planet, to the prolongation of human life and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral and spiritual life of the entire human race. 34

Issues of food, nutrition, health, and shelter are central to the challenge of providing an adequate standard of living for all members of the human family. These issues cannot, however, be tackled solely as technical or economic problems. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition; establishing food security; providing adequate shelter; and achieving health for all will require a shift in values, a commitment to equity, and a corresponding reorientation of policies, goals, and programs.

The technologies and resources exist to meet the basic needs of humanity and to eliminate poverty. Equity in the use of these

technologies and resources, however, will come about only with certain understandings and commitments. While individuals must do their utmost to provide for themselves and their dependents, the community must accept responsibility, when necessary, to help meet basic needs. Access to development programs and their benefits must be ensured for all. The economics of food production and distribution will have to be reoriented and the critical role of the farmer in food and economic security properly valued. 35 With regard to health-the physical, spiritual, mental, and social wellbeing of the individual-access to clean water, shelter, and some form of cheap energy would go a long way toward eradicating the problems that currently plague vast numbers of individuals and communities. 36 It must be acknowledged, however, that some illnesses reflect unwholesome human behavior. The inclusion of moral development in education would, therefore, help to reduce significantly certain current health problems.

34. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha' u 'llah: Selected Letters* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), pp. 203-4.

35 . A world-wide coordinated system of food reserves will be essential to the human family's physical well-being in times of shortage, especially if global change creates increasing instability in food production.

36. The 37th World Health Assembly called for "Member states to consider including in their strategies for health for all a spiritual dimension ... " (WHA 37.13, 15 May 1984).

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### 5. Governance and Participation

Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him. 37

Good governance is essential to social progress. While governance is often equated with government, it in fact involves much more. Governance occurs on all levels and encompasses the ways that formal government, non-governmental groups, community organizations and the private sector manage resources and affairs. Good governance is necessary if communities are to maintain their equilibrium, steer themselves through difficulties, and respond creatively to the challenges and opportunities ahead. Three factors that largely determine the state of governance are the quality of leadership, the quality of the governed, and the quality of the structures and processes in place. There is an emerging international consensus on the core characteristics of good governance, especially in relation to formal government. These characteristics

include democracy, the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and participation by civil society.

This consensus must be enlarged, however, to encompass an appreciation of the role that governance must assume in promoting the spiritual and material well-being of all members of society.

Governance must be guided by universal values, including an ethic of service to the common good. It will need to provide for the meaningful participation of citizens in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and policies that affect them. It should seek to enhance people's ability to manage change and should offer opportunities to increase their capacities and sense of worth. It will need to provide mechanisms for equitable access to the benefits of programs and policies, to education and information, and to opportunities for lifelong learning. Moreover, it must help to ensure that the news media are active, vibrant

37. Baha' u' llah, Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 70.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

and truthful. At the global level, a truly participatory system of governance will also need to be established.

#### VI. Developing Spiritually Based Indicators: Three Examples

This section offers three brief examples of how spiritually based indicators might be constructed. Such indicators will, ultimately, be needed at all levels-local, national and global.

The first example of a spiritually based indicator explores the application of the principle of unity in diversity to educational policy. Beginning with a vision of development that accepts both the possibility and the necessity of a united and peaceful world, unity in diversity is identified as a spiritual principle essential to the realization of that future. A policy area is then chosen: in this case, education. By considering the principle of unity in diversity in education, numerous possibilities for policies, goals and programs emerge, several of which might be pursued. 38 In this exercise, however, consideration will be limited to just one goal: to foster in students a global consciousness-a consciousness inherent in the principle of unity in diversity.

An educational program to promote such a consciousness might include, but not be limited to, cultivating an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems, and nurturing the feeling of belonging to and responsibility toward the world community. It might also include study of the significant contributions that the nations of the world are making to humanity's collective progress through participation in such international fora as the United Nations, through such agreements as the numerous human rights treaties and UN global

action plans, and through such international initiatives as the World Heritage Sites.

To assess progress toward this goal, one might measure the percentage of time—both in class and in after-school programs—dedicated to subject matter or activities which foster global consciousness. Another measure might be a content analysis of

38. Of course, more than one principle might be identified and applied in a given policy area.

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## THE B A H A ' f WORLD

textbooks to determine the percentage of space dedicated to the same. Still another measure might be the prevalence of such subject matters in the curricula of teacher training institutes. Yet another might involve the attitudes and knowledge of students (and teachers) related to these matters, as gauged by surveys. This exercise could be taken further: several of these measures might be combined into a composite index, or they might be assembled as a set of indicators related to the goal of fostering a global consciousness in students. 39

A second example of spiritually based indicators explores the application of the principles of equity and justice to economic development policy. By following the same process as in the first example, the guiding principles are identified as equity and justice; economic development is selected as the policy area; and the goal that is chosen is to eliminate poverty within and among the nations of the world. Obviously, this is a multi-faceted goal. For the purpose of this example, only the gap among nations will be considered, although distribution of wealth within nations must also be dealt with if world poverty is to be eliminated. Moreover, only poverty as it relates to income will be addressed. A premise of this goal is that there exist sufficient resources in the world to meet everyone's needs, but that eliminating poverty will require moderating consumption and accumulation, establishing just and equitable trade relations, and lifting the burden of excessive national debt.

There are available numerous income-gap measures which show where individual countries lie along a continuum. Most any of these could be used as measures, if taken over time, to determine if the gap between the most and the least economically prosperous nations is being reduced. A baseline of what constitutes economic poverty vis-a-vis national per capita income will have to be established in order to determine progress toward eliminating poverty. Another measure might weigh the economic benefits that accrue from trading opportunities that favor economically poorer nations. Still another measure might calculate, in terms of per capita income,

39. Obviously, this does not go into the details of weighing this information or of factoring in negative portrayals of the same subject matters.

## SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

the effects of steps taken by nations, whether individually or collectively, to reduce, if not eliminate, outstanding bilateral and multilateral debts held by the economically deprived countries. A third example of spiritually based indicators explores the application of the principle of independent investigation of truth to policy in the area of governance and participation. In this case independent investigation of truth is identified as the basic principle; the policy area selected is governance and participation; and the goal is to foster the effective use of broad-based consultation in the formulation and implementation of development policies and programs. Consultation is understood as a process of collective decision-making that maximizes participation by all segments of the community and seeks to arrive at the truth of a given matter. Achieving this goal will require that mechanisms be established and avenues be opened for community members to participate meaningfully in the conceptualization, design, implementation, and evaluation of the policies and programs that affect them. Progress toward this goal will be much more difficult to assess than progress toward the goals in the previous examples. Measures might include surveys to determine the extent of individual participation in all phases of development, and the degree to which individuals see their contribution to community progress as meaningful and ongoing. This measure would have to factor in the percentage of the community involved and the degree of participation by those community members typically excluded, including women, minorities and the elderly. Another measure might assess the existence of formal and informal structures and processes that facilitate collaborative initiatives, and the number and frequency of meetings held, or the percentage of the community involved with any of these mechanisms. Obviously, the examples above do not go into the detail necessary to put into operation the proposed indicators. For instance, all measures would need to contain standards for weighing the information and data that are collected. This information and data would also have to be assessed over time to give a meaningful picture of progress being made. Furthermore, it would be necessary to specify fully, and in advance, what constitutes "success."

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

VII. Toward the Development of  
Spiritually Based Indicators:  
Possible Collaborative Steps

This paper has presented a certain vision of the future and, based on that vision, has briefly examined spiritual principles that might be used in constructing indicators of progress toward this future. It has considered policy areas in which these principles might be applied in order to generate goals and, ultimately, indicators to examples of how such spiritually based measures might be conceived and developed.

The approach taken in this paper does not follow the process normally associated with creating indicators. That is, indicator creation usually, though not always, follows the establishment of policies and goals. However, community groups and others are, increasingly, approaching indicator development by first creating a vision, then identifying the principles that underlie that vision, then looking at policy areas in which to create goals based on those principles, and, finally, constructing indicators to measure progress toward these goals. This is the approach taken in this paper. Once spiritually based indicators become commonplace, any number of approaches will arrive at the same purpose: infusing spiritual principles into our understanding, practice, and assessment of development.

The actual identification of goals and the construction of spiritually based indicators for development might be undertaken as a collaborative process. In considering the following proposal, neither the steps, nor the principles, nor the policy areas suggested above would need to be taken as starting points.

The proposal is this: that representatives of the world's religions be brought together, perhaps under the aegis of the World Bank, or another international development agency such as the United Nations Development Programme, to begin consulting on spiritual principles and their bearing on individual and collective progress. 40 The initial aim of this effort-which should be seen, from the outset, as substantive, time consuming and ongoing- would be to

40. This involvement would signal a willingness by these development agencies to take seriously the spiritual reality of human nature.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

reach understanding on a limited number of spiritual principles that are shared universally and a set of priority policy areas in which they would be applied. Based on these principles and priority areas, goals would be generated and indicators constructed to measure progress toward these goals. Other aims might be added as the consultations progress. To the degree that a common vision can be articulated, the endeavor will be strengthened. While the representatives would not have to be involved in technical aspects such as calculating quantitative measures-the development agency involved might assume this responsibility- they would need to

review the indicators, once assembled, and be involved in any reworking called for after they have been tested. 41

Religious differences should not prove insurmountable to such an initiative, for there exists an underlying thread of unity connecting the world's great religious traditions. They each propound basic spiritual truths and standards of behavior that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose. The religions should, therefore, be able to collaborate on an effort that draws on and honors their deepest truths and holds such promise for humanity.

As this process advances, it might benefit by drawing on certain work that is already under way in the field of development, such as the global action plans from the recent series of UN conferences.

In these action plans, the governments of the world have committed to "social, economic and spiritual development" 42 and to "achieving a world of greater stability and peace, built on ethical and spiritual vision."43 They have acknowledged that their "societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live . . . not only as a matter of urgency but also as a matter of sustained

41. In constructing these indicators, both qualitative and quantitative measures

will need to be considered. Public opinion polls, focus groups with key audiences, individual and in-depth interviews, and participatory rapid assessments

might all be used to assist in obtaining the data necessary. Analysis of the data will require an understanding of the philosophical framework and the principles that gave rise to the indicators in the first place.

