

WORLD

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CONTENTS

Introduction to the Baha'i Community 7

WRITINGS AND MESSAGES

Baha'i Sacred Writings 21

From the Universal House of Justice 27

EVENTS 1999- 2000

Mount Carmel Projects: Progress 1999- 2000 35

New National Spiritual Assemblies 43

The Year in Review 47

Parliament of the World's Religions 105

The Baha'i International Community: Activities 1999-2000 111

Establishment of the First Chair for Baha'i Studies 123

Brazil's Response to Who is Writing the Future? 127

Education as Resistance to Forces of Disintegration

by Luiz Gushiken 129

The Dangerous Passage to a World Republic

by Leonardo Bo.ffi 139

Detachment Shall Lead to Redemption

by Ricardo Young 148

Update: The Situation of the Baha'is in Iran 157

ESSAYS, STATEMENTS, AND PROFILES

A Tribute to Amatu'l-Baha Rul).iyyih Khanum

by Violette Nak!Jawini 167

Some Aspects of Baha'i Scholarship

by Peter J Khan 197

Beyond Integration and Separation: The Dynamic Nature of
Baha'i Law

by Roshan Danesh 223

World Watch

by Ann Boyles 265

Profile:

Mongolian Development Center 285

Statements by the Baha' i International Community:

Current Situation of the Baha' is in Iran 29 1

The Right to Education 295

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Obituaries 303

Statistics 313

Directory 317

Selected New Publications 325

A Basic Baha'i Reading List	329
Glossary	333
Index	339

INTRODUCTION
TO THE BAHAI
COMMUNITY

judge in the United States receives an award from the American Bar Association for her work in the development of alternative dispute resolution. In northern Mongolia, people attending the inaugural festivities of a new local center are delighted by performances of traditional music, comedy, and dance, which are followed by a two-day women's seminar. An individual in Guinea, concerned about the practice of female genital mutilation in that country, organizes a meeting to help raise awareness about the problem. In Bolivia, hundreds of people from Quechua, Aymara, Mapuche, Wichi, Guaymi, Kariri Xoco, and Fulni-6 backgrounds attend a conference to discuss the progress of their communities. A community in Portugal organizes a campaign for students to participate in cleaning the local dam that provides drinking water for the city. In front of the president of Mauritius and some two thousand children gathered at the State House to celebrate peace, a twelve-year-old girl sings "Citoyen du Monde" ["World Citizen"], which so moves the dignitaries that they ask for it to be sung several times so that the other children can learn it. Students from Canada, Ghana, Macau, Sri Lanka, Togo, the

THE BAHAI WORLD

United States, and other countries constitute the first undergraduates of an academy in Switzerland whose vision is "to become a microcosm of the world and to eventually welcome to its campus at least one student from each country on the planet." Although they come from diverse backgrounds and far-flung areas of the planet, these people all share a united view of the world, its future, and their role in shaping it. They are Baha'is.

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 nearly 130,000 localities in 190 independent countries and 45 dependent territories or overseas departments. What was once regarded by some as a small, obscure sect was reported by the Britannica Book of the Year 1992 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 world-governing council, known as the Universal

House of Justice, are located in the Holy Land, in Haifa, Israel.

This article offers a brief introduction to the Baha'i community, its history, its spiritual teachings, and its aims and objectives.

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 Shia 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 in the following years, but the growth of the new religion continued even after the Bab Himself was imprisoned and later executed 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

THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

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 and Buddhism from Hinduism. It was apparent early in the Bab's ministry that the religion established by Him was not merely a sect or a movement within Islam but 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 past religious dispensations.

Mirza Iusayn- 'Ali 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, Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally 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 initial imprisonment Mirza Iusayn- '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. Bahci'u'llah was still nominally a prisoner when He passed away near 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 Baha'u'llah revealed the equivalent of more than 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. 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 His Father's long exile and imprisonment and was 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 outbreak of World War I in 1914, 'Abdu'l-Baha had returned to His home in Haifa, just across the bay from Acre, and devoted Himself to caring for the local people, 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 but declined to use. He passed away in 1921 and is buried on Mount Carmel in a vault near the spot where He had interred the remains of the Bab some years before. Among the 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 is 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, as His successor, to act 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 on four main areas: the development of the Baha'i World Centre in the environs of Haifa; the translation and interpretation of the Baha'i sacred writings; the rise and consolidation of the institutions of the Baha'i administrative

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

order; 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 spot designated by Baha'u'llah on Mount Carmel. Shoghi Effendi beautified and expanded the simple native stone structure, which is today a site of pilgrimage for Baha'is from all over the world. He enhanced the Baha'i properties and initiated construction of the International Baha'i Archives Building to house the original Baha'i scriptures and artifacts from the early days of the Baha'i Faith. This building, the first on the arc-shaped path on the site designated as the world administrative center of the Baha'i community, was completed in 1957. Shoghi Effendi's actions laid the foundations, literally and figuratively, for the further development of the Baha'i World Centre. 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 to 'Abdu'l-Baha for a number of years and was a student at Oxford University at the time of his Grandfather's passing. Shoghi Effendi's mastery of Persian, Arabic, and English, coupled with the authority conferred upon him 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, *God Passes By*, and wrote thousands of letters to communities and individuals around the world, elucidating passages from the writings and 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 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 of varying duration, during which twelve National Spiritual Assemblies were elected.

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 Riqvan in Baghdad the goal was to open 132 new countries and major territories to

the Faith and to expand existing communities in 120 countries and territories that had previously been opened. 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 as to whether an individual could be named who met the demanding spiritual qualifications specified by '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 protecting the unity of the faith and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to ensure that the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were won. Upon Shoghi Effendi's passing, these men and women guided the Baha'i community to complete the plan initiated by the Guardian and to hold the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 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

THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

fifty-six National Spiritual Assemblies that existed in April 1963, clearly demonstrated the principle of unity so central to the Baha'i Faith, with the nine members coming from four continents and representing a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. Based on the authority conferred on it by the Founder of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice stands as the acknowledged central authority in the worldwide Baha'i community and has, during the past thirty-six years, 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 181; and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies has increased from 3,555 to some 12,500. Baha'is live in 235 countries and territories around the planet. Spiritual and Moral Teachings and Baha'i Community Life The force that unites this diverse body of people is the vision achieved through their 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 world's great religions have been established by Messengers or Manifestations of this Divine Reality- Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad- who have been sent 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: humanity has been created to know and to worship God. Only the religions' social teachings change through this process of progressive revelation. The Baha'i perspective sees the cumulative benefits of progressively revealed religions as fundamental to an "everadvancing civilization." What divides various religious communities, Baha'is believe, comes not from God but from humanity and its accretions to the essential religious teachings brought by each divine Messenger.

At this stage of humanity's development, the unity of the human race must be recognized, the equality of women and men must be established, the extremes of wealth and poverty must be

THE B AHA'f W ORLD

eliminated, and the age-old promise of universal peace must be realized. Liking the development of the human race to that of an individual, the Baha'i writings say that we have passed through stages analogous to infancy and childhood and are now in the midst of a tumultuous adolescence, standing 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 are binding on Baha'is. Central to these is daily obligatory prayer. Study of and meditation upon the Baha'i sacred writings each morning and evening is also enjoined. Baha'is between the ages of fifteen and seventy, with certain exceptions, observe an annual nineteen-day, dawn-to-dusk fast. 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, at which all members join in worship, consult about community affairs, and socialize. Pending the further development of Baha'i communities, these meetings often occur in rented facilities, people's homes, or in a local Baha'i center. The Baha'i

THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

writings call for the erection in each community of a beautifully designed House of Worship, surrounded by 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. 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 faiths with music by an a capella choir. This preserves the sacredness of the experience of hearing and meditating upon the Holy Word without the interference of man-made 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 the 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 active non-governmental organization (NGO) that represents the collective voice of national Baha'i communities around the world, enjoys special 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. 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 the major world summits and NGO forums sponsored by the United Nations during the past decade.

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

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 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 of the

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha' u'llah: Selected Letters, 1st pocket sized 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

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 not only collaborates with like-minded organizations in and out of the United Nations, but it engages in public information efforts to bring the spiritual and social principles of the Faith to the attention of people everywhere. The persecution of the Baha'is in Iran since the 1979 Iranian revolution has prompted wide dissemination of information about the Baha'i Faith in the international news media. More than two hundred members of the Faith have been executed for their belief, considered as heresy by the regime, and thousands more have been imprisoned, fired from their jobs, or have had their homes confiscated or their pensions cut off as a result of government orders. Baha'is around the world have responded in unity to this ongoing persecution in Iran-the land in which their religion was born-by petitioning their governments to take action against this injustice; it is, to some degree, as a result of these efforts that the persecutions have not been more extreme, although Iran's Baha'is still face the possibility of arbitrary imprisonment and execution, and are still denied fundamental rights and freedoms .3

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 Peace*, sparked a worldwide campaign of presentations and public education projects throughout the International Year of Peace and since, aimed at government figures , leaders of thought, and the general population. The centenary of Baha'u'llah 's passing in 1992 was commemorated, in part, with the publication of a statement detailing His life, teachings, and mission, designed to increase knowledge of the Baha'i Faith among members of the public. A statement presenting the Baha'i perspective on social development, *World Order of Baha 'u 'llah*, p. 204.

See pp . 15 7- 64 and 29 1- 94 for furth er information on th e con tinuing persecution of Iran 's Baha ' i community.

The Prosperity of Humankind, was disseminated at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, and later that year a statement entitled *Turning Point/or All Nations* was released as a contribution to discussions on the future of the United Nations during its fiftieth anniversary. In 1999, the Baha'i International Community released *Who Is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century*.

The Baha'i community has also been continually engaged in a series of international teaching plans. It has seen rapid expansion in

different parts of the world, perhaps 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. New national governing bodies are also being formed elsewhere, as the Universal House of Justice deems communities to have reached a sufficient level of maturity.

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 enormous energies with which the Creator of all things has endowed this spiritual springtime of the race. 4

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.

Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind* (1995). See *The Baha'i World 1994-95*, pp. 273-96, for the complete text of this statement.

BAHA'f SACRED WRITINGS

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah
having created the world and all that liveth and moveth
H therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained
and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and
capacity to know Him and to love Him- a capacity that
must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose
underlying the whole of creation ... Upon the inmost
reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of
one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of
His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused
the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a
mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been
singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.
These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty

and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly

desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven ... These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace.

Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts.

....i,-i

All praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of nonexistence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory. This twofold distinction conferred upon him hath cleansed away from his heart the rust of every vain desire, and made him worthy of the vesture with which his Creator hath deigned to clothe

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

him. It hath served to rescue his soul from the wretchedness of ignorance.

This robe with which the body and soul of man hath been adorned is the very foundation of his well-being and development. Oh, how blessed the day when, aided by the grace and might

of the one true God, man will have freed himself from the bondage and corruption of the world and all that is therein, and will have attained unto true and abiding rest beneath the shadow of the Tree of Knowledge!

And now, concerning thy question regarding the creation of man. Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition.

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 he is then 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. From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha 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 as a shoreless ocean, every pupil a prodigal fountain of knowledge. If, then, the pursuit of knowledge lead to the beauty of Him Who is the Object of all Knowledge, how excellent that goal; but if not, a mere drop will perhaps shut a man off from flooding grace, for with learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on error and indifference to God.

The sciences of today are bridges to reality; if then they lead not to reality, naught remains but fruitless illusion. By the one true God! If learning be not a means of access to Him, the Most Manifest, it is nothing but evident loss.

The Manifestations of God are ..in agreement with the view that education exerteth the strongest possible influence on humankind. They affirm, however, that differences in the level of intelligence are innate; and this fact is obvious, and not worth debating. For we see that children of the same age, the same country, the same race, indeed of the same family, and trained by the same individual, still are different as to the degree of their comprehension and intelligence. One will make rapid progress, one will receive instruction only gradually, one will remain at the lowest stage of all. For no matter how much you may polish a shell, it will not tum into a gleaming pearl, nor can you change a dull pebble into a gem whose pure rays will light the world ... That is

to say, education cannot alter the inner essence of a man, but it doth exert tremendous influence, and with this power it can bring forth from the individual whatever perfections and capacities are deposited within him. A grain of wheat, when cultivated by the farmer, will yield a whole harvest, and a seed, through the gardener's care, will grow into a great tree. Thanks to a teacher's loving efforts, the children of the primary school may reach the highest levels of achievement; indeed, his benefactions may lift some child of small account to an exalted throne. Thus is it clearly demonstrated that by their essential nature, minds vary as to their capacity, while education also playeth a great role and exerteth a powerful effect on their development.

J.,-

Woman's lack of progress and proficiency 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. The happiness of mankind will be realized when women and men coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other.

Jr>

To the mothers must be given the divine Teachings and effective counsel, and they must be encouraged and made eager to train their children, for the mother is the first educator of the child. It is she who must, at the very beginning, suckle the newborn at the breast of God's Faith and God's Law, that divine love may enter into him even with his mother's milk, and be with him till his final breath.

So long as the mother faileth to train her children, and start them on a proper way of life, the training which they receive later on will not take its full effect. It is incumbent upon the Spiritual Assemblies to provide the mothers with a well-planned program for the education of children, showing how, from infancy, the child must be watched over and taught. These instructions must be given to every mother to serve her as a guide, so that each will train and nurture her children in accordance with the Teachings.

Jr>

Then it is clear that the honor and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants;

rectitude in all circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one's life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honor!