42. Agenda 21, 6.3. Emphasis added

43. Habitat Agenda, 4. Emphasis added

## THE BAHAI'f WORLD

and unshakable commitment through the years ahead." 44 Moreover, they have affirmed that "development is inseparable from the cultural, ecological, economic, political and spiritual environment in which it takes place."45 These same governments have also recognized that "individuals should be allowed to develop to their full potential, including healthy physical, mental and spiritual development," 46 and that "[r]eligion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of millions of women and men, in the way they live and in the aspirations they have for the future. " 4 7

These commitments, along with the policies, goals, and programs suggested in these action plans, carry the weight of global consensus. In this sense, they represent the highest common understanding of development priorities and approaches that the international

community has been able to reach. 48 On the other hand, beyond general statements about the fundamental role and importance of spirituality, spiritual vision, and spiritual development, these global agreements offer no coherent picture of what these terms mean, and current development measures-the determinants of "success"-by and large, fail to take spiritual factors into account. Still, it must be acknowledged that these action plans have recognized that spirituality is part and parcel of development and they do attempt to articulate certain principles such as tolerance and solidarity, some in greater detail and with greater success than others. Therefore, the consultations of the religious representatives could be deeply enriched by a study of these documents. Moreover, these consultations may very well generate policies and goals similar to those found in the global agreements and could, consequently, benefit from considering the prescriptions that the agreements

44. Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, 3.

45. Programme of Action for the World Summit for Social Development, 4. Emphasis added

46. Agenda 21, 6.23. Emphasis added

47. Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, 24. Emphasis added

48. Given the strong influence of NGOs at these conferences, including those who sought to make spiritual values and principles the guiding force of these action plans, this focus on the spiritual is hardly surprising.

#### SPIRITUALITY IN DEVELOPMENT

contain. However, since the policies and goals developed by the religious representatives would be based on clearly identified spiritual principles, they would much more likely be supported by people than those based on predominantly material considerations. By calling for the creation of development indicators in each of the global action plans, the United Nations has set in motion processes at the national and global levels for establishing appropriate measures of progress. The work on spiritually based indicators might, eventually, tie into these initiatives.

As these spiritually based measures are developed and put into use, consultative processes might be established nationally and locally in which communities would be encouraged either to adapt these indicators to their particular conditions, or to develop similar measures independent of this global initiative. The process of adapting or creating such indicators would, in and of itself, be enlightening and empowering for those involved. Moreover, the programs and policies that would eventually emerge from these processes would, in all likelihood, win the support of many people and draw formal endorsements from religious institutions and communities.

The creation of spiritually based indicators would not be the ultimate purpose of this initiative. Rather, it would be to place spiritual principles at the center of development, to use them in setting standards, policies, and programs, and to draw on them to motivate individual and collective action. However, by demonstrating that the application of spiritual principles is both practical and measurable, the acceptance of spirituality as the very soul of development can be significantly furthered. Creating spiritually based measures for development is, therefore, not only timely, but essential.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the forty-second Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held 2- 13 March 1998 in New York City.

## EMPOWERING the GIRL CHILD

The Baha'i International Community was particularly pleased that the girl child was identified in the Beijing Platform for Action as a critical area of concern. Baha'is have long been active in efforts to address the developmental needs of girls so that they will be able, as women, to contribute fully to the advancement of civilization. Indeed, the Baha'i writings promise that "when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics war will cease." <sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, highly appropriate that the fortysecond Commission on the Status of Women should focus attention on the challenge of creating an enabling environment for empowering girls. As the Commission consults about actions that might be taken by governments and NGOs to create an environment that will enable

1. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 135.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

girls to develop their capacities and will empower them to participate fully in the affairs of the world, we offer the following suggestions for consideration.

o The girl child's first and most influential environment is her family. She learns from her immediate and extended family who she is and how she fits into the world. If the family environment is to empower girls, sons and daughters must be equally valued and loved, the rights of all family members must be safeguarded, children must be taught to respect themselves and others ,

and the unity and solidarity of the family must be nurtured.

o Girls must be educated. "Woman's lack of progress and proficiency," the Baha'i writings assert, "has been due to her need of equal education and opportunity. Had she been allowed this equality, there is no doubt she would be the counterpart of man in ability and capacity." 2 So important is the education of girls, that if a lack of resources forces a choice, parents are advised to consider giving first priority to the education of their daughters. Girls must be prepared not only to participate fully in the affairs of the world, but also to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and first educators of the next generation.

o Boys must be raised with an understanding of the equality of women and men and be prepared to work together with women as equal partners in all fields of human endeavor. Failure to educate boys for equality will have devastating consequences not only for girls, but also for society as a whole. As long as the oppression of women is tolerated, men will continue to harbor harmful attitudes and habits that they carry from the family to the work place, to political life and ultimately to international relations. Because the attitude of superiority, fostered in men by erroneous beliefs, is often unconscious, programs should be instituted to sensitize males,

2. 'Abdu 'l-Baha, Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 182.

## EMPOWERING THE GIRL CHILD

both boys and men, to the ways in which they may unknowingly discourage girls and block their progress. 3

- Likewise, law enforcement officials, judges, and other custodians of society who are responsible for the rights of women and children will need to be sensitized to the ways in which women are oppressed and deprived of opportunity.
- The negative influence of the media has been widely discussed. Its positive potential, however, has gone largely untapped. The media should be reminded of their responsibility to encourage positive social values in boys and girls and to improve the ways in which women are portrayed. They could promote the ideas that girls are deserving of equal rights, that society's progress depends on the full participation of women, that girls are as capable as boys, and that women are a powerful force for peace.
- No attempt to set human affairs aright can ignore religion. Although most religions have, in their early years, improved the lot of women, it must be acknowledged that religion has also been used as an excuse to oppress them. Religious leaders and

people of faith everywhere have a special responsibility to reaffirm those eternal spiritual principles that unite the hearts and release the capacities of every soul. For example, the admonition that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated can be found in the teachings of every religion. Were this principle to guide all interactions, including those between

3. "In brief, the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible; woman's aspiration toward advancement will be checked by it, and she will gradually become hopeless. On the contrary, we must declare that her capacity is equal, even greater than man's. This will inspire her with hope and ambition, and her susceptibilities for advancement will continually increase. She must not be told and taught that she is weaker and inferior in capacity and qualification. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance by the statement, 'You are most capable, and if you endeavor, you will attain the highest degree.'" 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 76-77.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

men and women, girls and boys, many harmful traditional beliefs and practices would gradually be relinquished.

- Governments can, through their policies, support the efforts of individuals, families, teachers, law enforcement officials, the media, and religious leaders to create an environment that encourages women and girls to develop their capacities and to step forward into new arenas of service.

In conclusion, the Baha'i International Community stands ready to do its share to help create an enabling environment for empowering girls. For, in the Baha'i view, "The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes the equal to the world of men ... can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be." 4

4. Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), pp. 315-16.

The Baha'í International Community presented this statement on the Protection of Minorities to the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights

held from 16 March to 24 April/1998.

## PROTECTION of MINORITIES

All people are entitled to the same universal human rights. All qualify for the same standard of justice. Thus it is self-evident that members of minorities should have rights equal to those of all other persons. Therefore, majorities have a special responsibility, motivated by a sense of justice, for bringing about appropriate social and political adjustments to enable minorities to exercise, to the fullest extent possible, the rights they have in common with everyone. By the same token, minorities have a moral responsibility to respond honorably to such genuine endeavor by majorities. All this implies dealing with minority issues within the context of a shared understanding that the advantage of the part is best served by ensuring the advantage of the whole and that the whole cannot flourish when certain parts are oppressed or deprived.

As an integral part of every society, minorities constitute an indispensable aspect of social diversity in all countries. Such diversity is to be welcomed as a natural phenomenon much the same as the variegated flowers of a garden.

Indeed, in every society many forms of diversity are embraced.

It is useful, therefore, to distinguish between differences that make

one minority needful of particular attention to ensure the actualization of their human rights and differences that engender no particular concern. Every majority incorporates within itself a reasonably congenial collection of minorities, and there are invariably minorities within minorities. It would be impossible, then, to set boundaries that would guarantee exclusion of all minorities. Equally impossible, it seems to us, is the creation of a sufficiently useful definition of minority to embrace the prevailing realities. Moreover, at this time human beings are so inclined to promote discrimination against their fellows, that there is a risk that undue effort at defining minorities could unwittingly provide new pretexts for discrimination.

A more productive course of action might be to identify and advise abroad the conditions being suffered by underprivileged minorities and to generate action both to equip these minorities to claim their just rights and to urge governments to enact the necessary legislation to redress legitimate minority grievances. Beyond such action there remains the necessity to effect a change in the attitude of majorities towards oppressed minorities and to lift from minorities any sense of helplessness induced by prolonged oppression.

The Baha'i International Community has observed with satisfaction the proceedings of the first three sessions of the Sub-

Commission's Working Group on Minorities. The establishment of such a working group and the emphasis given to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities by the Sub-Commission and the Commission itself are to be commended. We believe, however, that the challenge of securing justice for all citizens is not entirely within the ability of governments to meet, as it calls for the exercise of spiritual and moral influences. Indeed, the legal rationality of human rights, though essential, is not a sufficient basis for the resolution of minority problems, which for the most part originate in the malfunctioning of the human spirit. For a lasting resolution to be achieved, it must be recognized that collateral with the application of the legal provisions for these rights is adherence to the principles of the human spirit. With the latter, the approach, the very language, is different. The operation of these principles imbues both majorities and minorities with a

#### PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

consciousness of their reciprocal moral responsibilities as fellow human beings—a consciousness which vitalizes such civilizing virtues as forbearance, mercy, compassion, and loving kindness towards all people; a consciousness which emboldens the voice of conscience, and which opens portals to a realm of experience which employs the language of the heart where the language of civil law exerts no influence.

It is in this latter context that the Baha'i International Community feels an acute need and particular urgency. For if the immense human rights efforts being made by the United Nations and governments is to bear fruit, the combined force of political and legal, spiritual and moral influences must be employed in an unrelenting pursuit of solutions to the problems that oppress minorities. For its part the Baha'i International Community is attempting to address these challenges within its membership throughout the world, and in this regard it considers itself a workshop in which its members are learning to apply the principles of world order brought by Baha'u'llah more than a century ago. Spread throughout the earth, the Baha'i community has integrated representatives of all racial and national backgrounds and from a wide range of religious experiences into a community united in action to attain realization of the oneness of humankind.