These virtues do not appear from the reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. It may be that in the world of nature a trace of these perfections may appear, but they are unstable and ephemeral; they are like the rays of the sun upon the wall.

As the compassionate God has placed such a wonderful crown upon the head of man, man should strive that its brilliant jewels may become visible in the world .

....10

During thy supplications to God ... consider how thine heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God, and thy mind attracted to the Kingdom of God! By these attractions one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is enlarged the water increases, and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one's wants .

....10

The light of the sun becomes apparent in each object according to the capacity of that object. The difference is simply one of degree and receptivity. The stone would be a recipient only to a limited extent; another created thing might be as a mirror wherein the sun is fully reflected; but the same light shines upon both.

The most important thing is to polish the mirrors of hearts in order that they may become illumined and receptive of the divine light. One heart may possess the capacity of the polished mirror; another, be covered and obscured by the dust and dross of this world. Although the same Sun is shining upon both, in the mirror which is polished, pure and sanctified you may behold the Sun in all its fullness, glory, and power, revealing its majesty and effulgence; but in the mirror which is rusted and obscured there is no capacity for reflection, although so far as the Sun itself is concerned it is shining thereon and is neither lessened nor deprived. Therefore, our duty lies in seeking to polish the mirrors of our hearts in order that we shall become reflectors of that light and recipients of the divine bounties which may be fully revealed through them.

FROM THE
UNIVERSAL
HOUSE OF
JUSTICE

Since its first election in 1963, the Universal House of Justice has directed and coordinated the worldwide activities of the Baha'i community. Originally ordained in the writings of Baha'u'llah, the administrative structure of the Baha'i Faith was defined by 'Abdu'l-Baha and was raised up during the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. A solid foundation of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies was laid, and at that historic juncture when the Baha'i Faith had spread widely enough and national communities were stable, the structure was capable of supporting an international governing body, the Universal House of Justice. Baha'is around the world now turn to it for vision and direction, for the further application of the laws of Baha'u'llah, and for inspiration.

Ri9van 156 B.E. Message

In its message to the worldwide Baha'i community at Ri<;lvan in April 1999, the Universal House of Justice both reviewed the accomplishments of what it termed a "community in a dynamic state of transformation" and surveyed its future prospects.

The House of Justice began by noting the momentum generated by the Eighth International Baha'i Convention as the Baha'i community entered the final year of its Four Year Plan. Signs of that momentum were apparent in the establishment of three new National Spiritual Assemblies, 1 progress made on the Mount Cannel Projects at the Baha'i World Centre, an increase in the size of pilgrim groups, and the translation and planned publication of texts from the writings of Baha'u'llah. The development of training institutes- at that date, 344, which had provided at least one course to some 70,000 people- and the emergence of Regional Baha'i Councils were given as indications of the growing strength of Baha'i communities, as was the involvement of communities and individuals in social and economic development. Accomplishments in external affairs and the increasing use of the arts in the Baha'i community were also noted.

Looking ahead, the House of Justice called for the fonnation of more new National Spiritual Assemblies. 2 It also announced two significant upcoming events: the inauguration of the new Centre for the International Counsellors at the Baha'i World Centre with a gathering of Counsellors and Members of the Auxiliary Boards in January 2001, and the official inauguration of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab in May 2001.

Contrasting "the confident vision that propels the constructive endeavors of an illumined community" with the "tangled fears" of millions around the globe, the House of Justice urged Baha'is

everywhere to become fully engaged in pursuit of the ultimate objective of making it possible for the world's peoples "to build a united, peaceful and prosperous life."

26 November 1999

Some seven months later, on the Day of the Covenant,

26 November 1999, the Universal House of Justice took the

Sabah, Sarawak, and Slovakia; see *The Baha'i World 1998-99*, pp. 53-58.

The letter originally called for the formation of new National Spiritual Assemblies in Latvia, Lithuania, and Macedonia, but conditions in the latter

country later prompted the House of Justice to postpone the formation of the National Assembly there.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

opportunity to provide a further review of the community's progress and prospects.

It particularly noted the growth of the worldwide network of training institutes and the effort to develop formal programs and systematically deliver courses. By that point, institutes had reached some 100,000 people, resulting in "a greatly strengthened community, internally sound and notably reinforced." Achievements

in external affairs, in social and economic development, and in the ability of the Baha'i community to reach out to and win the trust of the general public, governments, and organizations of civil society were also noted.

Looking ahead, the Universal House of Justice announced that at the end of 2000 the Baha'i community would embark on a worldwide Twelve Month Plan "aimed at concentrating the forces, the capacities and the insights" that had emerged through the Four Year Plan. Following those twelve months, a Five Year Plan will initiate "a series of worldwide enterprises that will carry the Baha'i community through the final twenty years in the first century of the Faith's Formative Age." 3

In preparation for those "worldwide enterprises," the Baha'i community must bring institute programs into full operation and further systematize its efforts to teach the Baha'i Faith. "Area Growth Programs" in targeted regions of each continent will contribute to this process, and what is learned from them will be incorporated into future plans. The House of Justice urged that particular emphasis be given to children, and that "definite steps be taken to ensure that the vision of the community fully embraces its younger members."

At a moment when "keen interest is being shown by leaders of thought in the destiny of the coming generations," the Universal House of Justice expressed its hope that "the Baha'i community, both in its internal operation and its interactions with society, will

convey a sense of confidence in the future of humanity."

The Formative Age of the Baha'i Faith began with the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921.

28 December 1999

The enrichment of the spiritual life of the Baha'i community was the theme of a letter written on 28 December 1999 by the Universal House of Justice, which said, "In every land we see a growing thirst for spiritual life and moral clarity. There is recognition of the ineffectiveness of plans and programs for human betterment which are not rooted in lives of spiritual awareness and ethical virtue." In this context, the House of Justice announced the universal application of all Baha'i laws pertaining to obligatory prayer, fasting and the recitation of the Greatest Name ninety-five times a day—all of which, it noted, directly foster individual devotional life and so affect the community as a whole. 4

Further, noting that "The spiritual growth generated by individual devotions is reinforced by loving association among the friends in every locality, by worship as a community and by service to the Faith and to one's fellow human beings," the House of Justice called upon Baha'i communities to hold regular worship meetings open to all and to become involved in projects of humanitarian service.

Other Letters

In a letter dated 24 August 1999, the House of Justice, noting that Turkey is "a land held sacred in the hearts of Baha'is" because of its historic associations with Baba 'u 'llah, expressed its grief at the suffering and loss brought about by the devastating earthquake there. It informed all National Spiritual Assemblies that it had arranged for a financial contribution to be made to the relief effort and for condolences to be extended to the country's president.

The passing of Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Rul:iiyyih Khanum on 19 January 2000 occasioned a moving letter of tribute, which was addressed to the worldwide community and was followed shortly after by an account of her funeral. 5

Some laws revealed by Baha ' u ' ll ah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas not yet universally binding and are being progressively applied by the Universal House of Justice as the Baha'i community matures.

5 See pp. 167-96 for a retrospective article on the life of Amatu'l-Baha

Rul:iiyyih Khanum and the text of the letter of tribute.

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The passing of member of the Universal House of Justice Adib Taherzadeh on 23 January 2000, 6 the subsequent election of

Kiser Barnes to the Universal House of Justice, and the appointment of Zenaida Ramirez to the International Teaching Centre were also announced in letters to the Baha'i community.

In support of its call for the further development of Baha'i Institutes and the systematic growth of the community, in March 2000 the House of Justice released a seminal document on this topic which offers an overview of the advancement of the institute process since April 1998, when the first document on the subject was released.

See obituary, pp. 311 - 12.

EVENTS

1999-2000

View of the Shrine of the Bab from the lower terraces, at dusk.

MOUNT

CARMEL

PROJECTS

Progress 1999- 2000

"\l. Then Baha'u'llah visited Mount Cannel as a prisoner of the VV Ottoman empire in the late nineteenth century, He indicated the place on the then barren mountain that would someday become the spiritual and administrative center for Baha'is around the world. On that spot now stands the Shrine of the Bab, the centerpiece for the Baha'i projects on the mountain. Now, a little more than a hundred years after Baha'u'llah's visit, the terraced gardens that complement the Shrine and the buildings that house the administrative center of the Baha'i world will be completed within the next year.

The Ric;ivan 1999 message of the Universal House of Justice set the pace of work for the remaining months of the twentieth century, listing "a chronology of expectations" for the period ahead, and making two significant announcements: first, the holding of a Counsellors ' Conference in the Holy Land in January 2001 to "mark the occupation by the International Teaching Centre of its permanent seat"; and second, following the completion of the Mount Carmel Projects, the holding of dedicatory events between

21 and 25 May 2001. The goals thus set, the Mount Carmel Projects team continued its labors.

Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab

A major challenge has been to maintain the gardens on the Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab in harmony with the mountain environment. By the summer of 1999, the pattern for a new phase of the landscaping program was established. This program entailed the creation of wildlife corridors to provide a sustainable environment for beneficial birds, insects, and other wildlife that act as natural pest deterrents. The gardens maintenance program will rely

on practices such as cultivation, mulching, and plant competition, rather than the extensive use of chemicals. Implementation of this program, however, required the completion of the formal axis of the Terraces, centered around the long stairway that stretches their length, and the gradual extension from this axis into slopes designed as an open garden park bordered on both sides with large strips of natural forest.

The Terrace gardens are designed in three zones. The central axis is formal in layout, with lawns, annual flower beds, santolina hedges, geometrically pruned bushes and trees, and other ornamental details. Bordering this axis are transition-garden slopes planted mainly with flowering trees, olive and oak trees, and perennial bushes characteristic of the Middle East. With the completion of the first two zones, the areas beyond were left free to develop into natural forest to serve as wildlife corridors. It was

The double-storied structure of the nineteenth terrace on Panorama Street.

MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

Stone ornaments, paving, and fountains on the nineteenth terrace, which looks out over Haifa.

not long before several small birds indigenous to the mountain returned to nest—blue kingfishers, sunbirds, finches, and quail. Returning, too, were a host of beneficial insects like the ladybird and preying mantis, and animals such as the mongoose, the hedgehog, and the land tortoise. These natural forest areas not only began to provide a protected environment for such creatures, but also served as a buffer zone between the gardens and surrounding residential areas, providing natural barriers to the sights and sounds of the city.

In 1994, the Universal House of Justice wrote: "the beauty and magnificence of the Gardens and Terraces now under development are symbolic of the nature of the transformation which is destined to occur both within the hearts of the world's peoples and in the physical environment of the planet." ¹ These words continue to provide inspiration for the planning and care of the gardens.

On 17 August 1999, a significant milestone in the Mount Carmel Projects was reached when the bridge over Hatzionut Avenue was used for the first time. The bridge connects the terrace of the Shrine of the Bab with the eleventh terrace.

The Universal House of Justice, letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies

es, 4

January 1994.

During this period, work gained momentum at the site of the entrance plaza of the Terraces at the junction of Hagefen Street and Ben Gurion Avenue. Excavations of more than one thousand cubic meters of earth were completed, and a large underground mechanical room was constructed to support the elaborate water features designed for the plaza. A tubewell was drilled nearby to supplement water resources for the gardens, extensive plumbing work and installation of pipes was undertaken, and geometric curves and aqua drains were constructed. The concrete structure of the star-shaped central fountain was erected, forming the centerpiece of the plaza.

The Centre/or the
Study of the Texts,
the International
Archives Building,
and the Shrine of
the Bab.

The Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives
Extension

Another landmark in the projects, the completion of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives Extension, was reached in April 1999. The offices of the building manager, the building facilities manager, and security were soon set up, and other offices gradually moved into the premises.

On 4 July 1999, more than 150 key participants from the main contractor's site team, the Mount Carmel Projects team, and the subcontractors of all trades came together with Mr. Giora Perez, the managing director of Perez G.G. Engineers, and Mr. Fariborz Sahba, project manager, to celebrate this achievement. Mr. Sahba, while conveying the appreciation of the Universal House of Justice, expressed his gratitude to all concerned for collaborating to complete the buildings on time and for being conscious of

MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

quality in all the work accomplished. The spirit of cooperation evident on the site, he said, resulted in the construction of one of the finest quality structures in Israel. Mr. Perez reiterated his deep appreciation for the teamwork and said how his workers would treasure the privilege of participating in these projects throughout their lives.

The entrance lounge of
the Centre/or the Study
of the Texts.

The International Teaching Centre

As the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives Extension were completed and occupied, the building of the International Teaching Centre also rapidly approached completion. Production of mill work, such as partitions for the dining rooms, shelves and tables for the mail room, display cabinets for the book center, and panelling for the auditorium, proceeded. The first four levels of the common area will accommodate various departments, and other staff facilities are also located there. By November 1999, millwork had been installed on all these levels, and marble paving in the foyer of the auditorium and the staff dining room at levels four and five had been completed. All levels of the building received their final coat of paint and carpet tiles were laid in the office spaces. By March 2000, the council chamber for the International Counsellors was also completed.

Concomitant with the internal finishing work, extensive stone cladding on the external walls was completed, and preparations were made for landscaping around the Teaching Centre complex. Thousands of cubic meters of earth were moved to allow the grading of the slopes, with much of the backfill material coming from the excavations on the Terraces. Green tiles were installed on the exterior of the new International Teaching Centre building.

roof of the Teaching Centre building, harmonizing its appearance with the other buildings on the Arc.

New Pilgrim Facilities in Haifa and Bahji

In its Rivlin 1999 message, the Universal House of Justice conveyed its decision to implement an expanded pilgrimage program, raising the number of pilgrims from groups of 100 to 150, upon completion of a new pilgrim reception centre in Haifa, located on Hatzionut Street across from the Monument Gardens. The new property comprises two structures which formerly served as medical laboratories. While the original facades of the two buildings on the property were restored, their interiors were fully remodelled to create large formal spaces. Restoration work commenced in July 1998 and was completed by March 2000. A hall, with a seating capacity of 350, was created in the main level of one building, which also contains a lounge, kitchen, and dining facilities. Reception areas and offices were created in the other building, and a pedestrian bridge now connects the two.

The Universal House of Justice also approved architectural plans "for a much needed facility to be built at Bahji to accommodate pilgrims and other Baha'i and non-Baha'i visitors." 2

Excavations began on 9 April 2000 and a week later an official

The Universal House of Justice, message to the Bahá'ís of the world, 21 April 2000.

MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

ceremony was organized by the Baha'i World Centre to mark the commencement of work. Prominent among the 160 invitees were the mayor of Acre and others from the municipality. Representatives from the Greek Orthodox Church and the Islamic Waqf also attended, as did Professor Moshe Sharon, incumbent of the Chair for Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The Baha'i World Centre was represented by Albert Lincoln, secretary general of the Baha'i International Community, and Fariborz Sahba, architect and project manager.

A bird's eye view of the progress on the Terraces and the Arc.

Recognition of the Projects

Since excavations for the construction of the Terraces commenced in May 1990, the face of Mount Carmel has been transformed.

And although they are not yet fully complete, the Terrace gardens are now attracting world attention.

On 25 May 1999, at a ceremony held at the residence of the president of Israel in Jerusalem, the Baha'i World Centre received the Magshim '99 Award for the Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab. The Terraces project was one of five selected for the award, given by the Council for a Beautiful Israel, a non-governmental organization. Mrs. Aura Herzog, widow of the late president of Israel Chaim Herzog and international president of the Council for a Beautiful Israel, presented the award to Fariborz Sahba, who

received it on behalf of the Baha'i World Centre. In her introductory remarks, Mrs. Herzog said, "This is the second time that the renowned Baha'i gardens have won the Magshim Award .. this time for the extraordinary final stage of the terraces development that has taken place over the last decade. Today, the gardens are of unmatched beauty, and they were judged without rival. . . We have even heard them categorized as ... one of the wonders of the world."

The Fourteenth International Agricultural Exhibition (Agritech '99), organized by the Israel Export Institute, was held in Haifa from 5 to 9 September 1999. Some nine thousand participants from around the world converged on Haifa for this event.

More than two hundred ministers and high ranking officials from many nations were escorted to the Shrine of the Bab and the Terraces on an official visit. Baha'i ushers, many of whom were attired in their national costumes, represented a wide spectrum of nationalities and presented a visible testimony to the worldwide scope of the Baha'i community. Throughout the tour, Agritech participants remarked on the beauty of the gardens. One of the ministers commented, "In a beautiful environment people tend to become beautiful. I feel in this beautiful and special atmosphere I can recognize beauty in others."

The booklet *The Bahri 'i Shrine and Gardens on Mount Carmel, Haifa- Israel*, first published by the municipality of Haifa early in 1999, is now available in Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and Portuguese, as well as French, German, Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, Italian, and English. The booklet contains photographs of the Shrine of the Bab, the surrounding terraces, and the buildings on the Arc . It also describes the historical roots of the Baha'i Faith in the Holy Land.

Several Israeli publications carried articles highlighting the beauty of the gardens and focusing on the historical connection between the Baha'i Faith and the Holy Land. The Shrine of the Bab and the Terraces were also filmed as one segment in the world-wide coverage of millennium celebrations, broadcast on 1 January 2000 on BBC and ABC. It is estimated that the program was seen by close to a billion viewers.

New

NATIONAL

,\SPIRITUAL

J-iSSEMBLIES

The Baha'i Faith was first introduced to the Baltic States in 1927, when Martha Root-journalist and preeminent international teacher of the religion-visited the region. Sixty-five years later, in 1992, the collapse of the Soviet Union made possible the fonnation of the first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Baltic States, to administer the Baha'i communities of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

At Ric;!van 1999, owing to the maturation of the Baha'i communities in these countries, separate National Spiritual Assemblies were established in Latvia and Lithuania, and the former Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Baltic States became the National Assembly of Estonia. Consequently the total number of National Spiritual Assemblies around the world reached 181.

Nearly eighty years ago, 'Abdu'l-Baha specified the purpose of these institutions in His Will and Testament, describing them as "secondary Houses of Justice." Their function is not only to manage the needs of each national Baha'i community and to act as a representative of the Baha'is to the civil authorities, but also

TI-IE BAHAI W ORL D

Members of the.first
National Spiritu al Assembly
of Latvia with Counsellors
Mai/a Philainen, Hartmut
Grossman, and Polin Rc!fat
(rear row, .fi'om leji to
right).

to serve as the electorate for the Universal House of Justice. The first of these secondary Houses of Justice was established in 1923, under the direction of Shoghi Effendi, and given the temporary appellation National Spiritual Assemblies.

The Universal House of Justice decides when a national community has progressed enough to warrant the formation of a National Assembly. In addition to unifying and coordinating the activities amongst the Local Spiritual Assemblies and Baha'is within their respective countries, National Assemblies constitute the major links between the national communities and the Universal House of Justice.

The Assemblies are elected in a unique democratic process, without campaigning or nominations. Delegates from proportionally assigned electoral units within each country come together annually to vote for the members of that country's National Assembly.

Latvia

The first Baha' i national convention of Latvia was held in the House of Architects, in the Old Town of Riga, on 29 and 30 April 1999. Approximately forty people attended, including Maija Philainen and Polin Rafat, both members of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe; members of the former Regional Assembly also attended. Hartmut Grossman, Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre, represented the Universal House of Justice.

Mr. Grossman read the message of the Universal House of Justice to the Latvian community, which expressed its "hope that the deliberations of that gathering [the national convention] have

NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

provided direction for your future initiatives and will result in glorious victories throughout your country." Members representing seven different nationalities and ethnic groups were elected to the new National Assembly at the convention.

During the convention proceedings, the Assembly consulted with delegates on a number of issues immediately facing the Latvian Baha' i community, such as the advancement of efforts to spread the Baha' i teachings within the country, training institutes, and the consolidation and training of local communities. Sylvia Vice, an ethnic Latvian who grew up in Canada but returned to Latvia in 1989, gave a personal account of the early history of the Baha'is in that country.

All Local Spiritual Assemblies in Latvia are registered with the government, and the new National Assembly is currently in the process of seeking registration.

Members of the first

National Spiritual
Assembly of Lithuania,
with Counsellors
Hartmut Grossman, and
Maija Philainen (seated
in center).

Lithuania

Lithuania's first National Spiritual Assembly was elected during the country's national convention on 1 and 2 May, 1999, in Vilnius. Continental Counsellor Maija Philainen attended, as did members of the Auxiliary Board, members of the former Regional Assembly, and thirty-five others, including representatives from all local Baha'i communities in Lithuania and visitors from surrounding countries. The proceedings were conducted in Lithuanian, with translation into English.

Hartmut Grossman, representing the Universal House of Justice, conveyed its special message to the Lithuanian Baha'is, which stated in part, "A new chapter in the history of the Faith in your country is opening. You can render no greater service to your

people than sharing the life-giving Message of Baha'u'llah with your fellow citizens ... "

Mr. Grossman also offered a detailed analysis of the Four Year Plan, focusing particularly on the increase in human resources of the Baha'i community, the development of which requires the effort of each individual and the goal of which is constant progress towards the personal and community ideals set forth by Baha'u'llah in His teachings.

A special tribute was paid to Helen Smith, the first Baha'i to settle in Lithuania, who is currently serving as director of the national training institute and was elected to the new National Assembly. The convention also welcomed the first Lithuanian Baha'i family into the community—a couple and their two children, who became Baha'is a few days before the convention, in the town of Krelinga.

Seven of the nine members elected to the National Spiritual Assembly were native Lithuanians, and two were pioneers from other countries.

The Universal House of Justice expressed high hopes for the region, saying, in a message written shortly after the election of the Assembly, "The doors are open wide for your Baha'i community to attain unprecedented growth in the years immediately ahead."

The Future

In messages to the Baha'is and the Assemblies of both countries, the Universal House of Justice stressed the importance of unity to the continued success of the Baha'i communities in these countries, which are

viewed by much of the outside world as internally divided and lacking social cohesion.

The fact that these fledgling Baha'i communities have matured during a time of upheaval gives them the opportunity to serve as a unifying force in a region beset with divisions of nationality, ethnicity, and culture, and the concurrent ills that clinging to these differences bring.

THE YEARS REVIEW

In the century and a half since its inception, the Baha'i Faith .

It has grown from a small, isolated community into a worldwide body, with more than five million members in virtually

every nation in the world . Under the guidance of Baha ' u'llah's administrative framework the community continues to grow, progress, and develop every year. This article surveys events and activities of the Baha' i world during the period between Ric;lvan 1999 and Ric;lvan 2000.

Baha'u'llah wrote, "the earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

Baha'is around the world are striving both to unify and to consolidate their own communities and to improve conditions in the wider society by initiating social and economic development projects; promoting the cause of peace and intergovernmental cooperation; implementing programs of moral education; developing human resources through training institutes; increasing racial, ethnic, and tribal harmony through dialogue and cooperation; supp01 ling human rights; fostering use of the arts; and promoting scholarship.

Internally, the _Baha'is strive to create distinctive communities by such means as establishing local and national Baha'i centers,

gaining legal recognition for Baha'i institutions, strengthening relationships with other religions and leaders of thought, and gathering in regional and national Baha'i conferences to consult and

build wider bonds of unity. Baha'i community development is designed to promote creativity, build capacity, and develop distinctive social patterns. Beyond these activities, Baha'is are

teaching their Faith to the people of the world, an undertaking which 'Abdu'l-Baha called "the greatest of all divine bestowals."

This constitutes more for Baha'is than a mere numerical increase; it is a responsibility to humanity- to share the teachings which they believe are the means for the advancement of the whole human race.

The sheer number of activities makes this record far from comprehensive. Instead, it aims to provide a general overview of the evolving range and sophistication of both local and national activities, and perhaps give some insight into the challenges of

building a global community.

Africa

ANGOLA- Twenty-one people participated in Angola's first Baha'i study course on the advancement of women, held from 3 to 6 May 1999. The participants in the all-day sessions studied the theme of spiritual empowerment in Baha'u' llah's writings. In addition to

Participants in a
Baha'i deepening on
the empowerment of
women in Luanda,
Angola, in May 1999.

the all-day study sessions, the participants learned and sang new songs.

BENIN- The regional women's committee of the Sahel hosted a conference in Parakou in August 1999. More than 150 Baha'is from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Togo attended the event, which was covered on local radio and regional television. The departmental director of the Ministry for Women's Affairs of Borgu attended. The conference was preceded by two days of workshops, a visit to the authorities of Parakou, and visits to nearby localities.

BOTSWANA-The summer school organized by the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Botswana, in collaboration with the Provincial Baha'i Council of the North-West in South Africa, was the first to be held entirely in the Setswana language and the first to be held for all Batswana peoples on both sides of the Botswana-South Africa border. The gathering took place in Mmabatho, South Africa, from 16 to 21 December 1999. Dithapelo Tsa Baha 'i, the first Baha'i prayer book in the Setswana language, was published in September 2000, after five years of effort. It is also the first hardcover book produced by the Botswanan Baha'i community.

BURKINA-Four regional women's conferences and four youth conferences were held in Burkina during the period under review. Between November 1999 and January 2000, Burkina's recently formed drama group Light of Unity toured parts of the country and performed before some 4,800 people, of whom more than 350 became Baha'is. The group also met with traditional chiefs and government and religious officials. Jean Jacques Yem of Cote d'Ivoire spent a month in Burkina training Baha'i youth in the use of the arts to teach the Baha'i Faith.

CAMEROON- The Baha'i youth of Douala participated in the city's parade to commemorate the International Day of the African Child on 17 June 1999. Later, during a program in the village hall of Akwa, the youth performed a "Dance of Unity" which they had choreographed and sang songs they had composed. The program was presided over by a provincial representative of the ministry

THE BAHAI WORLD

Women
celebrating
International
Women's Day in
Douala,
Cameroon.

for Youth, Sport, and Social Affairs, and was attended by the minister for the Advancement of Women. The youth were interviewed by radio and television reporters and awarded prizes by the ministers for "Best Peace Message," and "Best Message for Children's Education for Peace."

CAPE VERDE-In December 1999, Leilani Smith-Tellez traveled from the United States to Cape Verde to teach the Baha'i Faith. During her visit, she was interviewed about the Faith on national television, radio, and newspapers. She also had the opportunity to give presentations about the Baha'i teachings and social and economic development programs undertaken by the Baha'is to the president of cabinet ministers; the minister for Education, Science, Youth, and Sport; and the director and founder of the oldest women's organization in Cape Verde.

CHAD-After almost a decade, Baha'i youth in Chad were able to hold a national youth conference. Seventy-two youth from fourteen localities gathered for two days in April 1999 at the Samandari Institute in Manda to consult about the role of Baha'i youth, the different avenues of service open to them, and children's education. In June, a teaching project guided by two full-time facilitators from the Samandari Institute and composed mainly of youth brought 340 people into the Baha'i Faith.