The oneness of humankind is a reality that past ages were ill equipped to certify. Now it is increasingly recognized that what hurts one portion of the human race, hurts all of it; what benefits one, benefits all. At this time in history when scientific discoveries have compelled a global awareness of the commonality of the heritage and endowments of all people, it is possible to resolve the issues of deprivation that are consequences of disunity. The attention being given by organs of the United Nations to these

long-neglected issues signifies a unique stage in the evolution of social life on the planet. We, therefore, urge the Commission on Human Rights to adopt the draft decision recommended by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (resolution 1997/23) and allow the Working Group on Minorities to meet annually.

## INFORMATION

### REsOURcEs

### OBITUARIES

Margaret Kelly Bates	Prime Minister's son in her capacity
On 20 June 1997 in Costa Rica. Born received	as a professional nurse and
in Lancashire, England, on 21 March	the "Keys of Ceylon" as a reward.
At	
1897, Margaret Kelly married Mar-	the request of the National
Spiritual	
ion Bates in 1929 and was widowed	Assembly in the United States Mrs.
twenty-two years later. After declar-	Bates and her daughter gave
lectures	
ing her belief in Baha'u'llah in 1956,	on the Baha'i Faith throughout the
Mrs . Bates dedicated her life to the	country. In her desire to obey
Shoghi	
development of Baha' i communities	Effendi's exhortation that one
should	
all around the world. She served on	commit one's entire life to the
teach several Baha'i institutions, including	ing field, she pioneered to
Costa Rica	
Local Spiritual Assemblies in Nice,	in 1970. After living for some time
in	
France, and Bombay, India. In 1957	the United States, Mrs. Bates moved
Mrs. Bates and her daughter Jeanne	back to Costa Rica in 1989, say
ing,	
were the first Baha'is in the Nicobar	"I will take my bones back to Costa
Islands, earning the title Knights of	Rica."
Baha ' u'llah. Also with her daughter,	Hugh Emery Chance
Mrs. Bates opened the Cocos Islands	On 25 March 1998 in the United
in the South Indian Ocean to the	States. Hugh E. Chance was born
Faith and was the first Baha'i to visit	into a Methodist family on 28 De-
British North Borneo. In 1960, in	cember 1911 in Kansas. It was
during	
Ceylon, she saved the life of the	his first year at Cornell College
in	

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Iowa that he met his future wife , Major E. Dunne

Margaret Chamberlin. During his wartime service with the US Navy, Mr. Chance was introduced to the Baha'i Faith, to which he was attracted because its teachings coincided with his long-held ideals of unity, brotherhood, and world peace. He, his wife, and their daughter became Baha'is in 1954, and within two years they had attracted enough people to the Faith to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Davenport. By 1959 Mr. Chance was Unserving on the National Teaching Committee. In 1960 he was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and became its Secretary the following year. In 1963 Mr. Chance was one of the nine men elected to form the Universal House of Justice. Before the end of the year, the Chances had settled in Haifa, Israel, and remained there for thirty years. Mr. Chance's training as a lawyer and his vast professional experience played a key adrole in the development of several departments of the Baha'i World Centre, including the communications and information processing section and the Office of Public Information. where He retired from the Universal House eightyof Justice in 1993. With "hearts heavy with sorrow," the Universal House of Justice described Mr. On 1 January 1998 in New Zealand. Chance's passing as a "profound Roger John Edwards was born on loss," extolling him as a "staunch,

On 19 August 1997 in the United States. Born on 17 February 1908 in Oregon, in the United States, Major E. Dunne became a Baha'i in 1947. Later that same year he married Zara Benson Phanco. In 1948, the Dunnes moved to Astoria, Oregon, to help in the deve lopment of the Baha'i community and to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly. In response to the Guardian's call for pioneers, Dunnes moved to the Gold Coast (now known as Ghana) in 1953. able to renew their visas, they to Liberia in 1954 and stayed there for eight years, leaving only to briefly in the Madeira Islands in and in the Canary Islands from 1967 to 1968. While in West Africa, Mr. Dunne served on the National Spiritual Assembly of West Africa and on the region's Auxiliary Board for Protection. After a few years in the United States the couple again set in 1975 as pioneers to Nevis in the Leeward Islands, despite their vanced age and deteriorating After twelve years in the islands, pioneered to Mexico. In 1991 , Mr. Dunne became seriously ill and had to return to the United States, he passed away at the age of nme. Roger John Edwards

17 October 1953 in Auckland, New Zealand. Raised in a Baha'i family, as a far-sighted supporter" of the Cause of Baha'u'llah and praising the sera youth he traveled throughout the Pacific region sharing the message of optimism, adamant faith," and an indomitable will." Mrs. Chance prein 1977, after which the Edwardses deceased her husband by almost two years. moved to the Solomon Islands for years.

## OBITUARIES

one year, returned to New Zealand of for a year, and then pioneered to Papua New Guinea, living for four-teen years in Aiyura and Goroka. Mr. Edwards lectured in Mathematics Education at Goroka Teachers' College, where he twice served as the stohead of the Mathematics Department, and was well loved by his students She and colleagues. From 1982 to 1991 he served as an Auxiliary Board member on in Papua New Guinea and from 1996 1997 in the South Island of New Zealand. Mr. Edwards identified easily with youth, who often accompanied him on teaching trips and mountain ninetyclimbing expeditions. The Edwardses raised four children.

Alma Cynthia Gregory On 5 December 1997 in the United Kingdom. Born on Long Island, New York, on 11 May 1904, Alma Cynthia Ginman was raised as a Baha'i attend

Gregory assisted in the formation of many Local Spiritual Assemblies in the British Isles. She associated with such believers as Ethel Rosenberg, Dr. J. E. Esslemont, Martha Root, Lady B lomfield, and in her later inspired her fellow Baha'is with ries about them and their heroic efforts to serve the Baha'i Faith. served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles and the Assembly Development Committo tee from 1948 to 1956. She moved to Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides in 1969 and remained there until her passing in 1997 at the age of four. She is survived by one daughter.

Masha'llah 'Inayati

On 4 July 1997 in Iran. At the time of his death Masha'llah 'Inayati

a sixty-three-year-old Baha'i resident of Tehran. During a visit to

native village of Ardistan to

child from the age of seven, when her mother embraced the Faith. When she was a child, her Baha'i education took place with the help of some of the first Baha'is in the United States.

Isfahan,

Ella Cooper, Hyde and Clara Dunn, of

and Ali Kuli Khan all helped to educate her in the fundamental verities a

of the Faith. In 1918 she was sent to Cheltenham Ladies College in England while her parents were living and working in China. Two years later she and her mother moved to London, where Shoghi Effendi visited them the

during his studies at Oxford. In 1933 Alma married Walter Ewart Gregory, an international ice-dance champion who served as a navigator-pilot officer during the Second World War and Kakawas killed in action in 1942. Mrs. he

## THE BAHAI WORLD

was appointed the Sub-Headman of of

his Location and in 1952 the Chief Kabras Location. Mr. Kulecho selfentered the BaM 'i Faith in 1962, "sterling

after which he served on various regional committees and on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Malava for nearly thirty years. He participated

On 13 June 1997 . Evotia Masipei actively in local and regional teaching projects, attended international Nanumea Island, Tuvalu (then Ellice Baha' i conferences that were held in Island), and was the first Tuvaluan to Kenya and was personally visited by accept the Baha'i Faith on Tuvaluan several Hands of the Cause of God, soil. She served on the Local Spiritincluding Amatu'I-Baha Ru~iyyih

a meeting held to commemorate the anniversary of the Ascension of Baha 'u 'llah, Mr. 'Inayati was arrested in circumstances which are not clear. Taken to prison in

he was severely beaten on all parts

his body and was held in prison for about a week before being taken to

hospital, where he was kept under armed guard, though it was only a minor matter for which he had been arrested. Reported to have been in good health before his arrest, Mr. ' Inayati died of his injuries in

hospital.

Isaya Kulecho

On 11 February 1998 in Kenya. Isaya Kulecho was born in 1912 in Shiguru village, Kabras Location, in the mega District of Kenya. In 1950

of his passing the Universal House

Justice described him as " dearlyof loved," "steadfast, noble-hearted, effacing" and recalled his

achievements" in Latin America with "keen admiration."

Evotia Masipei

was born on 27 November 1935 in

tual Assembly of Bikenibeu for three

Khanum, Enoch Olinga, Rahmatu years and raised six children.

'llah Muhajir, William Sears, and John

Robarts. As Chief, Mr. Kulecho defended the local Baha'i community States.

Olive McDonald

On 26 June 1997 in the United

and freely offered the use of his large for Baha'i functions. He raised sixteen children.

Born on 18 October 1914 in Pennhome

sylvania in the United States, Olive

Boutillier married John McDonald.

Artemus Dwight Lamb

In 1969 she entered the Baha'i

Faith

and a year later pioneered to Chad,

On 17 January 1998 in San Salvador,

serving on the National Spiritual

El Salvador. Born 20 January 1905

Assembly from 1971 to 1977. High in Iowa, United States, Artemus

lights of her Baha'i service include

Dwight Lamb entered the Baha'i

her establishment of Journal de

Faith in 1939. He left the United

l'Unite, the national Baha'i newspaper

States in 1944 to pioneer to Punta

of Chad, her service as an office assis-

Arenas, Chile, and later moved to

tant to a member of the Continental

Costa Rica. Mr. Lamb lived in Cen-

Board of Counsellors, and the teachtral America and Mexico for the rest

ing of Baha'i children's classes.

of his life. From 1951 to 1961 he

served first on the National Spiritual

Assembly of Central America and

the Antilles and then on the National

Spiritual Assembly of Central Amer-

ica; from 1963 to 1968 he served as

an Auxiliary Board member for the

transportaregion; and from 1968 to 1985 he

a commercial

served on the Continental Board of

and

Counsellors for the Americas. In the

last years of his life he wrote The

Odyssey of the Soul as well as many

Thomas,

booklets and pamphlets. At the time

## OBITUARIES

remained there until their retirement

George Richardson Mather

On 10 August 1997 in the United

States. George Richardson Mather

was born 2 November 1919 in New York and became a Baha'i in 1952.

He studied business and

tion and was certified as

pilot. He and his wife, Shirley,

their three children were living in

Delaware when they decided to pio-

neer in 1970. Settling in St.