CONGO REPUBLIC- The government of the Congo Republic invited representatives of the Baha'i Faith and other religions to

make presentations at a two-day meeting in the Parliament building in Brazzaville. Held from 17 to 19 December 1999, the time, called "Awareness-raising Days," was focused on conciliation and forgiveness.

COTE D'IVOIRE- In May 1999, a campaign for the advancement of women was launched in the region of Danane, where participation of women in Baha'i activities has been low because of entrenched traditional attitudes about female inferiority. Plans for further strengthening the campaign include the adaptation of the training manual "A Campaign for the Advancement of Women: Training Package for Men and Women" to the needs and culture of the locality.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO- A Baha'i family in the Democratic Republic of Congo took the initiative of renting an

exhibition hall in Lubumbashi from mid-March to mid-June 1999.

Family members placed a large banner over the entrance announcing a Baha'i exhibit and printed six hundred leaflets to distribute to visitors. A highlight of the hall's activities over the three months was a symposium held on 12 June entitled "What Religion for Africa?" A professional writer and friend of the Baha'is gave the keynote address at the gathering. Some 2,250 people visited the hall, more than 2,500 leaflets were distributed, twenty books were given away, and nine declarations of faith were recorded.

DJIBOUTI- The Local Spiritual Assembly of the capital city of Djibouti embarked in July 1999 on a four-month campaign to teach the Baha'i Faith. In Tadjoura, the Baha'is first went to the sultan to obtain permission to inform the people about the Baha'i teachings. He remembered the Baha'is from a past visit and gave his permission, saying, "The world is in serious trouble; we need these kinds of teachings." The Baha'is distributed literature in the local language.

ERITREA- About fifty people attended the meeting sponsored by the national teaching committee of Eritrea on 19 September 1999, to inform Asmara's Baha'i community of the current status of the Ahdieh teaching project. Under the auspices of the project, four traveling teachers joined two short-term pioneers in Agordat for three weeks, where they distributed Baha'i literature and welcomed two people to the Baha'i community. Elsewhere, Baha'is managed to open a temporary Baha' i center and undertook teaching activities in Mendefera.

ETHIOPIA-A young man who became a Baha' i in Addis Ababa in April 1999 shared the news with two friends in his home near the Kenyan border. They also became Baha'is and in turn told their friends about the Faith they had found. Several local Christians and Muslims heard how the Baha'i Faith was spreading in their town and together went to the police asking that the three Baha'is be jailed. After three days in jail, the Baha'is went to court. The plaintiffs reported to the judges that the young men were creating havoc by spreading a strange religion and were teaching it with unfamiliar and peculiar materials. The judges responded by stating that the Baha'i Faith is well-known and the confiscated books had been printed in Addis Ababa, where the Faith is officially recognized. After their release, news of the trial spread. By the end of the month, thirty-three people had become Baha'is after hearing of it by way of the trial. A meeting was called for the new Baha'is, who elected a Local Spiritual Assembly.

GABON-The National Spiritual Assembly of Gabon is in the process of renovating its national center in Libreville. It has successfully completed the first phase of the work and has begun the second phase, which involves constructing an upper level on the

main annex of the center.

THE GAMBIA-Sang Correa, a well-known Gambian boxer who is a Baha'i, married Elizabeth Mendy in Correa's hometown of Lamin on 22 May 1999. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Lamin conducted the region's first Baha'i marriage, strengthening the Assembly's ability to apply Baha'i laws and understand their relationship to traditional practices.

GHANA-On 9 June 1999, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Madina presented a set of books on the Baha'i Faith to the newly opened Institute of Local Government Studies, whose mandate is to train

YEAR IN REVIEW

local government employees from all over the country. The Baha'i delegation was well received by the Institute's director and deputy director. The director was particularly interested in the Baha'i concept of consultation and offered to arrange a forum in which the region's different religions could present their teachings and their relevance to local government administration.

GUI NEA- A Baha'i in N'zao organized a meeting on 27 July 1999 to help raise awareness of the problem of feminine genital mutilation in Guinea.

KENYA- Some 550 Baha'is representing twenty-six countries attended an international youth conference in Nairobi for four days in December 1999. The theme of the conference was "Youth 2000: The Role of Youth in the Coming Millennium." It was officially opened by Dr. V. G. Simiyo, chairman of the Department of History at the University of Nairobi. Topics discussed included the mission of Baha'u'llah, the Baha'i Covenant, the lives of selected early Babi and Baha'i figures, the training institute process, tribalism and superstition, and social and economic development. Most talks were followed by workshops, and the arts played a prominent role. Fourteen members of the Continental Board of Counsellors and two Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre attended the event.

LESOTHO-In an effort to establish ties with people of capacity in Lesotho, the Baha'i community presented copies of the Baha'i International Community's recently published statement, Who

Baha'is present the
statement Who is
Writing the Future?
to His Majesty King
Letsie III of Lesotho.

is Writing the Future? to invited guests at the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the Bab in Maseru on 20 October. Several guests spoke about the document, including Mothusi Mashologu, a well-known Basotho dignitary, and Khoeli Pholosi,

a member of the National Spiritual Assembly. A delegation had previously presented a copy of the document to His Majesty King Letsie III, who received it graciously. The document was also presented to government ministers, members of Parliament, and other prominent people in the community.

LIBERIA-During a visit to Liberia, five African American women met with government officials, civic groups, and women's organizations in Monrovia, after which they joined a teaching project.

From Monrovia, the group traveled to Dolo's Town where they held training courses in computers and on the use of the arts to teach the Baha'i Faith.

Radio programming created by Liberian Baha'is, broadcast on the international service of Kiss Liberia Communication Network, have proven to be quite popular. Regular programs such as "Society and Religion," "Morning Meditation," "Special Features," and "D.C. Talk" stimulate public inquiries and discussion.

MADAGASCAR- Twenty-one members of Local Spiritual Assemblies took part in an institute training session held from 25

September to 2 October 1999 at the Baha'i center in Antananarivo.

The first half of the course was spent studying the concept, role, and functions of the institute and the place of human resource development in large-scale community growth. The other half was spent studying the Baha'i teachings on spiritual subjects such as prayer, meditation, the soul, and the purpose of life.

MAURITIUS- On 1 January 2000, some two thousand children gathered at the State House, Le Reduit, to celebrate peace, along with the president of the Republic of Mauritius. On behalf of the Baha'i children of Mauritius, Rouhangiz Baichoo, a twelve-yearold Baha'i girl, addressed a vote of thanks to the president for his treatment of children and interpreted a song composed by a Malagasy Baha' i entitled "Citoyen du Monde" ["World Citizen"].

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The president, his family, and other dignitaries were moved by the song and asked that it be sung several times so that the other children could learn it.

MOZAMBIQUE-During the "Green Light Teaching Project," initiated by the Baha'i community in Mozambique, more than

twenty-five hundred people in forty-nine new localities in the Sofala and Manica provinces in the central part of the country became Baha'is. Also, the first program to train tutors of institute study circles in Mozambique was held for four days in June 1999, at the national Baha'i center. Tutors are those who are expected to form independent study circles in their home communities after they have been trained. The training included vigorous study of the Baha'i writings, and discussion of attitudes important for tutors including the need to encourage students to be independent

and active participants in their own learning.

NAMIBIA-In a long-tenn, large-scale effort to promote race unity in Namibia, the Baha'is of Windhoek have visited nearly all of the city 's primary and secondary schools. During race unity presentations to principals, teachers, and students, more than ten thousand people have heard the Baha'i perspective on race relations. Organizers hope to visit all the schools in the capital and expand the project to outlying areas.

Namibia's first international Baha'i summer school attracted more than four hundred Baha'is from seven countries in December 1999. The event, with the theme "Building a Unified, Vibrant, Cohesive Cmmnunity," was enlivened by presentations by Hassan Sabri from the United Kingdom and Kevin Locke from the United States, and by a perforning arts festival.

RWANDA-Many members of the minority pygmy tribe known as Abatwa have become Baha'is and are actively participating in the Baha'i community of Rwanda. In the past, the Abatwas had consistently refused to integrate with modern society or to accept any religion.

SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE-Forty-eight Baha'is have completed courses at the Elise Lynelle Training Institute in Sao Tome and

Jn Gisenye, Rwanda, local Baha 'is work to build a regional center for the area.

Principe, where they studied the Baha'i teachings on spiritual subjects such as the purpose, significance, and nature of the soul, and prayer and meditation.

SENEGAL- In its 5 and 6 October 1999 issues, a widely-read Senegalese newspaper printed an article on various "dangerous sects" being introduced to Senegal, including the Baha' i Faith. Under the guidance of the National Spiritual Assembly of Senegal, a letter was written to the editor to give the position of the Baha'is on the issue. When there was no response, the Baha'is again contacted the paper and a delegation of three Senegalese Baha'is met with the editor-in-chief. In the 13 December issue the letter of the Baha'is was finally published.

On 17 April 2000, the Baha'i community of Senegal launched the first Baha' i Web site of French-speaking Africa, at <www.sn.bahai .org>.

SEYCHELLES- In the Seychelles, Baha'i holy days are now regularly announced on radio, TV, and in newspapers. There was also national media coverage of the laying of the foundation stone of the new national center, and a feature program on SBC TV on the statement Who is Writing the Future ?, which also received coverage in the national newspaper Seychelles Nation.

SIERRA LEONE-In recognition and appreciation of the constructive ideas offered by two Baha'is during a television interview concerning the peace process, members of the Baha'i community

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of Sierra Leone were invited to participate in two subsequent interviews on national radio in the spring of 1999. The first focused on the role of religion in nation building, and a member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Freetown gave a Baha'i perspective on the topic. The second interview focused exclusively on the Baha'i Faith.

SWAZILAND-Baha'i work in education in Swaziland advanced from the established six preschools and one primary school to include a Baha'i high school, known as Setsembiso Sebunye High School, which opened its doors to 107 students in January 2000. The building, housing the first two forms for a five-year program, will be expanded over the next five years. This will culminate in an education complex on a four-hectare campus for one thousand students by 2005. The school aims to include moral and spiritual education, advanced information technology starting from primary school, and a community development outreach program of service to the greater community. The Baha'is in Swaziland also recently dedicated their new local center in Nginamadolo. The previous local Baha'i center in the area became the first Baha'i primary school and is now administered by the government.

TANZANIA- On 3 December 1999, seventeen Baha'is, including thirteen secondary school students, traveled from Iringa to Mbozi to begin a ten-day teaching trip sponsored by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Iringa. The group had prepared for the trip by organizing a program of songs, puppet shows, and introductory

A study session/or
Baha 'i scouts held in
Scio Tome and
Principe.

Counsellor
member of the
In ternationa /
Teaching Centre
Joan Lincoln (rew;
sixth/iwn left)
with participants
in a leaching

conference in
Maradi, Niga

talks about the Baha'i Faith. The group was received warmly in each village they visited, with audiences ranging in size from one hundred to five hundred people.

TOGO-Sixty-five members from twelve Local Spiritual Assemblies-four from Burkina Faso and eight from Togo-met in Papri, Togo, for two days in May 1999 to discuss teaching, the advancement of women, children 's education, and the importance of holding Nineteen Day Feasts in their respective Baha' i communities. The first part of the conference was followed by an evening fireside, which was followed by focused teaching campaigns throughout the country.

UGANDA-A large number of religious leaders representing the Catholic Church, the Church of Uganda, Orthodox Christians, other Christian denominations, the Muslim community, and the Baha'i community were invited to a workshop in Kampala on religious tolerance. The workshop was sponsored by the development organizations Always Be Tolerant, SNV Netherlands, GTZ Germany, and the German Development Service and was held on 17 February 2000. Participants discussed the need for religious unity and obstacles to it, the use of consultation and other tools to solve conflicts, particularly in connection to the fourteen-year civil war raging in the north of the country, and prospects for Ugandan social and economic development. George Olinga of the National Spiritual Assembly chaired both the morning and afternoon sessions.

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ZAMBIA-A regional seminar for Baha'i headmen was held in Sinazongwe, Zambia, from 11to13 June 1999, with nineteen traditional leaders attending. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for the headmen to meet and interact, to deepen their knowledge of the Faith, and to consult about the best ways to strengthen their respective Baha'i communities.

ZIMBABWE- The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha' is of Bulawayo organized a seminar called "Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century," held on 9 June 1999. Representatives from twenty-two of the region 's sixty-three primary schools attended, as did seven secondary school teachers and staff and lecturers from the National University of Science and Technology. As part of their attempts to put into practice the Baha'i teachings on education, the Baha ' is of Mubayira inaugurated their first Baha' i

preschool in October.

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African Baha'is, including many who traveled from Rwanda to participate in a youth conference, pose in front of the House of Worship in Kampala, Uganda.

The Americas

ALASKA-Hundreds of Baha'is from all corners of the state responded to the programs and courses of the Alaska Baha'i Institute, participating in courses, conferences, and training sessions. Two

training conferences focused on development skills for Local Spiritual Assemblies, training in the fundamental verities of the Baha'i Faith, skills for teaching, and training for facilitators of the institute's courses. The ABI developed a statewide network of course facilitators, increasing their number from sixteen to seventy-six facilitators, and brought the institute's courses to about four hundred people in more than thirty towns and villages.

ARGENTINA-Some thirty members of Argentina's Local Spiritual Assemblies gathered at the national Baha'i center in Buenos Aires for two days of consultations in October 1999. Training sessions were held in inter-Assembly cooperation, the training institute process, and the role of officers. In addition, an entire day was spent discussing the role of Assemblies in handling personal matters. Participants were also able to spend half a day in consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly.