Virgin Islands, in June 1972, they

of the newly created International

in 1986. They then moved to St. Kitts in the Leeward Islands and stayed Mayfor seven years. Mr. Mather served of

on the National Spiritual Assembly of the West Leeward Islands. The Mathers returned to the United States an

in 1994.

survived by her son, Michael May-Florence Virginia Mayberry On 9 May 1998 in the United States.

Born in 1906 in Sleeper, Missouri, Florence Virginia Wilson demonstrated from early childhood great Afenthusiasm for learning. During her youth, she met several Baha'is who South

profoundly influenced her search for first

spiritual truth. Not until a few years student after her marriage to David Mayberry in 1936, however, did she intensify Township,

her study of Baha 'u 'llah 's teachings, enrolling in the Baha'i Faith in May he

1941 in Reno, Nevada, where the responsifirst Local Spiritual Assembly in the the Baha'i

state was elected shortly afterwards. message

She was appointed as a member of South

the first Auxiliary Board to the Hands the Cause of God serving in the Western Hemisphere in 1954 and in of

1959 was elected to the National Spir- its

itual Assembly of the United States. age

Shortly after the Mayberry family pioneered to Mexico in 1961 Mrs. Mayberry was elected to serve on Secrethe National Spiritual Assembly of

Teaching Centre, and she served in that capacity until 1983. Mrs.

berry wrote short stories, many

which were published in Ellery Queens Mystery Magazine. She also authored several books, including

autobiography. Mrs. Mayberry is

berry, three grandsons, and three great-grandchildren.

Andrew S. R. Mofokeng

On 11 December 1997 in South rica. Andrew S. R. Mofokeng was born in Fouriesburg, Free State,

Africa, on 29 August 1933. He

heard of the Baha'i Faith as a

in Swaziland in 1954 and became the first Baha'i in Western

Sophiatown, that same year. Upon his enrollment in the Baha'i Faith

was asked by a committee ble for the propagation of

Faith to share Baha'u' llah's

in Swaziland, Basutoland, and

Africa. From 1956 to 1963 Mr. Moofokeng served on the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is

South and West Africa, becoming

first Recording Secretary at the

of twenty-one- the youngest in the Baha'i world. Within a few months

he was also the Corresponding tary. He alternated between

these

that country and participated in the Basufirst International Baha'i Convention where he

in 1963. In 1968 she was appointed Spirto the first Continental Board of 1965

Counsellors for the Protection and Auxiliary

Propagation of the Baha' i Faith in North America. Five years later the Universal House of Justice named her one of the three Counsellor members manag-

capacities until he pioneered to toland (Lesotho) in 1963, was soon elected to the National itual Assembly. From 1957 to

Mr. Mofokeng served as an

Board member to the Hands of the Cause of God in South Africa and Basutoland. Mr. Mofokeng was the liaison officer between white

## THE B AHA'I WORLD

ers and black employees in the mines in Orange Free State, South Africa, and an English/Sesotho interpreter in the High Court of Basutoland. He taught the Sesotho language at the University of Witwatersrand, wrote poetry in English and Sesotho, and Mrs.

trans lated a number of books into Sesotho, including the first prayer Secretary

book in that language and The Eter- nal Covenant. The Universal House she

of Justice wrote that " his teaching in

and administrative endeavors [have] left an enviable record of service that future generations may well emulate" and shared with the Southern African Cora H. Oliver

Baha'i community a "profound sense of loss." Mr. Mofokeng is survived by four children.

1939, she became one of the first

Guy Murchie

On 8 July 1997 in the United States. to

Guy Murchie was born in 1907 and Oliver

became a Baha'i in 1939. He was a

Lois Nolen

On 2 December 1997 in the United States. Lois Nolen and her husband Richard were designated Knights of Baha'u'll<1h fo r pioneering to the Azores from 1953 to 1962. In 1970, after the passing of her husband,

No len moved to British Honduras (Belize), where she served as

of the National Spiritual Asse mbly from 1971 to 1973. In the 1980's

served at the Baha'i World Centre

Israel. The Nolens are survived by five children.

On 23 October 1997 in the United States. Cora Oliver became a Baha'i in New York in May 1930. In October

pioneers to Panama. Responding to

the call to open virgin territories

the Baha'i Faith, in 1953 Ms.

moved to British Honduras (Belize),

reporter and artist for the Chicago Tribune, covering the early years of World War II. After leaving the Tribune in 1942, he became a flight instructor and navigator, while continuing to write and illustrate. He later founded Apple Hill Camp, an international summer camp for children in New Hampshire, which he operated for eleven years. Mr. Murchie authored three bestselling books, all of which were Book of the Month Club selections, including *The Seven Mysteries of Life*. Isaac Asimov said of Mr. Murchie's book *Music of the Spheres*, "One can only stand amazed at the breadth of Mr. Murchie's understanding and his ability to put the facts and speculations of science into colorful and nontechnical language."

#### OBITUARIES

and again from 1971 to 1974. Mr. Parsons was also a member of several Canadian Local Spiritual Assemblies and served on the Auxiliary Board of throughout the 1970's and 80's. He worked as a teacher, vice-principal, and principal and authored two books and many articles on the Baha'i Faith. Mr. and Mrs. Parsons raised four children. Shahnim Reza'i until her death. Mrs. Rice-Wray

thereby earning the title of Knight Baha'u'llah. Her activities in Honduras included the establishment of many local Assemblies. She on the National Spiritual Assembly from the date of its inception in until 1973, when she returned to United States after a short stay in Guatemala. Ronald James Parsons On 9 July 1997 in Canada. Ronald James Parsons was born on 8 May 1926 in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. In 1949, he married Rita Olive Blake and in 1961 declared faith as a Baha'i. Before the Baha'i Faith, Mr. Parsons was ordained minister. He served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada from 1964 to 1970

lie at the request of Dorothy From 1954 to 1957, Mrs. Rice-Wray was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is Central America. From 1957 to 1961, she served on the National Assembly of the Baha'is of Greater Antilles the treasurer, and from 1961 to she was the treasurer of the Assembly of the Baha'is of the Dominican Republic, where she remained

On 7 July 1997 in Iran. Shahram studied education and architectural Reza'i, a young Baha'i serving as a engineering and was an accomplished conscript in the army near the city of painter. The gallery at the Dominican-Rasht, was shot in the head by his American Cultural Institute in Santo weapons training officer on 6 July Domingo bears her name.

1997 and died the following day. In court the officer claimed the shooting was an accident and was released after a few days, once the court established that the man killed was a Baha'i. The and court excused the officer from paying the blood-money normally required in such instances, ordering him to pay the country.

only the cost of the three bullets used to kill Mr. Reza' i. Sheila Rice-Wray 1959

to 1960 and on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Indonesia from 1963 until it was disbanded was born 8 November 1908 in South Dakota, in the United States, and few pioneers able to remain in the country. He supported his service to became a Baha'i at the age of thirty. She wrote to the Guardian, asking the Baha'i Faith by working as the where she should go to help complete head of several different hospitals in the goals of the first Seven Year Plan, Indonesia. He also developed programs of systematic education in the through Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Baha'i writings and translated them Dominican Republic, spurred on by a from their original Arabic and Persian into Indonesian.

Mozaffar Samandari

On 12 September 1997 in Indonesia. Dr. Mozaffar Samandari was born in Rasht, Iran, on 10 June 1928. He

his wife pioneered to Indonesia in 1957, deliberately choosing to live in many remote areas of the

Dr. Samandari served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha' is of Southeast Asia from

## Latin America Loving Prayers

Shoghi." Eventually settling in Paraguay in 1950, she later moved to Bolivia and to the Dominican Republic.

Marguerite (Margot) Worley  
On 21 June 1997 in Brazil. Marguerite (Margot) Gleig was born on 25

## THE BAHAI WORLD

April 1910 in Bahia, Brazil. After living in England for six years, her returned

family moved back to Brazil in 1921, where she studied under Leonora to

Holsapple, the first Baha'i pioneer to that country. In the 1930's she met Roy Lee Worley, the American vice-consul stationed in Bahia. During a trip to the United States to visit Lee's family, the couple visited the Baha'i Assembly

House of Worship in Wilmette, met May Maxwell, and later embraced the Baha'i Faith at the home of Stanwood Cobb. Following their marriage on 2 March 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Worley returned to Brazil, where they raised a family of three children. Mrs. Worley was active in

At a

spreading the message of Baha'u'llah and helped to form the first Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Salvador, Bahia, in 1947. She was reelected the Chairman of the National Marguerite

Spiritual Assembly of South America and in 1961 became the chairman of building

the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Brazil. From 1958 to 1968 she served as an Auxiliary

Board member. When her husband retired in 1968, the Worleys

to the United States and took up residence in California. From 1968

1976 Mrs. Worley served on the Regional Teaching Committee of southern California, traveling to Mexico and French Guiana, Guyana, and Suriname and helping to establish the National Spiritual

of Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. In 1976 she and her ailing husband returned to Brazil, where Mr. Worley passed away two years later. In the 1980's Mrs. Worley started the Baha' i children's

"Flower Garden," holding classes until the last week of her life.

special meeting on 31 March 1998, the Special Commission for the Defense of Women's Rights of the State of Bahia posthumously nized the services that

Worley rendered "to the unity of kind through her activities in

the administration of the Baha' i community throughout South America during the years of 1950 to 1960."

## STATISTICS

### General Statistics

Worldwide Baha'i population More than 5 million  
Countries/dependent territories where 190 countries/



## Social and Economic Development

Baha'i development activities are initiated either by Baha'i administrative institutions or by individuals or groups. Together, these activities contribute to a global process of learning about a Bahai'i approach to social and economic development. They presently fall into three general categories.

### Activities of Fixed Duration

Most Baha'i social and economic development efforts are fairly simple activities of fixed duration in which Baha'is in villages and towns around the world address the problems and challenges faced by their localities through the application of spiritual principles. These activities either originate in the Baha'i communities themselves or are a response to the invitation of other organizations. It is estimated that in 1997- 98 there were some 1,460 endeavors of this kind, including tree-planting and cleanup projects, health camps, workshops and seminars on such themes as race unity and the advancement of women, and short-term training courses.

### Sustained Projects

The second category of Baha' i social and economic development consists of approximately 300 ongoing projects. The vast majority are academic schools, while others focus on areas such as literacy, basic health care, immunization, substance abuse, child care, agriculture, the environment, or microenterprise. Some of these projects are administered by nascent development organizations which have the potential to grow in complexity and in their range of influence.

### Organizations with Capacity to Undertake Complex Action

Certain Baha'i development efforts have achieved the stature of development organizations with relatively complex programmatic structures and significant spheres of influence.

They systematically train human resources and manage a number of lines of action to address problems of local communities and regions in a coordinated, interdisciplinary manner. Also included in this category are several institutions-especially large schools-which, although focusing only on one field, have the potential to make a significant impact. In this category there are currently 33 such organizations, which are located in all continents of the globe.

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Selected NEW  
PuBLICATIONS

Advancement of Women: A Baha'i Perspective  
Janet Khan and Peter Khan. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust,  
1998. 351 pp.

This book describes the contribution the Baha'i Faith has made and is yet to make in the area of gender equality and the part that its Central Figures, institutions, and individuals have played and will play in shaping the forces that will ultimately bring about positive change on a global scale.

The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion  
William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, rev. ed. Wilmette:  
Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998. 253 pp.

A revised and updated introduction to the history, teachings, structure and community life of the Baha'i community, which was originally published by Harper and Row in 1985. It is aimed at an undergraduate university-level audience.

Believing in Yourself  
Erik Blumenthal. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1997. 128 pp.  
A self-help book on developing self-esteem and the confidence to fulfill your potential in life, blending spirituality with psychology. Written by a practicing psychotherapist.

#### THE B AHA'i WORLD

The Brilliant Proof  
Mirza Abul-Fa'iz. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1998. 104 pp.  
Mirza Abul-Fa'iz's defense of the Baha'i Faith, penned in response to a scurrilous attack by a Christian evangelical in 1911, is an early example of Christian/Muslim/Baha'i polemic and is also an exposition of the Baha'i teachings. This volume includes the original essay that sparked the controversy as well as a new foreword that provides historical background.  
Exploracion de un marco conceptual para la educacion moral  
Lori McLaughlin Nogouchi, Holly Hanson, and Paul Lample.  
Buenos Aires: Editorial Baha'i Indolatinoamericana, 1998. 64 pp.  
In an effort to contribute to the discourse on education, this publication

makes use of the teachings of Baha'u'llah to describe the moral attributes needed to help construct a new world civilization.

fgadhi punidha naal

Baha'u'llah. Kuala Lumpur: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998. 400 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873, this is the volume's first authorized Tamil translation.

Forgiveness: Jewels from the Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha

'Abdu'l-Baha. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997. 35 pp.

Quotations from 'Abdu'l-Baha on forgiveness, accompanied by photographs.

Het Heiligste Boek: de Kitab-i-aqdas

Baha'u'lhih. the Hague: Stichting Baha'i Literatuur, 1997. 352 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873, this is the volume's first authorized Dutch translation.

Historical Dictionary of the Baha'i Faith

Hugh C. Adamson and Philip Hainsworth. London: Scarecrow Press, 1998. 504 pp.

Volume number seventeen of "Historical dictionaries of religions, philosophies, and movements ." This book presents the Founders, principles, administration, and significant historical events of the Baha'i Faith.

Kitab-i-Aqdas

Baha'u'llah. Karachi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997. 452 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873 , this is the volume's first authorized Urdu translation.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

Lights of Fortitude: Glimpses into the Lives of the Hands of the Cause of God

Barron Harper. Oxford: George Ronald, 1997. 632 pp.

Collection of pen-portraits of each of the fifty Hands of the Cause of God.

Lua Getsinger, Herald of the Covenant

Velda PiffMetelmann. Oxford: George Ronald, 1997. 432 pp.

Letters, diaries, and talks of Lua Getsinger from 1898 to 1916.

Qamus-i-iqan

Monid Ardekani. Lebanon: Baha'i Publishing Trust of Lebanon, 1997. 190 pp.

A chronology of the The Kitab-i-Iqan (The Book of Certitude, by Baha'u'lhih) in Arabic.

Rasahat-e-Abar

Dr. Sabir Afaghi and Muklas Vaidani. Karachi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997. 94 pp.

A biography of Abar Husayani Gunvari , a Baha'i poet famous in India and Pakistan. The book also includes a compilation of his poems.

Scripture and Revelation: Baha'i Studies, Vol. III

Moojan Momen, ed. Oxford : George Ronald, 1997. 368 pp.

A selection of papers presented at the first 'Irfan Colloquium at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, in December 1993 and the second 'Irfan Colloquium held in Wilmette, Illinois, USA, in March 1994.

Shoghi Effendi, a Tribute

Washington Araujo. Buenos Aires: Editorial Baha'i Indolatinoamericana, 1998.

192 pp.

Inspirational and motivating biography of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Cause of God.

The Station and Claims of Baha'u'llah

Michael Sours. Wilmette : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997. 231 pp.

This book explores Baha'u'llah's challenging claim about His Revelation and the day we are living in, and examines these claims in the context of His teachings concerning the oneness of the Founders of the world's great religions.

To Be a Mother

Wendi Momen. Oxford: George Ronald, 1997. 190 pp.

A collection from the Baha ' i and other scriptures, prayers, poems, aphorisms and literary pieces on being a mother.

Toward Oneness

Tod Ewing. Riviera Beach: Palabra Publications, 1998. 69 pp.

A compilation on racial and cultural issues addressing how to eliminate racial prejudice.

What's in It for Me?

Phyllis G. L. Chew. Kuala Lumpur: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998. 168 pp.

An introduction to the Baha'i Faith and Baha'i solutions to the world's problems. This book reviews and explores the blueprint given by Baha'u'llah and answers the question asked by many inquirers of the Baha'i Faith, "What's in it for me?"

The Wisdom of the Master: The Spiritual Teachings of 'Abdu'l-Baha

'Abdu'l-Baha. Los Angeles: Kalirnat Press, 1997. 124 pp.

This treasury of spiritual inspiration is gleaned from daily events in the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha and from His words and writings. Brought together here for the first time, these quotations and stories are a source of growth and healing and a guidebook to personal transformation.

Written in Light: 'Abdu'l-Baha and the American Baha'i Community, 1898-1921

R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram. Los Angeles: Kalirnat Press, 1998. 147 pp.

Captured by light, these delightful photographs reveal the history of the

American Baha'i community. Several new photos of 'Abdu'l-Baha are included which show his intimate relationship with the American believers. Other photos give a glimpse of early American Baha'is at work and at play, in Baha'i meetings and in each other's homes. These pictures demonstrate the strength, the depth, and the remarkable racial diversity of the early Baha'is.

## A Basic BAHA'í READING List

The following list has been prepared to provide a sampling of works conveying the spiritual truths, social principles, and history of the Baha'í Faith. It is by no means exhaustive. For a more complete record of Baha'í literature, see Bibliography of English-language Works on the Babi and Baha'í Faiths, 1844--1985, compiled by William P Collins (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990).

### SELECTED WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

#### The Kitab-i-Aqdas

The Most Holy Book, Bahá'u'lláh's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873, the volume's first authorized English translation was released in 1993.

#### The Kitab-i-Iqan

The Book of Certitude was written prior to Bahá'u'lláh's declaration of His mission as an explanation of progressive revelation and a proof of the station of the Bab.

#### The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'láh

Written in the form of a compilation of moral aphorisms, these brief verses distill the spiritual guidance of all the Divine Revelations of the past.

#### Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas

A compilation of tablets revealed between 1873 and 1892 which enunciate important principles of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, reaffirm truths He previously proclaimed, elaborate on some of His laws, reveal further prophecies, and establish subsidiary ordinances to supplement the provisions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

#### Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

A selection of Bahá'u'lláh's sacred writings translated and compiled by the Guardian of the Baha'í Faith to convey the spirit of Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings.

### WRITINGS OF THE BAB

#### Selections from the Writings of the Bab

The first compilation of the Bab's writings to be translated into English.

## SELECTED WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912

Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to a wide variety of audiences in Paris in 1911 - 1912, explaining the basic principles of the Baha'i Faith.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rulers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and rise of civilization and elucidating the spiritual character of true civilization.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha

A compilation of selected letters from 'Abdu'l-Baha's extensive correspondence on a wide variety of topics, including the purpose of life, the nature of love, and the development of character.

Some Answered Questions

A translation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's answers to a series of questions posed to Him during interviews with Laura Clifford Barney between 1904 and 1906. The topics covered include the influence of the Prophets in the evolution of humanity, the Baha'i perspective on Christian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

## BAHA'I READING LIST

### SELECTED WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

God Passes By

A detailed history of the first one hundred years of the Baha'i Faith.

The Promised Day Is Come

A commentary on Baha'u'llah's letters to the kings and rulers of the world.

The World Order of Baha'u'l-hih: Selected Letters

An exposition on the relation between the Baha'i community and the entire process of social evolution under the dispensation of Baha'u'llah, in the form of a series of letters from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'is of the West between 1929 and 1936.

### INTRODUCTORY WORKS

Baha'u'llah

Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, 1991.

A brief statement detailing Baha'u'llah's life and work issued on the occasion of the centenary of His passing.

Baha'u'llah and the New Era

John Esslemont. 5th rev. papered. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust,

1990.

The first comprehensive account of the Baha'i Faith, written in 1923 and updated for subsequent editions.

The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion

William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin. rev. ed. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998.

Textbook providing an overview of Baha' i history, teachings, administrative structures, and community life.

All Things Made New

John Ferraby. 2d rev. ed. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987.

A comprehensive outline of the Baha'i Faith.

Most of the books listed above have been published by various Baha '£ Publishing Trusts and are available in bookshops, libraries, or from the Trusts. Please see the Directory for addresses.

## GLOSSARY

'Abdu'l-Baha: (1844-1921) Son of Baha' u'llah, designated His successor and authorized interpreter of His writings. Named 'Abbas after His grandfather, ' Abdu ' l-Baha was known to the general public as 'Abbas Effendi. Baha' u' llah gave Him such titles as "the Most Great Branch," "the Mystery of God," and "the Master." After Baha' u'llah's passing, He chose the name ' Abdu' l-Baha, meaning "Servant of Baha' u' llah."

Administrative Order: The system of administration as conceived by Baha'u'lhih, formally established by ' Abdu ' l-Baha, and realized during the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. It consists, on the one hand, of a series of elected councils, universal, national, and local, in which are invested legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the Bah a' f community, and, on the other hand, of em inent and devoted Baha' is appointed for the specific purpose of propagation and protection of the Faith under the guidance of the Head of that Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

Amatu'l-Baha Ru~iyyih Khanum: Mary Sutherland Maxwell, an em inent North American Baha' i who became the wife of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, in 1937, after which she became

## THE BAHAI WORLD

known as Ru~iyyih Khanum Rabbani. (Amatu'l-Baha is a title meaning "Handmaiden of Baha'u'llah.") She served as the Guardian 's secretary during his lifetime and was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in 1952. She is the most prominent dignitary of the Baha'i community.