BAHAMAS-On 21 January 2000, the Baha'is of the Bahamas were given a thirty-minute slot on national television, free of charge, to air "The Power of Prayer" video program produced by the Baha'i community in the United States.

BARBADOS-The national women's committee of the Baha'is of Barbados cosponsored a two-day workshop called "Women Speak Across Faiths-Action and Reflection." The Baha'is participated in panel discussions sponsored by the gender studies department of the University of the West Indies and organized a dance

Men and women study training institute materials in Sucre, Bolivia.

Youth at the

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Brazil.

presentation entitled "Healing Battered Women" at the same university. Local daily newspapers covered all of the events.

BELIZE- The first national Baha'i children's conference of Belize took place in August 1999, in Belmopan. After prayers there was a discussion of the Baha'i teachings about race unity. Stories, songs, and other activities reinforced the lesson of beauty in diversity.

BERMUDA- Bermuda's Baha' i youth workshop met every week during the summer. Workshop members made contributions to the Baha'i summer school in August, held a spiritual gathering later that month, and were guests on the "Baha'i Live" radio program.

BOLIVIA- More than six hundred Baha'is, including hundreds of Quechuas and scores of Aymaras from Bolivia and Peru, as well as representatives of the Mapuche from Chile and Argentina, the Wichi from Argentina, the Guaymi from Panama and Costa Rica, and the Kariri Xoco and Fulni-6 from Brazil, attended the second Encounter of the Native Peoples of the Americas, held in Sucre for two days in August 1999. The event reflected the growth of the Baha'i Faith in Quechua and Aymara communities. Participants consulted about the progress of their respective Baha'i communities, specifically examined the elements of their native cultures which help or hinder their Baha'i development, and shared music and dance.

BRAZIL- The fifth annual World Citizenship Awards, sponsored by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Brazil, were presented in Rio de Janeiro on 8 December 1999. A jury composed of members of eight non-governmental organizations and the Baha'i community recognized six individuals and four institutions for their outstanding contributions to the development of society and the promotion of peace and understanding.

CANADA-In July 1999, the Baha'i community of Canada was invited to offer prayers and readings during the devotional program of a special event at Rideau Hall, the official residence of the governor-general, which was hosted by the wife of the governor-general, Her Excellency Diane Fowler LeBlanc. More than fifteen hundred guests , including diplomats , businessmen, members of NGOs, artists, and academics participated in the "Celebration of Life," held to thank those who had worked in various health and peace-related projects. The multifaith devotional program featured prayer, readings, music, a tree planting, and the release of a flight of doves.

Representatives of the National Spiritual Assemblies of

Alaska, Canada, Finland, Greenland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States, as well as members of the Baha'i Council of Lapland, the Auxiliary Board, and Baha'is from ten local communities in the Canadian north, met for the first circumpolar Baha'i conference, held in Yellowknife, North West Territories, from 24 to 26 September. The theme of the conference was "Creating a Culture of Growth in the Circumpolar Regions"- a response to the Rivian 1996 message from the Universal House of Justice, which urged greater cooperation between the North American and Asiatic Baha'i communities. Among the challenges facing Baha'is in the circumpolar areas are recovery from the lingering effects of colonialism, human rights violations, environmental degradation, racism, gender inequality, difficulties facing youth, social scourges such as alcoholism and family abuse, and the pressures of social conformity. In meeting these challenges, the importance of prayer, devotional meetings, and support from other Baha'i communities was stressed.

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CHILE-A National Unity Gathering was held for two days in September 1999 in Santiago. Sponsored by the National Spiritual Assembly, the gathering brought together two hundred Baha'is, including four members of the Continental Board of Counsellors and all nine members of the National Assembly. The conference was designed to focus the community's efforts on two main objectives: increasing the number of institute study circles and teaching more intensively in the Mapuche Indian region in the south and in the northern Copiapo desert.

COLOMBIA- Large numbers of Baha'is are now involved in the Ruhi training institute programs with more than 5,300 participants in some 250 study classes throughout the country.

COSTA RICA-An interreligious gathering for peace was held on 9 January 2000 as Costa Rica's opening event for the International Year for a Culture of Peace. The activity, which was attended by about two hundred people, took place in front of the Basilica of Los Angeles in Cartago and included statements, prayers, meditations, and songs led by Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and indigenous representatives.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC-In the summer of 1999, the Baha'i community of Santiago invited representatives of the media to discuss statements and principles found in the recently released statement, Who is Writing the Future? The exchange took place in front of a live audience with a panel composed of Fernando Perez Memem, editor of the newspaper La Informaci6n; Gladializa Pereyra, television producer and anchorwoman; Jose Gutierrez, radio and television producer; Carlos Manuel Estrella, producer; and Paul Peralta, representative of the Baha'i community. While the panelists offered a

variety of viewpoints on the history of mankind, all agreed on the need for the development of more spiritual qualities in the future.

EAST LEEWARD ISLANDS- Donald and Christine Brown from Canada visited Antigua and Montserrat during the last months of 1999. On Antigua, Mr. Brown spoke at a public meeting on the

In Bolivia, Baha'is are engaged in family literacy projects, which include early literacy for preschool children.

Baha'i attitude toward the third millennium. Both were interviewed on radio and television and by two local newspapers.

ECUADOR- The Baha'i community of Ecuador engaged in many activities for children and youth. Among them were a regional youth conference that drew fifty-five youth from Chile, Ecuador, and the United States, and a children's camp in Cuicocha, which had thirty-five participants.

EL SALVADOR-El Salvador's Baha'i community offered to conduct a training workshop for the country's newly formed national committee on education in human rights and, on 10 December 1999, participated in a commemoration of the fifty-first anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. A committee composed of members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a consortium of NGOs, and agencies of the United Nations system organized the event. In January 2000, a Baha'i representative participated in a workshop on "Culture of Peace" in commemoration of the eighth anniversary of the peace accords in El Salvador, which was sponsored by the Commission on Culture of Peace of the Legislative Assembly, the University of Peace of Costa Rica, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Copies of documents produced by the Baha'i International Community relating to the topic were shared with more than seventy participants.

FRENCH GUIANA- Baha'is as young as ten years old participated in the Pearls of the Caribbean teaching project, forming a dance group that was used as a catalyst for teaching the Baha'i Faith. During July and August 1999, three Baha'is from Haiti and two

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from Guadeloupe, one from Germany, and one from Quebec, Canada, joined thirteen youth in French Guiana, where they studied material developed by the Ruhi Institute and were taught dances created by the Diversity Dance Workshop. After the two-week program, they gave three presentations to the public, were interviewed for a

report on the Baha'i community during a regional news program, and received coverage in three full -page newspaper articles.

GRENADA-A Baha'i family prepared and arranged a series of locally produced television programs to proclaim the teachings and principles of the Baha'i Faith in Grenada.

GUADELOUPE-In August 1999, the Pearls of the Caribbean teaching project traveled to Guadeloupe where participants joined nine Baha'i youth from Guadeloupe and Martinique and several adults in a human rights education project. The group contacted local authorities to discuss Baha'i involvement in the field of human rights and to obtain permission to perform dances related to the subject. Performances were announced on radio and television and were covered in local newspapers, and one television station produced a twenty-minute interview with a local Baha'i.

The Sparks of
Peace project in
Georgetown,
Guyana, brought
together youth
from all over the
Caribbean region.

GUYANA- For twelve years the Sparks of Peace project has operated during the summer to help create a Caribbean Baha'i youth identity. Twenty-four young Baha'is from Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Eustatius, St. Lucia, St. Kitts/Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago composed the team for summer 1999. Based in Guyana, the team first met for two weeks of training and orientation, then formed teams and traveled for some weeks throughout Guyana, teaching the Baha'i Faith.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Georgetown, Guyana, was able to finalize arrangements related to the acquisition of land for a local Baha'i center in December.

HONDURAS- Six of the nine Pech Indian villages in the Department of Olancho were represented at the Pech Baha'i Congress held in Vallecito from 20 to 21 December. Four of the five chiefs present were Baha'is, joining more than eighty other participants. Also attending were Rolf von Czekus, a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre, and Ruth Pringle, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas. Themes of the conference were preserving cultural identity, the growth of the Baha'i community, and improving the quality of bilingual education for children. Sacred Pech music, along with other music, was performed. The secretary of the Federation of Pech Indian Tribes of Honduras expressed his interest in working closely with the National Spiritual Assembly on projects related to the

cultural, spiritual, and material progress of the Pech people in the area.

MEXICO- The Baha'i community of La Colima worked with Colima's state agency Integral Development of the Family to give a three-week course entitled "Developing Our Virtues." Classes were held in July and were attended by 120 children between the ages of seven and thirteen. The wife of the governor of the state, Mrs. Hilda Ceballos de Moreno, attended the course's closing ceremony and gave a talk in which she expressed her gratitude to the Baha'i community for making the classes possible and her hope that they would continue. This course was the result of a number of initiatives in the field of moral development. In another initiative, Baha'is supplied a weekly article called "Baha'i Moral Development Project" to three of the city's most widely read newspapers. The Baha'is also established an annual Baha'i Human Virtues Award, which consists of publicly recognizing students, heads of households, and public school teachers who have

distinguished themselves by living a virtuous life. Several local and state government institutions recognized and expressed appreciation for the work.

PANAMA- An Encounter of Religions, organized by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and the Family, was held 28 December 1999. An audience of approximately one thousand welcomed the president of Panama, government ministers, and representatives of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and indigenous faiths. The program consisted of an introductory artistic presentation by the Baha'i youth workshop, a dramatic presentation by the Buddhists, and songs by Christians and Hare Krishnas. The five-minute presentation by each group emphasized goodwill toward the new government and willingness to work together.

Participants in a recent institute course in Masaya, Nicaragua, display their graduation certificates.

PARAGUAY- An international youth conference was held in Paraguay in January 2000, bringing together more than four hundred Baha'i youth to consult about fulfilling the goals set by the Universal House of Justice and their role as Baha'i youth. The conference was envisioned as the first in a series of youth conferences for the Americas.

PERU- The first meeting of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Andean countries took place in Lima during the first three days of October 1999. Members of the National Spiritual Assemblies of Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela attended, as

did two members of the Continental Board of Counsellors, to consult on teaching, strengthening Baha'i institutions, training, and social and economic development projects.

PUERTO RICO-The services of Camlen Jovet, a prominent television and radio news personality in Puerto Rico, were formally recognized by the country's Baha'i community in a special ceremony held on 23 April 1999. The Baha'is thanked her for her tireless assistance in the aftermath of Hurricane George and for the recognition she has given the Baha'i Faith over the years. Mrs. Jovet publicly thanked the Baha'is during her nationally broadcast radio program the next morning.

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES- A radio program called "Baha'i Vision," which includes interviews with Baha'is and non-Baha'is and readings from the Baha'i sacred writings on different themes, was aired weekly and reached many of the Caribbean islands. Baha'is also participated in ten call-in radio programs during the last year to share the Baha'i viewpoint on various social issues. In addition, Baha'i activities were announced on radio and television as public service announcements.

SURINAME- The "Green Light Project" began in March 1999, as a two-year teaching initiative in the upper Suriname River district of Sipaliwini, which is home to the Sararnaccan tribe and thirty percent of the Baha'i population in that country. The project was designed to bring the Baha'i message to twenty villages and to carry out an educational project through the establishment of regular devotional services, children's classes, and training institutes. The program was developed with the assistance of Baha'i Secon, a foundation for social and economic development functioning under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO-Each year the government of Trinidad and Tobago honors citizens who have done outstanding work in different areas of nation building. This year, two of the awards were presented to Baha'is. Henry Collymore received the Trinity Cross- the highest award in the country-for distinguishing himself in the field of medicine and community service. Mansingh Amarsingh was given the Hummingbird Silver Medal for his twenty-five years of service to the nation in sports. The presentations were made by President Arthur N. R. Robinson at his official residence on 31 August 1999.

UNITED STATES-In a 7 April ceremony in San Francisco, Dorothy Nelson, senior judge of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, received the 2000 D'Alemberte/Raven Award for Outstanding Contribution to Dispute Resolution from the American Bar Association's Section of Dispute Resolution. The award recognizes members of the legal profession who have contributed significantly to the field of conflict resolution. James Alfini, chair

of the ABA Section on Dispute Resolution, called Judge Nelson "a noted jurist and educator whose early recognition of the need to focus on dispute resolution alternatives has had a profound impact on the growth of the ADR field."

In May 1999, Firuz Kazemzadeh, secretary for external affairs of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, was named by President Bill Clinton to the nine-member US Commission on International Religious Freedom. The commission studies international violations of religious freedom and issues recommendations each year for US responses. Dr. Kazemzadeh's appointment was announced along with the appointment of Laila Al-Marayati, a leading US spokeswoman on Islamic issues, and Charles Z. Smith, a justice of the Washington State Supreme Court. Dr. Kazemzadeh has testified frequently before the House International Relations and Senate Foreign Relations Committees on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly concerning the religious repression of the Baha'is, particularly in Iran. "The promotion of religious freedom abroad is a priority of the Clinton presidency," the White House news release of 5 May stated. "These three distinguished appointees will further ensure that international religious freedom continues to be an integral part of the administration's foreign policy."

On March 9, 2000, the US president organized "A Call to Action: The President's One America Meeting with Religious Leaders." More than 150 religious leaders, including five Baha'is, attended the meeting, whose purpose was to discuss the commitment of the United States' faith communities to improving racial

relations. Dr. Robert Henderson, secretary-general of the United States National Spiritual Assembly, spoke to the gathering on behalf of the Baha'is, highlighting the Baha'is' efforts towards race unity. The press release issued by the White House regarding the event specifically mentioned the 110,000 Baha'is in the US, and their creation of "programs, videos, and TV spots which are designed to reach households across the country with positive messages of spiritual solutions to social problems."