Arc: An arc cut into Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, along which the international administrative buildings of the Baha'i Faith are being built.

**Auxiliary Boards:** An institution created by Shoghi Effendi in 1954 to assist the Hands of the Cause of God. When the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors was established in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice, the Auxiliary Boards were placed under its direction .

**Bab, the:** The title, meaning "Gate," assumed by Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, who was the Prophet-Founder of the Babi Faith and the Forerunner of Baha'u'llah. Born 20 October 1819, the Bab proclaimed Himself to be the Promised One of Islam and announced that His mission was to alert the people to the imminent advent of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," namely, Baha'u'llah. Because of these claims, the Bab was executed by order of Na'iri'd-Din Shah on 9 July 1850.

**Baha'i Era:** The period of the Baha'i calendar beginning with the Declaration of the Bab on 23 May 1844, and expected to last until the next appearance of a Manifestation (Prophet) of God after the expiration of at least one thousand years.

**Baha'i International Community:** A name used generally in reference to the worldwide Baha' i community and officially in that community's external relations. In the latter context, the Baha' i International Community is an association of the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world and functions as an international nongovernmental organization. Its offices include its Secretariat at the Baha'i World Centre, a United Nations Office in New York with a branch in Geneva, an Office of Public Information, an Office of the Environment, and an Office for the Advancement of Women .

**Baha'i World Centre:** The spiritual and administrative center of the Baha'i Faith, located in the twin cities of Acre and Haifa, in Israel.

## GLOSSARY

**Bah:i'u'lhih:** Title assumed by Mirza J:usayn- 'Ali, Founder of the Baha'i Faith. Born on 12 November 1817, He declared His mission as the Promised One of all Ages in April 1863 and passed away in Acre, Palestine, on 29 May 1892 after forty years of imprisonment, banishment, and house arrest. Bah a' u' llah 's writings are considered by Baha'is to be direct revelation from God.

**Consultation:** A form of discussion between individuals and within groups which requires the subjugation of egotism so that all ideas can be shared and evaluated with frankness, courtesy, and openness of mind, and decisions arrived at can be wholeheartedly supported. Its guiding principles were elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

**Continental Boards of Counsellors:** An institution created in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice to extend into the future the work of the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, particularly its appointed functions of protection and propagation. With the passing

of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha' i Faith, there was no way for additional Hands of the Cause to be appointed. The duties of the Counsellors include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, advising and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Faith in their areas. Counsellors are appointed for terms of five years.

Convention: A gathering called at a regional, national, or international level for consultation on matters affecting the welfare of the Baha' i community and for the purpose, respectively, of electing delegates to a National Convention, electing the members of a National Spiritual Assembly, or electing the members of the Universal House of Justice.

German Templar Colony: Group of houses with red-tiled roofs at the foot of Mount Carmel that once housed members of the Society of the Temple, founded in Germany in the mid-1800's . Templers foregathered in Haifa in 1863 to await the second coming of Christ.

Hands of the Cause of God: Individuals appointed first by Baha'u'llah, and others named later by Shoghi Effendi, who were charged with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi there is no further possibility for appointing

#### THE BAHAF WORLD

Hands of the Cause; hence, in order to extend into the future the important functions of propagation and protection, the Universal House of Justice in 1968 created Continental Boards of Counsellors and in 1973 established the International Teaching Centre, which coordinates their work.

Holy Days: Eleven days commemorating significant Baha'i anniversaries, on nine of which work is suspended.

I;Iuququ'lhih: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the Kitabi-Aqdas, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom al I must tum" (at present, the Universal House of Justice) of nineteen percent of what remains to one's personal income after one's essential expenses have been covered. Funds generated by the payment of I;Iuququ'llah are used for the promotion of the Faith and for the welfare of society.

International Teaching Centre: An institution established in 1973 by the Universal House of Justice to bring to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land and to provide for its extension into the future . The duties of the International Teaching Centre include coordinating, stimulating, and directing the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and acting as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice. The membership of the Teaching Centre comprises all the surviving Hands of the Cause and also nine Counsellors appointed by the Universal House of Justice. The seat

of the International Teaching Centre is located at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel.

**Knight of Baha'u'llah:** Title initially given by Shoghi Effendi to those Baha'is who arose to open new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached those remaining unopened territories at a later date.

**Lesser Peace:** A political peace to be established by the nations of the world in order to bring about an end to war. Its establishment will prepare the way for the Most Great Peace, a condition of permanent peace and world unity to be founded on the spiritual principles and institutions of the World Order of Baha' u'llah and signaling humanity's coming of age.

## GLOSSARY

**Local Spiritual Assembly:** The local administrative body in the Baha' i Faith, ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The nine members are directly elected by secret ballot each year at Ri<;lvan from among the adult believers in a community.

**Monument Gardens:** Beautifully landscaped gardens at the heart of the Arc on Mount Carmel where befitting monuments have been erected over the graves of the daughter, wife, and youngest son of Baha' u' llah, and also the wife of Abdu ' l-Baha.

**Mount Carmel:** The mountain spoken of by Isaiah as the "mountain of the Lord." Site of the Baha'i World Centre including several Baha'i holy places, the most important of which are the Shrine of the Bab and the Monument Gardens.

**National Spiritual Assembly:** The national administrative body in the Baha'i Faith, ordained in the Baha'i sacred writings, with authority over all activities and affairs of the Baha' i Faith throughout its area. Among its duties are to stimulate, unify, and coordinate the manifold activities of Local Spiritual Assemblies and of individual Baha'is within its jurisdiction. The members of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world constitute the electoral college for the Universal House of Justice. At Ri<;lvan 1997, there were 175 National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies. See also Regional Spiritual Assembly.

**Nineteen Day Feast:** The principal gathering in each local Baha'i community, every Baha'i month , for the threefold purpose of worship, consultation, and fellowship.

**Pioneer:** Any Baha'i who arises and leaves his or her home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Baha'i Faith. "Homefront pioneer" is used to describe those who move to areas within their own country that have yet to be exposed to the Baha' i Faith or

where the Baha'i community needs strengthening.

Regional Spiritual Assembly: An institution identical in function to the National Spiritual Assembly but including a number of countries or regions in its jurisdiction, often established as a precursor to the formation of a National Spiritual Assembly in each of the countries it encompasses.

## THE B AHA'i W ORLD

Ri<;Ivan: Arabic for "Paradise." Twelve-day festival (from 21 April through 2 May) commemorating Baha'u'lhih 's declaration of His mission to His companions in 1863 in the Garden ofRi~v{m in Baghdad.

Shoghi Effendi Rabbani: (1897-1957) The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith after the passing of ' Abdu ' 1- BaM in 1921 , designated in His Will and Testament as His successor in interpreting the Baha'i writings and as Head of the Faith.

Shrine ofBah:i'u'llah: The resting place ofBaha' u'llah 's mortal remains, located near the city of Acre, Israel. The Shrine is the holiest spot on earth to Baha' is and a place of pilgrimage.

Shrine of the Bab: The resting place of the Bab's mortal remains, located on Mount Cannel in Haifa, Israel, a sacred site to Baha' is, and a place of pilgrimage.

Tablet: Divinely revealed scripture. In Baha' i scripture, the term is used to denote writings revealed by Baha' u ' llah, the Bab, and ' Abdu ' I- Baha.

Universal House of Justice: Head of the Baha' i Faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, and the supreme administrative body ordained by Baha' u ' llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Book of Laws. The Universal House of Justice is elected every five years by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies, who gather at an International Convention. The House of Justice was elected for the first time in 1963 . It occupied its permanent Seat on Mount Cannel in 1983 .

Adapted from A Basic Bahci 'i Dictionary, Wendi Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989).

## INDEX

A	institutions 90, 94- 96
'Abdu'l-Baha 6, 296	laws and moral teachings I 0
writings and utterances of23- 28, 159- 178, 193- 200, 210, 212, 225- 228 , 262- 263,296	spiritual teachings 9- 10
	Baha'i Health Agency 288
	Baha' i International Community 4, 1-14, 39- 50, 300
Agenda 21 42, 151, 238, 257, 258	
Alaska 141, 145	action re Baha'i community of
Iran	

Albania 14, 96, 119, 128 53

All China Women's Federation in Beijing Geneva Office 288  
136 Office for the Advancement of

Alliance of Religions and Conservation Women 12, 40, 47, 288  
(ARC) 67 Office of Public Information 12, 14,

Amatu'I-Baha Ru~iyyih Khanum 31, 67, 39, 48, 182, 288  
72- 75, 94, 103, 115, 299 Office of the Environment 12, 40,  
67,

Andaman and Nicobar Islands I 02 68,288

Angola 3, 100, 140 Secretariat 288

Anne, The Princess Royal 129 statements of 233- 259, 261 -  
267

Antigua and Barbuda 151 United Nations Office 2, 11,  
34, 39,

apartheid 229 288

Araujo, Washington 115, 120, 146,293 Baha'i Justice Society 288

Arbab, Farzam I, 157, 196 Baha' i Medical Association of  
Canada

Argentina 94, 146, 283 , 285 288

Aristotle 179 Baha ' i Office of the Environment  
for

Armenia 14 Taiwan 288

arts 90, 146-150 Baha' i Publishing Trusts,  
directory of

Arturo, Lawrence 43, 68 285- 287

Association for Baha ' i Studies 113, 114 Baha'i World Centre 4, 6, 7, 41 ,  
48

directory of 283- 285 Baha' u' llah 5, 14, 301

Association Medicate Baha'ie 287 writings of 19- 23,29, 161,  
168- 171,

Australia 54, 108, III, 114, 127, 132, 176- 177,199,224- 227,295-  
296

134, 141, 145- 148,283,285 Bahamas 132

Austria 125 Baltic States 14, 140

Azerbaijan 14, I 05 Bangladesh 122, 215

Barbados 109, 148

B Barnes, Kiser 67, 68

Bab, the 4, 7, 296, 300 Bates, Margaret Kelly 271

Terraces of the Shrine of 81 - 83 Belarus 14, 149

Baha'i Association for the Arts 288 Belgium 94, 98, 106, 143, 149, 285

Baha ' i community life 10- 11,90, 103- Belize 129  
110, 203- 216 Benin 122

Baha'i Computer and Communications Bermuda 93, 283  
Association 288 Bertha Dobbins Day I 16

Baha ' i Esperanto League 287 Bikman, David 203

Baha'i Faith Bloom, Allan 184

administrative order of 7- 9, 205- 208 Blums' Awards 116

aims of 11 - 15  
 history of 4- 9  
 Bolivia 94, 98, 152  
 Botswana 108, 135  
 Boyles, Ann 179  
 Brazil 31, 90, 94, 115, 124, 137, 151, 283, 285  
 Costa Rica 90  
 Cote d'Ivoire 98, 102, 150, 180, 285  
 Croatia 14, 144  
 Breakwell, Thomas I 04, I 07  
 Bulgaria 119, 140  
 Burkina Faso 122  
 Cuba 120, 150  
 Cyprus 3, I 02, 138, 140  
 Czech Republic 14, 34, 147  
 c  
 Cambodia 14, 122  
 Cameroon 3, 143, 283, 285  
 Campbell, Joseph 186  
 Canada 3, 54, 107, 113, 125, 133, 141, 142, 145, 147, 149, 230, 284, 288  
 Canary Islands 74, I 05  
 Cape Verde 119, 131  
 Carey, Dr. George, Archbishop of Canterbury 43, 63, 67  
 Cayman Islands 135  
 Caymans Against Substance Abuse (CASA) 135  
 centers of learning 234  
 Centre for the Study of the Texts 79, 83- 85  
 Chad 137  
 Chance, Hugh Emery 271 - 272  
 Chicago Sun Times 112  
 Chile 122, 141, 283  
 China 112, 136  
 Christendom 162  
 Christian Aid 64  
 civilization  
 advancement of 19- 28  
 Baha'i view of 159  
 material and spiritual 157, 178  
 spiritual 26- 27, 212  
 Clara and Hyde Dunn Memorial Lecture 134  
 Clinton, Bill 134  
 Convention  
 D  
 Dahl, Arthur 43, 152  
 Dallas Morning News 136  
 Democratic Republic of Congo  
 Denmark 98  
 development 90, 121 - 123, 233- 259  
 Baha'i-inspired 213-215, indicators 236-237  
 meeting basic needs 250- 251  
 spirituality in 233- 259  
 spiritually based indicators  
 259  
 statistics 281 - 282  
 Dine Out 112  
 directory of Baha'i agencies 283- 289  
 Dominica 125, 148  
 Dominican Republic 90, 118, 144  
 Dunne, Major E. 272  
 E  
 Eastern Caroline Islands 92  
 Ecuador II 0, 284  
 education 20- 28, 248- 249, 253, cointentional 191  
 goal of 194  
 importance in advancement of civilization 179- 201  
 See also moral education  
 vocational 218, 219  
 Edwards, Roger John 272- 273  
 Eighth International Baha' i

Clinton, Hillary Rodham 130 32,35,80  
 Club of Budapest 132-133 Einstein, Albert 164  
 Coles, Robert 187-189 El Salvador 42, 90, 94, 130  
 Colombia 3, 90, 91, 100, 150,213-21 5, Elizabeth, the Queen of England  
 129  
 283 Emerson, Ralph Waldo 188, 194  
 communities of the future 234 Encyclopedia Britannica 4  
 consultation 198, 30 I Encyclopedie des religions del  
 'humanite  
 contact with prominent people 90, 128- 126  
 132 England 142, 230, 284, 287, 288  
 Cook Islands 119 Engo-Tjega, Ruth Bamela 44

## I N D E X

environment 90, 151 - 153 God, Baha'i concept of 196  
 See also Baha'i International Gorbachev, Mikhail 133  
 Community, Office of the governance and participation 252- 253  
 Environment Grameen Bank 215  
 environmental stewardship 249- 250 Greece 125 , 138, 150, 153  
 equality of the sexes 243- 244 Greenland 92  
 Equatorial Guinea 126 Gregory, Alma Cynthia 273  
 equity and j ustice 243, 254 Grieser, Mona 68  
 Erasmus 183 Guadeloupe 96  
 Eritrea 14, 138 Guam 125  
 Estonia 107 Guardian of the Baha ' i Faith  
 Ethiopia 91, 12 1, 128 See Shoghi Effendi  
 European Baha'i Business Forum 119, Guardianship 8  
 288 Guatemala 146, 151  
 European Baha' i Youth Council288 Guinea-Bissau !50  
 evolution 158 Gujral, Bani Duga l 45  
 Guyana 109, 121  
 F  
 family 262 H  
 Faroe Islands 14 7 Habermas, Jurgen 203  
 Fattakhov, Shamil49, 106 Haiti 96  
 Federated States of Micronesia 104, 138 Hands of the Cause of God 8, 94,  
 301  
 Fiji 3, 106, 286 Hanson, Holly 196  
 Finland 107, 128 Happy Hippo Show, the 49  
 Forum on Human Solidarity, Human Hawaii 147, 149, 284  
 Settlements and Global Ecosystems Health for Humanity 289  
 44 Honduras 90  
 Foundation for the Application and Hong Kong 139, 147, 286, 289  
 Teaching of the Sciences Hong Kong Baha'i Professional Society  
 (FUNDAEC) 213- 215 289  
 Solidarity Production System 215 Houses of Worship 11, 90, 109, 110-113  
 Tutori al Learning System 214 human rights 12, 265- 267

Four Year Plan 31,32  
 France 94,98, 102,104, 107, 113, 126,  
 140, 142, 143, 151 ,287,288  
 Freire, Paulo 191  
 French Guiana 96  
 I  
 G  
 Gambia 148, 150  
 Genaphi, Princess of Swaziland 131  
 Georgia 14, 143  
 German Templer Colony 87, 301  
 1,  
 Germany 91,94, 120, 140, 147, 149,209,  
 230,284,286,287  
 Ghana 150, 207 ,284  
 145-  
 girl child, empowerment of 261-264  
 glossary of Baha'i terms 299-304  
 Institute of Science, Technology and  
 Ecology, Delhi 63  
 intellect, power of 24- 25  
 interfaith activities 90, 124- 126  
 International Baha'i Archives 7, 79, 84-  
 85  
 International Consultancy on Religion,  
 Education and Culture (ICOREC) 62  
 L  
 International Ecology Congress 43  
 International Teaching Centre 79, 80, 85-  
 87, 302  
 involvement in the life of society 90,  
 I 15- 121  
 Iran, Baha'i community of 2, 13, 35, 41,  
 51-60  
 Ireland 54, I 19, 124, 130, 147  
 'Irfan Colloquium 114--115  
 !socrates 185  
 Development  
 Israel I 08, 144, 14 7, 288  
 Prime Minister of 48  
 Italy 102, 140,284,286  
 143, 151  
 fiftieth anniversary of the Baha ' i  
 J  
 education program 34  
 humanity, oneness of 212, 230, 241 -  
 267  
 Hungary 14, 103- 104, 113, 149  
 Iceland 121, 127  
 'Inayati, Masha'llah 55, 273  
 independent investigation of truth  
 245-  
 246,255  
 India 1, 112, 118, 136, 138,217- 22  
 284,286  
 indigenous peoples 90  
 indigenous peoples, special role of  
 146  
 Indonesia 147  
 standard of 161  
 two systems of 159  
 Kohlberg, Lawrence 191  
 Korea 104, 147,286  
 Kulecho, Isaya 273- 274  
 Kyrgyzstan 14, 101, 110  
 Lamb, Artemus Dwight 274  
 Lample, Paul 196  
 Landegg Academy 115, 140- 141,289  
 Laszlo, Ervin 132  
 Latvia 142  
 Leach, Bernard 149  
 Lebanon 286  
 Lesotho 93  
 Liberia 34, 122  
 Liberia Community  
 Incorporated 122  
 Los Angeles Times 51  
 Luxembourg 2, 94, 127, 140,  
 community of 71, 75-

- Jamaica 129  
 Japan 104, 114, 142, 147, 284, 286  
 Jordan 113  
 justice 199  
 Macau 147
- K**  
 Kaplan, Robert 180, 181, 183  
 Kazakhstan 14, 43, 152  
 Kempton, Honor 75  
 147, 152,  
 Kenya 92, 95, 284, 286  
 Khalajabadi, Kayvan 55, 56  
 Khatami, Mohammad 51, 53, 59  
 Kilpatrick, William 184- 185, 191  
 Kiribati I 03  
 Kitab-i-Aqdas I 06, I 09  
 knowledge  
 acquisition of 21 - 28, 157, 168- 178,  
 193- 194, 226  
 134  
 pride and competition in 177  
 as commodity !58  
 related to information 168  
 related to understanding 169  
 275  
 related to wisdom 172  
 social role !57  
 source of 167, 193
- Lyons, Miriam 46
- M**  
 Maathai, Wangari 63  
 Madagascar 99  
 Ma~rami, Dhabu~u'llah 55, 56  
 Malawi 145  
 Malaysia 34, 121, 142, 144,  
 153, 284, 286  
 Mali 122  
 Malta 151  
 man, reality of 23, 170  
 Mandela, Nelson 129  
 Manifestations of God 9  
 Mariana Islands 117  
 Marshall Islands 96  
 Martin Luther King Day of Service  
 Martinique 96  
 Masipei, Evotia 274  
 materialism !58  
 Mather, George Richardson 274-  
 275  
 Mauritius 99, 118  
 Mayberry, Florence Virginia 275  
 Mayor, Federico 133, 180

## INDEX

- McDonald, Olive 274  
 media, use of in promoting equality of  
 sexes 263  
 Mexico 120, 146, 152  
 microfinance 2 15  
 minorities, protection of 265- 267  
 Mirza 'Ali-Mu~ammad  
 Ogunleye Bisi, Chief 43  
 See the Bab  
 Mirza I: Iusayn-'Ali  
 See Baha'u'llah  
 Mi!)!aqi, Bihnam 55, 56  
 Mofokeng, Andrew S. R. 275- 276  
 Moldova 14, 140, 151  
 Monaco 151  
 Mongolia 3, 14, 123, 137
- Nineteen Day Feast 205, 206, 303  
 Niranjana Shah, Prince of Nepal 112  
 Noguchi, Lori McLaughlin 196  
 Nolen, Lois 276  
 Norway 54, 105, 106, 107, 221, 286
- p**  
 Oliver, Cora H. 276  
 On e Country 40, 49  
 Orbison, Virginia 71, 73, 75  
 Pakistan I 06, 181, 286  
 Palmer, Martin 62, 63  
 Panama 90, 110