For the past five years the Persian-language Baha'i radio program "Payam-e Doost" has been broadcasting from the Washington, DC, area in the United States in order to disseminate accurate information about the Baha'i Faith to Persian-speaking audiences. On 14 November 1999, "Payam-e Doost" was broadcast for the first time on the World Wide Web, marking the first time a radio program produced by Baha'is has been available throughout the world on the Internet. 1

URUGUAY- The eightieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Uruguay was celebrated at a conference held in Montevideo on 18 and 19 September 1999. Isabel de Sanchez, a

member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas, was among the one hundred participants.

VENEZUELA- Approximately one hundred youth from most major regions of Venezuela participated in the national youth conference held in Cabudare from 29 July to 1 August 1999. The conference was organized into workshops, which focused on study, living a Baha'i life, the country's goals for the Four Year Plan, systematization, evaluation, and planning, and service in the areas of institutes, children's classes, use of the arts, and expansion and consolidation projects. On the final day the youth formed groups according to the twelve geographic areas represented at the conference. Each group analyzed the status of the Four Year Plan goals for its own area and then made specific commitments to assist in achieving those goals.

Payam-e Doost is accessible at < www.bahairadio.org.>

WEST LEEWARD ISLANDS-During the course of the past year, Baha'is in the West Leeward Islands have established ongoing children's classes, devotional meetings, and study circles.

Members of the United States Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (seated, third from left) and Counsellor Wilma Ellis (seated, far right).

Asia

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS- The Local Spiritual Assembly of Port Blair, in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, held a series of public competitions for school children. Different contests were held for children from kindergarten to grade eight, while secondary students were asked to write for five minutes on the question "Who is Writing the Future?", a task inspired by the recent statement of the same name by the Baha'i International Community. More than six hundred students participated in the contests, and some 850 people attended the awards ceremony held on 12 November.

ARMENIA- The Baha'i institute in Armenia has been offering study courses on "Fundamental Verities," and "Arising to Serve," and on art, drama, and music. By April 2000, about one-third of the BaM'is in the country had completed the first two of these courses. A postgraduate student named Goar Vardanyan, who is not a Baha'i, wrote a dissertation on the Baha'i Faith, which was received with interest in the scholarly community and published during the summer of 1999.

BANGLADESH-Three Baha'is from Bangladesh attended a conference on women and peace held in Dhaka on 2 and 3 October. The gathering was hosted by the NGO Women for Women, and

representatives were invited from NGOs for women in SAARC countries (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The Baha'i representatives took an active part in all of the workshops and plenary sessions, and in some instances selections from the Baha'i writings were shared with the participants. One of the decisions made by all of the participants was to publish a newsletter for children in the SAARC nations, which would carry articles on peace and respect for diversity. The Baha'is also presented two statements to the conference: "Women and the Peace Process" and "Ending Violence Against Women."

CAMBODIA- On 25 January 2000, the Baha'is of Cambodia sponsored a high-level interfaith event to which representatives of five major religions were invited. Called World Religion Day, the event was so successful that His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk sent a letter of gratitude to the Baha'is for organizing it. More than 250 people, including ambassadors, ministers, community leaders, UN workers, and university students, gathered at the Hotel Intercontinental in Phnom Penh to hear presentations from each delegation on the theme of "Unity of Religions." Three prominent newspapers in the country covered the event.

In Cambodia,
an NGO
development
worker explains
the Baha'i
concept of
equality of the
sexes.

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Baha 'is showcase
their fitem ture at a
book exhibition in
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GEORGIA-The institute process in Georgia took a further stride in its development with the holding of a facilitators' course for three days in May. Sponsored by the board of the national training institute, the course brought together twelve Baha'is from five different communities and was a precursor to another tutor training course attended by thirty-seven Baha' is.

HONG KONG--The Hong Kong Baha'i community's annual Award for Services to Humanity was presented on 12 November 1999. Some 140 people attended, including sixty Baha' is. The secretary of justice, a member of the Legislative Council, the consulgeneral for Chile, a representative of Xinhua News Agency, a

leading educator, and other community leaders were among the special guests. Cecilia Chan, a professor at the University of Hong Kong, was given the award for 1999 for her work in the field of moral education.

INDIA-Among other engagements during his state visit to India in November, Pope John Paul II attended an interreligious meeting in New Delhi. Representatives of nine religions, including Zena Sorabjee, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors of Asia, shared the platform with the pope during the 7 November event organized by the Catholic Church, which was telecast live throughout India and the world. Many ambassadors, high-ranking government officials, political and civic leaders, and intellectuals, as well as cardinals, archbishops, and other senior religious

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dignitaries were present. Each religious representative had two minutes in which to address the pope and the assembly.

The president of India, His Excellency Dr. Kocheril R.

Narayanan, gave one of the President's Awards for Remarkable Achievements in the Field of Education to Setwan Yadav, the principal of the JNKT Government High School in Khagaria. The ceremony took place on 5 September in the presence of government ministers and other prominent people.

JAPAN-In July 1999, nearly one hundred Baha'is from all over Japan and visitors from every continent spent four days at the foot of Mount Iwate, in the north of the country, attending the annual Baha' i summer school. Nobuko Iwakura, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors of Asia, delivered the keynote address.

The focus of the study sessions was *Who is Writing the Future?*, a statement released by the Baha'i International Community in 1999.

KAZAKHSTAN- More than 270 Baha'is attended the international Baha'i winter school in Almaty for five days in January, including two members of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia and fourteen members of National Spiritual Assemblies of Central Asia. The core of the conference was a series of workshops on subjects such as Baha'i community development, the use of the arts, and living a Baha'i life. They also held a memorial gathering for Amatu' l-Baha Ru~iyyih_Khanum , who had died a few days earlier.

On 10 December, the Baha' i community of Kazakhstan took part in the second Round Table on Freedom of Conscience, Belief, and Religion. The theme of the event was "State, Society, and Religion," and it was conducted with the assistance of the Office of Democratic Institutes and Human Rights in Almaty. Representatives of many religions, government ministries, and departments participated in the conference, whose purpose was to establish better relations between state, public, and religious

organizations. The Baha'is were represented by a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors, an Auxiliary Board member, and a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Kazakhstan. The meeting concluded with a consensus regarding the need for

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government to respect international standards on human rights and to search for effective methods of interaction between governmental and religious associations.

The Baha'i booth
at the Seoul
International
Conference of Non-
Governmental
Organizations, held
10- 15 October 1999
in Korea.

KOREA- The 1999 International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations was held from 10 to 15 October at Olympic Park, Seoul. With more than eight thousand people attending from 107 countries, the event was dubbed by the media the "Olympics of Culture." The theme was "The Role of NGOs in the 21st Century: Inspire, Empower, and Act!" The principal representative of the Baha'i community to the United Nations, Techeste Ahderom, served as an organizer of activities under the theme of human rights, and a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Korea worked as director for program planning for the Korean organizing committee and as vice-spokesman during the conference. Other Baha'is served as speakers or in other roles. The program consisted of five plenary assemblies on human civilizations of the past and future, ten thematic meetings on the conference's main topics-peace and security, the environment, education for all, ethics and values, human rights, social and economic development, youth and children, public health, gender equality, and productive aging-workshops, clinics, and regional caucuses. Cultural performances and more than one hundred exhibits enlivened the atmosphere. The president of the Republic of Korea, Dae-Jung Kim, spoke during the opening session, and the secretary-general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, sent a message on video. The conference was initiated by the Global Cooperation Society International in consultation with the United Nations Economic and

Social Council and Kyung Hee University, Seoul.

KYRGYZSTAN-Representatives from the National, International and Slavic Universities, Bishkek Autotransport Technical School, and directors and teachers of Bishkek and Tokmok schools attended a conference on "The Baha'i Faith and Education" held in the National Library of Bishkek on 14 December 1999. The purpose of the conference was to inform these leaders of thought about the aims and history of the Baha'i Faith. A book exhibition was held, and the schools' libraries were presented with selections of the Baha'i writings.

MALAYSIA- Almost 1,200 Baha'is gathered at four regional conferences held simultaneously on 25 and 26 June 1999, in Malaysia.

The programs of the conferences, held in Sungei Petani, Kuala Lumpur, Klang, and Kota Baru, were similar. The first day began with the keynote message from the Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, followed by a presentation of Who is Writing the Future? and a slide presentation of the construction projects on Mount Carmel at the Baha'i World Centre. The second day was spent in detailed discussions of the region's plan for expanding and strengthening

Baha'is in Erdenbulgan,
Mongolia, stand in front of
their new local Baha'i center

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its Baha'i community. Ten members of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia attended the conferences.

MONGOLIA- The Baha'is of Erdenbulgan, an isolated village of about three thousand people in the north of Mongolia, dedicated their new Baha'i center in May. Traditional music, dance, and comedy performances delighted the large audience. The town's deputy mayor and education officer attended and spoke warmly of the Baha'is and their contributions to the life of the village, specifically mentioning the three-year-old vegetable growing project. Rosalie Tran, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors of Asia, opened the center and was the guest of honor at a two-day women's seminar, the first activity to take place there. In October, the National Spiritual Assembly of Mongolia received registration certificates for the provinces of Darkhan and Zavkhan, which enables the National Assembly to carry out Baha'i activities there.

In Myanmar; assistants to the
the Auxiliary Board members
hold a study course.

NE PAL-Bharat Koirala, chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Nepal, former editor of the Nepalese newspaper Gorkhapatra and founder of the Nepal Press Institute, was given the Knight International Press Fellowship Award in October 1999 which "honors outstanding individuals who have made remarkable contributions to the media in their region of the world." Koirala was singled out for his role in "spearheading many innovative programs in communication to reach the rural masses and for his continued support and struggle for freedom of expres-

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See pp. 285- 90 of this volume for a profile of the Mongolian Development Center, which sponsors the vegetable growing project in Erd enbul gan.

In Labipur, two hundred people attended a regional women's conference. The local Baha'is organized food and accommodations for all the participants. "What was rewarding," said one conference attendee, "was the active participation of women in the discussions regarding the progress of the Faith, concern for the welfare of women and children, and issues of health and hygiene and the education of women and children." In a society where the participation of women in the Baha'i community is still quite low, the proportion of female participation in institute courses has risen to thirty percent—a phenomenon that has aroused the curiosity of neighbors. Seeing the change effected in participants, more and more people have attended and graduated from training courses on the Baha'i teachings.

PAKISTAN- The local youth committee of Quetta organized a celebration of the country's Independence Day at the national Baha'i center on 13 August 1999. The meeting began with prayers in Urdu and Arabic, followed by singing and a tableau presented by Baha'i children. The Baha'i speaker stated that independence imposes great responsibility on people and that free people must use their freedom for the progress of humankind as well as their own nation. She said that Independence Day was an opportunity to consider one's contribution toward the welfare of all people.

Two local newspapers covered the event.

PHILIPPINES- On 20 September 1999, the Baha'i community of the Philippines organized the observance of the International Day of Peace, which was hosted by the city government of Muntinlupa (part of the National Capital Region) and attended by some 2,750 people. About two hundred people were also present at a second venue, the World Peace Park inside the New Bilibid Prisons Reservation. City mayor Jaime R. Fresnedi and vice mayor Vicente Chua led the local dignitaries. Dr. Reynaldo Imperial, chairman of both the Association for Baha'i Studies in the Philippines and

the national education committee, spoke on behalf of the Baha'i community. Bouquets of flowers were laid at the base of the monument at the World Peace Park and prayers were offered followed by the ringing of the Peace Bell.

The External Affairs Office of the Baha'i community of the Philippines worked with the United Nations Information Center (UNIC) in its human rights education campaign. The UNIC has invited the Baha'is to participate in planning and consultative meetings for the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000.

SABAH-Following a conference in Kg. Manggis, in the Malaysian state of Sabah, in April 1999, Baha'is undertook a two-week campaign to teach their Faith. Thirty Baha'is carried out teaching and consolidation activities in the villages, resulting in enrollments in the Baha'i community and in existing communities becoming more knowledgeable about the procedures of Baha'i elections.

SARAWAK- A special project to open Lusong Laku, in the Malaysian state of Sarawak, to the Baha'i Faith and to teach the Penan tribespeople began successfully in the fall of 1999. Forty-three people enrolled as Baha'is.

The Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women played an active part in a workshop on legal literacy held in Kuching on 5 December 1999. The workshop was organized by the Malaysian National Council of Women's Organizations and sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Subjects covered included the Domestic Act, the Child Protection Act, and family law. A member of Parliament opened the event, and speakers included representatives from the Sarawak Welfare Department, the Royal Police of Malaysia, the One-stop Crisis Centre of Kuching Hospital, and the Association of Women Lawyers.

SINGAPORE- In June 1999, the work of Mrs. Shirin Fozdar was recognized in a documentary television program about persons of Indian origin who have made significant contributions to the development of Singapore. Mrs. Fozdar, who was one of the first Baha'i pioneers to that country in 1950, was acclaimed in many circles for her work in promoting the advancement of women.

The year 2000 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i community in Singapore. Celebrations will

be held throughout the country from May to September, based on the theme "Unity in Diversity."