Monteiro, Mascarenhas 131  
 moral capabilities 196  
 moral education  
 Baha'i concept of 192-195  
 Baha'i framework for 195- 20 I  
 classes I 02, I 04  
 moral reasoning 186  
 Mottahedeh Development Services 134,  
 129  
 289  
 Mount Carmel Projects 2, 32, 79-88  
 Mozambique 101  
 Mswati III, King of Swaziland 131  
 Munsiff, Meherangiz 93  
 Murchie, Guy 276  
 Myanmar 105  
 N  
 Namibia 151  
 204  
 National Spiritual Assemblies 303  
 establishment of 14- 15, 34  
 Nepal 143  
 Netherlands I 06, 153, 286, 288  
 New Caledonia 139, 147  
 R  
 New Era Development Institute (NEDI)  
 race unity 90, 126- 128, 208  
 1, 217- 221  
 reading list of basic Baha'i books 295-  
 New York Times 51, 52  
 New Zealand 104, 117, 133 , 142, 230,  
 recognition of the Baha'i Faith 90, 132-  
 Nicaragua I 08  
 regional Baha'i councils 32- 34  
 Niger 109, 122  
 religion 230  
 Nigeria 150, 285, 286  
 and advancement of women 263  
 Nigerian Countrywomen's Association  
 civilizing force of 27-28  
  
**THE BAHAI'f WORLD**  
  
 interpretation of 162  
 nature of 159, 161 , 166  
 Republic of Congo 131  
 Republic of Georgia  
 See Georgia  
 Papua New Guinea 131 , 210-212  
 Paraguay 42, 90, 94, 118  
 Paris 31  
 Parsons, Ronald James 276-277  
 peace 5, 13, 24, 189, 216  
 Peace Monument, Brazil 151  
 Peru 90  
 Philip, Prince (Duke of Edinburgh)  
 Philippines 147, 284, 287  
 Poland 14, 113, 142, 287  
 Portugal 72, 74, 140, 142, 287  
 Postman, Neil 183-184, 186, 187, 192,  
 196  
 Power of Race Unity, The (video) 208  
 Power, Mary 44  
 Promise of World Peace, The 13- 14  
 prosperity 25- 26, 64, 68, 179, 182,  
 indicators of 68  
 Prosperity of Humankind, The 15, 182  
 Puerto Rico 147, 285  
 Purkis, Andrew 63

Reunion 99  
 142,  
 Reza'i, Shahram 55, 277  
 Rice-Wray, Sheila 277  
 136,229  
 Rogerson, Andrew 63  
 Spiritual  
 Romania 14, 107,2 10,287  
 Romany people 101  
 Rost, Radha 219  
 Royaumont Process, the 49  
 Basque  
 Ruhi Institute, Colombia 90-9 1, 93  
 Rushdy, Sherif 217, 220, 221  
 Baha'i  
 Russia 14, 100, 107,285,287  
 Rwanda 32, 92, 93, 204  
 Sri Lanka !53  
 s  
 Sabah 34  
 community  
 Samandari, Mozaffar 277  
 Samoa 98, 104, 109, 112  
 San Marino !51  
 Summit on Religions and Conservation  
 Sao Tome 14, 100  
 Sarawak 34  
 scholarship 90, 113- 115  
 schools  
 spring 105  
 summer 105, 106, 107, 108  
 288,289  
 winter 105  
 science  
 nature of 160, 166  
 practice of 165  
 science and religion 157-1 78, 234  
 harmony of 160, 162, 164, 166-  
 168  
 scientific knowledge 162- 163  
 study of 2 1-22, 25  
 Senegal 93  
 Serageldin, Ismail 63  
 Seychelles 96, 99  
 Shiva, Vandana 63  
 ShoghiEffendi6, 7, 12,304  
 Solomon Islands 97, 99, 116, 138,  
 !51  
 South Africa 112, 119, 127, 129,  
 statement of the National  
 Assembly of 229-232  
 South Korea 128  
 Spain 2, I 02, 144, 150, 285, 287  
 Amatu ' l-Baha's travels to  
 and Alicante provinces of 75  
 fiftieth anniversary of the  
 community of71-75  
 Spiritual Assemblies 206  
 St. Vincent and the Grenadines 120  
 statistics of the Baha ' i world  
 279- 282  
 Sudan 93  
 Suriname I 09  
 Swaziland 131  
 Sweden 101,287  
 Switzerland 98, 11 5, 140, 143, 147,284,  
 Taiwan 124, 142, 147, 149,287,288  
 Tajikistan 14, 102  
 Talibi, Musa 55, 56  
 Tanzania 92, 112  
 teaching the Baha'i Faith 14, 90, 97-  
 103  
 Thailand 109, 149  
 Tobey, Mark 149- 150  
 Tocqueville, Alexis de 203  
 Togo 100, 122  
 Tonga 104, 142

writings of 228, 297  
 210-  
 Sicily 14, 102  
 Sierre Leone 128, 180  
 Singapore 11 6, 147, 285  
 Slovak Republic 14, 34  
 Slovenia 14, 144  
 training institutes 31, 89, 90, 90-94,  
 212  
 Trinidad and Tobago 142, 285  
 trustworthiness and moral leadership  
 244-245  
 Truth and Reconciliation Commission

## INDEX

229  
 Tupouto'a, Crown Prince of Tonga I 04  
 Turkey 138, 140  
 Turkmenistan 14, 151  
 Turning Point for All Nations 14  
 Tuvalu 133  
 Tyndale, Wendy 64, 65  
 General Assembly resolution re  
 u  
 Uganda 92, 112, 123, 287  
 Vice President of 48  
 Ukraine 14, 11 3, 124, 140  
 United Kingdom 112, 114, 115, 128, 140,  
 149, 287, 288  
 United Nations 11, 39-50, 151  
 " Listen to Girls" 45  
 Commission on Human Rights 41  
 of  
 Sub-Commission on Prevention of  
 Discrimination and Protection of  
 Minorities, Working Group on  
 Minorities 266, 267  
 Commission on Human Rights  
 resolution re human rights in Iran  
 54  
 Commission on Human Settlements  
 47  
 Commission on Social Development  
 44, 47  
 Commission on Sustainable  
 Development 48  
 Commission on the Status of Women  
 45, 47, 26 1  
 Committee on the Elimination of  
 Discrimination against Women 47  
 Conference on Environment and  
 Development (Earth Summit) 12  
 Conference on Human Settlements  
 Economic Commission for Africa 47  
 Executive Committee of the UN High  
 Commissioner for Refugees  
 (UNHCR) Program 48  
 fi ftieth anniversary of 14  
 Fourth World Conference on Women  
 12  
 human rights in Iran 51 , 54  
 Human Rights Day I I 7  
 Intergovernmental Group of Experts  
 on the Right to Development 48  
 Special Rapporteur on Religious  
 Intolerance 54  
 Special Representative on Iran 54  
 Sub-Commission on the Prevention  
 of Discrimination and Protection  
 of Minorities 42  
 Substantive Session of the United  
 Nations Economic and Social  
 Council 47  
 Third Committee resolution re human  
 rights in Iran 53  
 UN EP Global Youth Forum 44  
 United Nations Children's Fund  
 (UNICEF) 40, 45-47  
 United Nations Day 118  
 United Nations Development  
 Programme 256  
 Human Development Report 237  
 United Nations Economic and Social  
 Council (ECOSOC) 40  
 United Nations Educational,  
 Scientific and Cultural  
 Organization (UNESCO) 133, !53,  
 180, 238  
 United Nations Population Fund 136,

(Habitat II) 12, 140 139  
 Decade for Human Rights Education United Nations Research Institute for  
 34 Social Development (UNRISD)  
 Decade for Human Rights Education 238  
 (1995- 2004) 42 Universal Declaration of Human  
 Development Programme Rights 42  
 Human Development Report 237 World Conference of Ministers  
 DPI/NGO Conference on Building Responsible for Youth 44  
 Partnerships 48 World Conference on Human Rights  
 Economic and Social Commission for 12  
 Asia and the Pacific 4 7 World Health Assembly 47

## THE BAHAI WORLD

World Health Organization, education of 226  
 Executive Board of 4 7 equality of 223-228, 262  
 World Summit for Social motherhood, station of 226  
 Development 12, 14 rights of 263  
 United States 51, 54, 59, 97, 101, 104, role as peacemakers 210, 227  
 112, 113, 115, 123, 127, 129, 130, See also Baha'i International  
 134, 136, 141, 142, 145, 146, 147, Community, Office for the  
 149, 208, 230, 287, 288, 289 Advancement of Women  
 statement of the National Spiritual Women for International Peace and  
 Assembly of 223- 228 Arbitration 136  
 unity in diversity 208, 230, 241 - 242 Word of God, potency of 22-23  
 Universal House of Justice 2, 4, 8, 9, 206, World Bank 2, 43, 61- 68, 238  
 2 12, 2 15, 304 Conference on Environmentally and  
 authority of 29-30 Socially Sustainable Development  
 messages from 29-35, 20 I 44  
 Uruguay 94, 130 World Faiths and Development  
 Uzbekistan 14, 92, I 08 Dialogue 2, 43, 61-70, 233  
 Baha' i participation in 62, 67-68  
 v religious representation  
 in 69-70  
 Valuing Spirituality in Development 62 world civilization 234  
 van den Hoonaard, Will C. 113 World Community Foundation 289  
 Vanuatu 98, 11 6, 142, 145 World Faiths and Development  
 Dialogue  
 Venezuela 90, 148, 285  
 See World Bank  
 Vietnam 142 World Wide Fund for Nature 67  
 Virgin Islands 134 World Wide Web 31  
 Virtues Project 104, 12 1 Worley, Marguerite 277- 278  
 Voice of America 59  
 Voices of Baha 147 y  
 Young Men's Christian Association  
 w (YMCA) 133  
 West Leeward Islands 143

youth 90, 139- 145, 208

Western Samoa 3

youth workshops 3, 208-209

Wolfensohn, James 62, 63, 66, 67

women 3 z

advancement of 90, 135- 139, 208, Zambia 4, 11 3

209-2 10,263 Zimbabwe 140

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