SRI LANKA- In 1949, the first Sri Lankan citizens became Baha'is, making 1999 the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in the country. The National Spiritual Assembly encouraged Local Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers around the country to organize suitable commemorative events. Young Baha'is trained in leadership and drama by Sri Lanka's

national training institute formed a youth group called the Institute of Positive Behavior. During its first year the group staged shows in twenty localities in Kalutara, Kadugannawa, Dehiowita, Hatton, and the Vavuniya regions in front of eight thousand people.

TAIWAN- Following the earthquake in Taiwan on 21 September 1999, the Baha'i community, short of material resources, decided to assist in reconstruction efforts by offering free classes for children in areas damaged by the quake. The Baha'is now offer very successful classes in three locations. One member of the Baha' i community arranged for a one-hour radio program to air every Sunday morning on earthquake-related stress, such as anxiety and depression.

THAILAND--The sixth Southeast Asian (SEA) Baha'i Forum, composed of representatives from the National Spiritual Assemblies of Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore, and Thailand, was held in Bangkok for two days in September. Zenaida Ramirez, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia, guided the consultations on subjects such as the progress of the training institutes, the need for a systematic program for teaching people of Buddhist background, the pooling of professional resources , external affairs, and strategies for establishing ties with leaders of thought. Joint sessions with youth representatives highlighted the need to help prepare Baha'i youth to enter the new century with a clear sense of how to respond to these challenges and echoed the parallel SEA national youth committee conference held at the same time.

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UZBEKISTAN-The government of Uzbekistan invited representatives of the country's religions to a press conference held on 12 August 1999, to celebrate the anniversary of the passing of the law on religious liberty. A Baha'i representative spoke to the gathering and was later given assurance that legal registration of additional local Baha'i communities would soon take place. Several communities were formally recognized under the law soon afterwards, to bring registered communities to a total of five: Bukhara, Jizak, Navoi, Samarkand, and Tashkent.

VIETNAM- During the serious flooding in Vietnam in late 1999, many local Baha'i communities made contributions of both time and money for the relief of victims. During the year the Baha'i community also formed a women's committee, an external affairs committee, and a legal committee, which will coordinate social and economic development projects such as literacy programs and microeconomics.

Taiwanese children participate in a drawing competition on themes

such as family, children :S education, and the advancement of women.

Australasia

AUSTRALIA- More than 450 men and women from some fifteen countries attended the International Women's Conference in Brisbane from 16 to 18 September 1999, making it one of the

largest and most diverse women's events ever held in the country.

Sponsored by the Office for the Advancement of Women of the Baha'i community of Australia, the conference gathered an outstanding lineup of educators, activists, lawyers, and religious and government leaders from around Australasia and elsewhere to speak on issues related to the advancement of women. Almost one-third of the participants were indigenous Australians. The event was aimed at "forging new partnerships among diverse sectors of society, taking practical measures to promote the advancement of women, and looking towards spiritual and moral values as the key to consolidating gains." The types of partnerships discussed included not only inter- and intragender interactions, but also alliances with businesses, government, like-minded nongovernmental organizations, different cultures, and spiritual groups. Some fifteen plenary sessions and seventy workshops focused on such topics as education, communication and the media, the workplace, women in the United Nations, health and healing, business and technology, diversity, social and economic development, and issues related to indigenous peoples.

In response to an invitation from the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, His Excellency Sir William Deane, governor-general of Australia, officially opened the new ACT (Australian Capital Territory) Baha'i center on 10 December.

This year's annual Clara and Hyde Dunn Dinner, held in October 1999 in Sydney, featured a lecture by Dr. Robert Kim-Farley,

Children at Newport

Public School in

Australia learn

áabout the Baha 'i

Faith as part of a

special religious

education program.

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a Baha'i who works for the World Health Organization. The dinner, named after the first Baha'is in Australia, is dedicated to the social ideals they championed. Dr. Kim-Farley's lecture, entitled "Health for All: The Challenge of the New Millennium," was presented to an audience of more than 180 people and addressed the changing needs of a global society in seeking answers to humanity 's health crises.

COOK ISLANDS- A national teaching conference was held on 14 August 1999, at the Baha'i center on Rarotonga Island to discuss the hosting of firesides, systematic planning, and teaching the Baha'i Faith. Each Local Spiritual Assembly was encouraged to develop a systematic plan for teaching the Baha'i Faith in its area.

EASTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS- The Baha'is of Pohnpei sponsored a seminar for women in October 1999. The sessions on women and finance, moral education, and family consultation were favorably received, and requests were made for similar events to be held in the future.

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS-The Baha'is of Koolaupoko, on the island Oahu, entered a float in Kailua's annual Fourth of July parade, winning first prize in the category for religious organizations. The theme of the entry was "1,000 Years of Unity and Aloha." The float was later featured on the evening news of all three local television stations.

KIRIBATI- Two Ocean of Light conferences were held in Kiribati early in the year, one on Abemama Island in January 1999, and the other on Kiritimati Island in February. Both meetings were organized by local Baha'is and featured singing and dancing. The morning sessions were composed of presentations on various topics, including teaching and consultation, followed by discussion.

MARIANA ISLANDS-About fifty Baha'is assembled at the University of Guam for the Marianas Baha'i summer school held on 22 and 23 May 1999. Through workshop-style courses, Baha'is had the opportunity to study different aspects of the Faith and enjoy the company of their friends .

NEW CALEDONIA AND THE LOYALTY ISLANDS- More than ninety Baha'is attended the national winter school held in Yate, New Caledonia, in September. Participants studied the relationship between traditional practices and the Baha'i teachings, among other subjects.

In the midst of a nationwide examination of new religious movements, a scholar named Jean Paul Aluze contributed a paper on the Baha'i Faith to a four-volume encyclopedia on the indigenous peoples of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands. These detailed synopses of many minority religious groups in the country will be distributed throughout the French-speaking Pacific. At a time when several established churches have raised their voices in criticism of the New Caledonian Baha' i community, the author's portrayal of the Baha'i Faith and its community was welcomed by the Baha'is as a positive contribution to the Islands' debate on religious values and pluralism. Among other things, the encyclopedia notes the Baha' i Faith 's forty-year history in the Islands and the fact that it "is recognized as a world religion," something particularly important in the face of local

accusations that the Baha' i Faith is a "cult." The encyclopedia will be distributed to institutions of higher learning and libraries throughout the French-speaking world.

NEW ZEALAND- Terrence O'Brien, former ambassador of New Zealand to the United Nations, was the keynote speaker at the Association for Baha'i Studies conference held at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, in July 1999. The conference's theme was "Global Prosperity," and Mr. O'Brien's experience at the United Nations and as director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at Victoria University enabled him to speak about the role of regional and international organizations in world development. He stated that the United Nations is a monumental organization, unprecedented in human history, whose shortcomings can be attributed to its member states, not the UN itself. More than a dozen Baha'is presented papers at the conference.

Thirty Baha'i youth participated in a week-long project in January 2000, in memory of Hedi Moani, a New Zealand Baha'i

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who was murdered because of his beliefs in October. The group embarked on a wide range of voluntary service activities, including helping with environmental clean-up work, assisting at the blood bank, and cleaning the houses of those suffering from arthritis. Some time was spent each afternoon distributing invitations to the public for concerts and talks each evening, which were also organized by the Baha'i youth.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA- Dr. Sirus Naraq , a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors and former resident of Papua New Guinea, was decorated as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. During a ceremony held at the Government House in Port Moresby on 28 October he was honored for his distinguished services to medicine and science and for contributing to the growth of the nation . Dr. Naraq spent eighteen years as a medical specialist and head of medicine at the University of Papua New Guinea. The presentation was made by the governor-general, Sir Silas Atopare, on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II.

SAMOA-In June and July 1999, the Hawaiian and Samoan Baha'i youth dance workshop traveled to Western Samoa and American Samoa, performing more than thirty-five times for some fifteen thousand people. Samoan radio, television, and newspapers covered the workshop, and the performances were well received by the traditional leaders of the village communities they visited. In May, the Samoan Baha' i youth workshop performed and did community service in urban areas of Apia and Pago Pago. After their

tour with the Hawaiian youth, the Samoan youth held a fundraiser for a village preschool and performed in national public events. SOLOMON ISLANDS- The seventh annual Blums' Community Service Award program took the form of an interreligious service for unity held in Honiara in September. The award, founded by Baha'is to honor the spirit of the first Baha'i pioneers to the island, was changed this year, said the organizers, "from the normal recognition of service by Solomon Islanders to a worship service as it was felt that this was more appropriate under the present ethnic circumstances in the country." More than three hundred

THE BAHAI:FWORLD

people attended to listen to the governor-general, Father John Lapli, give an overview of unity, and representatives of several churches and the Baha'i community read selections from their sacred writings. Banners created by students from local primary schools were presented, and several choirs provided music. The entire program was broadcast live on national radio.

TONGA- Baha'is in Tonga broadcast a radio program in September 1999 entitled "Prayer." Though the Tongan Baha'is have previously broadcast programs, this was the first show produced without any restrictions, and the first on a well-established FM station. They received substantial positive feedback concerning the content.

After three years of operation, Tonga's Ocean of Light School has an enrollment of 176 students, including three of the king's grandchildren. This year a kindergarten was built and a pre-high school curriculum was added. The school has received encouragement and assistance from Baha'is in Australia and New Zealand.

VANUATU- The Baha'i community of Vanuatu played an important part in the economic summit meeting convened by the Tafea provincial government and held in Isangel, Tanna, from 6 to 8 October 1999. The gathering was held to examine uses of the island's resources. Baha'is were involved in the preparations for the meeting at the national and local levels. As a member of an umbrella group of NGOs, the National Spiritual Assembly of Vanuatu was invited to submit comments on the draft plan and to present information on Baha'i development projects, particularly in the field of literacy. At the local level, Baha'i youth were asked to help construct the meeting house and other facilities for the summit, and they offered to provide musical entertainment in the evenings. The Baha'i community was the only religious group invited to send representatives to the meeting and was able to formally offer the Baha'i perspective on sustainable, human-centered development, bolstered with specific suggestions of lines of action the government could take. Many prominent people attended

the final day of the summit, including four government ministers, three members of Parliament, the high commissioners of Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, representatives of AusAID and the Asian Development Bank, several directors general of government departments, and the president of the provincial council, who joined the many local leaders already present at the gathering. In all, more than one thousand people were present, including observers. At the signing ceremony, the Baha'is were asked to sign the document on behalf of all of the religious groups in Vanuatu, and afterwards they received a formal delegation from the provincial government expressing appreciation for the contributions made by the Baha'is.

WESTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS- The first international Baha'i youth conference to be held in the Republic of Palau, in the Western Caroline Islands, took place in Ngardmau from 18 to 24 July 1999. Nine Baha'is from Palau and nine from Yap explored the theme "Becoming Our True Selves," with sessions offered on Baha'i identity, prayer and meditation, study of the Baha'i writings, living a Baha' i life, and consultation, interspersed with service projects for the State of Ngardmau such as picking up trash, cleaning, and painting. The conference ended with a dramatic performance and a short talk for the public.

The choir of the Baha'i House of Worship in Samoa performs on 4 August for the filming of a video series.

Europe

ALBANIA- The use of Ruhi Institute materials has met with success in Albania. Courses, held once a month in nine communities for four consecutive months, have increased the number of Baha'is teaching the Faith in their communities and have led to an increase in Baha'i enrollment in the country.

In an effort to alleviate some of the suffering due to ethnic strife in Kosovo, the National Spiritual Assembly and individual Baha'i families in Albania hosted Kosovar refugees in their homes.

AUSTRIA- In Austria, "Act Now" events were held every three months to provide Baha'i youth and their friends with the opportunity to think critically and take action on themes such as Who is Writing the Future?, thus opening a path for them to engage in a process designed to lead to peace.

In November 1997 the Baha'i community of Baden founded "Family Days" in Baden, which has evolved into an annual four-day event with programs and seminars, music, and arts for adults, youth, and children. The municipality and its cultural office, local newspapers, a Catholic parish, and two schools collaborate with the Baha'is on this project.

BELARUS- An international youth conference held 28 March 2000 in Minsk brought together some 170 people from Belarus, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Moldova, and the Ukraine,

Women in Brussels,
Belgium, preparing to
read "Words of Peace"
as part of a celebration
- for the Week of Peace in
October- J 999.

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Participants in
Bulgaria 'sfirst Ruhi
training institute in
Kostenets, Bulgaria, in
February 2000.

including many members of the youth committees of central Asia.
Just one-third of the attendees were Baha'is. The conference
focused on developing artistic skills and featured workshops, a
concert, and dramatic performances. Baha'is initiated a teaching
project in Minsk afterwards.

BELGIUM- The Belgian government asked for advice and recommendations from civil
society with regard to its projected plan
for sustainable growth. The response by the National Spiritual
Assembly of Belgium marked the first time the Assembly had
officially submitted recommendations to the government.
On 20 April Professor Kamyab Samii, a member of the
National Spiritual Assembly, was granted by royal decree, at the
request of the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, the civil decoration Officer of
the Order of Leopold for his work in education
and scientific research . In November, he was also elected as an
associate member of the Royal Belgian Academy Council of
Applied Sciences.

BULGARIA- The second annual One World Peace Tour by a youth
dance workshop from the United States took participants throughout Bulgaria,
where they performed and assisted the Baha ' i
community in its teaching work for almost seven weeks during
the summer of 1999. The workshop danced in the parks and streets
of several cities, was featured numerous times on radio and television, and
performed with the renowned Bulgarian musicians

B.T.R. and Kolselo, the latter during a concert held at the National Palace of

Culture.

CANARY ISLANDS- Women in the Canary Islands organized and participated in celebrations of Peace Week from 15 to 23 October, and in training aimed at helping them to become organizers, public speakers, facilitators, and teachers in support of peace. The effort was part of a broad campaign coordinated by the European Women's Task Force, and similar events were held in nineteen countries throughout Europe.

CYPRUS- Twenty-one Baha'is gathered for a teaching conference held at the Baha'i center in south Nicosia on 30 October, where they consulted about the country's goals for the Four Year Plan and planned strategies for reaching greater numbers of people with the Baha'i teachings.

CZECH REPUBLIC- Jan Sole, advisor to President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, approached the Czech National Spiritual Assembly, offering to hold a meeting to discuss the role of the religious believer in contemporary society. He stated that this offer was being made to all state-recognized churches and religions.

The gathering took place in Prague on 4 June 1999, when Dr. Sole addressed the twenty-five Baha'is who had come from all over the country. "He spoke for an hour," wrote one observer, "about many subjects related to ethical values in today's society and the role of religion in promoting these values." During the discussion that followed, Dr. Sole said he appreciated the openness, tolerance, and absence of fanaticism of the Baha'is he had encountered. The meeting ended with a promise by Dr. Sole to report back to the president about the gathering, and he expressed the hope that similar events would be held in the future.

ESTONIA- Estonia's first national Baha'i summer school was held for five days in July 1999 in Viljandi. Baha'is from Belgium, Canada, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and the United States were among the eighty-three participants. The community's winter school was held in Tartu from 26 to 30 December, and attracted forty people who studied current Baha'i thinking

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regarding community growth in workshops held in English, Estonian, and Russian.

FRANCE- The French Diversity Dance Workshop traveled throughout the country in June, meeting with great success. In Sarlat, one show began with an audience of one hundred and ended with more than 450 spectators; in Lot and Garonne, the group won the support of a government deputy; in Massy, the municipality requested a performance; and the local press in Limousin described their performance with the headline "Emotion is in the Streets."

The second annual "Nuit de l'Espoir" ("Night of Hope") concert, which was first held in 1998 as part of the French Baha'i community's centennial celebrations, took place in Paris on 3 December 1999. It was organized by 9 Productions, a company created by Baha'is and non-Baha'is to promote the Baha'i teachings through the arts. Under the theme of "Together for a Culture of Peace," the "Nuit de l'Espoir" was held in collaboration with UNESCO and featured a blend of songs, dances, and other performances by well-known artists. Proceeds from the event were offered to Les Restos du Coeur, a French charity.

The July issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* featured an article by William S. Hatcher entitled "Promoting Social Justice, Tolerance and Equality. The Baha'i Faith: Humanism Against Fanaticism." The article covers the early days of the Baha'i movement and presents it from a global perspective.

GERMANY-On 23 January 2000, a thirty-minute documentary film on the history of the Baha'i Faith was aired on the German cable television station Südwestrundfunk. "On the Way to the Land of Unity-the Baha'i Religion" was filmed in Germany and at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel, and was broadcast in Austria, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland to a potential audience of some 130,000 people.

On 7 September 1999, the German Baha'i community was represented at a joint press conference of senior representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith, held in Frankfurt. A joint declaration was released, calling for religious freedom and cooperation between religions. It received widespread attention from the German media, including Germany's major press agency.

The Trustee of I:luququ'llah, Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa, traveled to Hofheim in October 1999. Dr. Varqa was accompanied by Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre Firaydoun Javaheri. Approximately one thousand people from forty-one countries gathered at the conference on I:luququ'llah as Dr. Varqa delivered several talks highlighting the spiritual aspects of the law, including its influence on the soul, society, and the development of the Baha'i community. A new video about I:luququ'llah was shown, and there were several artistic presentations.

GREECE-Arsis, a Greek organization for the social support of youth, in collaboration with Thessaloniki Baha'is, organized a seminar on "Youth and Their Rights: Creating an Environment for Youth to Develop." Greetings from the mayor of Thessaloniki and the vice-mayor for culture were addressed to the organizers during the event, at which the rector of Landegg Academy, spoke on human rights. The event, held on 5 May 1999, was featured on

national television, and a local private television station aired a thirty-minute interview. On the radio, a twenty-minute interview focused mainly on the Baha'i Faith, and two newspapers printed articles profiling the event.

A delegation of members of the National Spiritual Assembly of Hungary meets with President Arpad Gonez (center) in May 1999.

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HUNGARY-On 11 May 1999, a delegation of four Baha'is met with the president of the Republic of Hungary, Arpad Gonez, and took the opportunity to highlight some activities of the Hungarian Baha'i community. The Baha'i representatives expressed their appreciation for the president's work in human rights and thanked him for the country's consistent support for the Baha'is in Iran. They also mentioned that eighty percent of the Hungarian Baha'i community belongs to the Roma minority and that the equality of all mankind is a crucial issue for the Baha'is. The president welcomed this news, saying that in his opinion making peace with the Roma will be the major task of Hungary for decades to come. On 20 July, several Hungarian Baha'is held a meeting with Florian Farkas, president of the National Roma Association. Mr. Farkas mentioned that he found the principles of the Baha'i Faith very attractive and expressed his hope that collaborative cultural events could be organized between the Roma and Baha'i communities.

ICELAND-More than one thousand people came to a fair held on 26 March 2000, in Westfjords in honor of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Over twenty nationalities had their own booths offering literature, visual and audio-visual material, artwork, and food from their country, and religious and non-governmental organizations also had booths. This is the third time that this occasion has been celebrated. The event was initiated by a Baha'i woman in isafjordhur, who formed a task force with others interested in the issue. It has since been supported by many organizations and the municipalities in the area. The task force has used the event to draw the attention of the Icelandic authorities to the high number of foreigners

living in the region, and in May the Icelandic Parliament agreed to establish a Regional Information and Social Center for Newcomers.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND- A multicultural calendar produced by Access Ireland was officially released by the lord mayor of Dublin, Mary Freehill, during an event held 7 September 1999, at her

1 Ba ha 'is in the Netherlands at their booth during the Liberation Festival in May 1999.

official residence . Baha'i holy days are marked on the calendar, along with those of other world religions.

ITALY- A spirit of understanding and mutual friendship was experienced by representatives of the twenty religions invited by the Catholic Church to attend the Interreligious Assembly held in the Vatican City from 24 to 29 October 1999. The two Baha'i representatives, Maria Augusta Hedayat and Julio Savi, reported that they "heard the participants speaking of unity of the peoples of the world, of harmony among religions, the end of the conflicts between religions."

At the request of the Ministry of Public Education, the Italian Baha'i community presented the project "The Earth is But One Country" during a national symposium of educational agencies. The project is aimed at increasing the ability of teachers at all school levels to cope in a multicultural society. All of the material presented at the symposium was compiled on a CD-ROM and distributed to all schools in Italy.

LITHUANIA- The first Lithuanian Baha'i summer school , in Kretinga, was held from 30 July to 3 August 1999. Baha'is from every community in Lithuania attended, as well as visitors from Belarus, Estonia, Latvia (which had its own three-day summer school around the same time), Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. A member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Europe spoke on the school's theme, "Who is Baha'u'llah?" The participants studied a major letter from Shoghi

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Effendi and were apprised of the newly elected National Spiritual Assembly's plan for the development of the country's Baha'i community. 3

LUXEMBOURG-Every year, the Baha'is of Luxembourg host a formal celebration of the 28 June birthday of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke, which is the same day as the country's National Day. The commemoration for 1999 featured some sixty invited guests, including representatives from different religious communities.

NETHERLANDS- "Promoting Positive Messages Through the Media: The Happy Hippo

Show" was presented at The Hague Appeal for Peace conference in the Netherlands as an example of how Baha'is are helping create new conditions for understanding, cooperation, and lasting peace in South Eastern Europe. The Hague Appeal was convened by a number of non-governmental organizations in order to mobilize civil society in support of world peace.

Participants were able to demonstrate the activities of their respective organizations, draw inspiration from each other's efforts, and consult to plan future projects. Held from 11 to 15 May 1999, the conference drew more than ten thousand people from all over the world, making it the largest civil society peace conference in history. The Netherlands Baha'i community and the European Baha'i Youth Council (EBYC) had exhibition booths in the Global Forum area. The Netherlands community also sponsored its youth dance workshop, Awake, which gave performances on the theme of promoting tolerance.

NORWAY- On 11 November 1999, the inaugural conference for the National Dialogue on Religion and Belief took place at the University Aula in Oslo. The Norwegian government intends to initiate a year-long nationwide dialogue of religions and spiritual communities on such issues as the family, the environment, justice, gender equality, violence, education, ethics, and religious freedom. The program was composed of short talks, and

See pp. 43-46 of this volume for more on the election of the National Spiritual Assemblies of Latvia and Lithuania.

THE BAHAI-FAITH WORLD

representatives from nine major religions, including the Baha'i Faith, read from their sacred texts, with His Majesty King Harald V presiding. Professor Hans Kling spoke about global ethics and the importance of religious dialogue for peace, and the Bishop of Oslo spoke about mutual respect and the issue of teaching religion in schools. Nineteen ninety-nine was the final year of the LOTUS project at the New Era Development Institute (NEDI) in India, marking twelve years of collaboration between the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Norway and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Through the Norwegian Baha'i Committee for Social and Economic Development (NBCSED), the Norwegian Baha'i community and NORAD have funded projects at NEDI that have fostered the development of human resources, regional centers, and the institutional and technical capacity of the institution. During the LOTUS project, NEDI and the Telemark Teacher Training College in Norway signed an agreement regarding the value of academic, cultural and personal exchange, with special emphasis on partnership and bilateral exchange in the field of child and youth education, and environmental

and peace education. The NBCSED has also been instrumental in establishing Bistandstorget, an umbrella organization for NGOs within the development field in Norway. This has created a unique opportunity for the presentation and discussion of the Baha'i approach to social and economic development in a professional setting. The Baha' i community is now chairing the board of Bistandstorget for the second consecutive year.

POLAND- On 29 February 2000, for the third consecutive year, a presentation on the Baha'i Faith was made at Kopemik University's Institute of Sociology, in Torun, Poland.

The European Family Life Task Force held a conference entitled "My Home" in the national Baha'i center in Poland from 28 to 30 January 2000. The gathering focused on promoting Baha'i values in family life, touching on issues such as hospitality, creating a loving environment, and family consultation. Representatives

from Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, and the Ukraine attended.

PORTUGAL-In July 1999, the Baha'is of Portugal were granted permission to offer an elective class in public high schools entitled "World Citizenship-Morals and Religion According to the Baha'i Teachings." After contacts were established in ten schools and a curriculum was approved by the Ministry of Education, several students in each school selected the course, which was scheduled to begin the following September.

To commemorate World Environment Day on 5 June, the Baha'is of Evora, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and with the support of the municipality, organized a "Clean Dam, Live Water" campaign in which more than fifty students from two schools participated. The children, who had previously been given information about the environment, were very receptive to the idea of cleaning the local dam, which provides drinking water for the city. The teachers, too, became enthusiastic and asked to be included in future activities of this type organized by the Baha'is.

ROMANIA-In August 1999, forty Romanian Baha'i travel teachers were joined by youth from Bolivia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, and the United States, who formed a group called Diversity Dance Theatre of Europe (DDT). The group performed twice a day either in rented halls or in public spaces. The professionalism of the DDT and the subjects they treated in their dances

Counsellor Sohrab
Yousejfian (left) meets
with Dr. Ibrahim
Rugova, leader of
ethnic Albanians, in
Kosovo, Serbia.

THE BAHAI'F WORLD

prompted the national television station and two private stations to invite them to perform live on their shows. As a result of the teaching campaign spearheaded by the DDT, thousands of people directly learned of the Baha'i Faith, and millions of people saw the televised performances.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION-The first regional Baha'i school of the Sakha Republic was held for three days in July 1999. Forty-seven Baha'is from seven localities were present, as was a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia and a musical youth group from Kazakhstan . Around the same time, two Baha'is visited various towns in the region, including Yakutsk, Tulagina, Nerungri, Berjigestakh, Khatasi, and Kanggalasi. They met with a number of dignitaries, including the minister of Culture, the vice minister of Environmental Protection, and a member of Parliament. They were interviewed for a television news program, donated books to public libraries, taught several children's classes, and visited isolated Baha'is who had not had contact with other Baha'is for a number of years.

SICILY-Sicily's first Baha'i youth dance workshop, One Family, was formed in Catania in October 1998, after being inspired by a two-week visit from the dance workshop Panacea, formed by young volunteers serving at the Baha'i World Centre. During 1999, membership grew from ten to thirty-five members, and One Family gave dozens of performances in schools, theaters, public parks, and other locations. The principal of one school at which they performed asked the group to organize a project using music and dance to sensitize students and their families to some of the social problems around them. In December the workshop performed at a Christian oratory, with Christian youth, nuns, and priests in the audience. After the performance the father superior said he was moved by the performance and felt that the group represented a force for peace in the world.

SLOVAKIA- A summer school for the Baha'is of Slovakia was held in Bystra from 31 July to 5 August 1999. About ninety people participated in workshops on family life, education, marriage, and teaching the Baha'i Faith.

In March, the Voices of Bah a choir visited Bratislava for four days and participated in a series of teaching and proclamation events, culminating in a public concert which drew close to five hundred people. The choir, together with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, also made the first recording of an oratorio dedicated to Baha'u'llah's Tablet of Carmel.

SLOVENIA AND CROATIA-The Baha'i community of Slovenia and Croatia held its seventh annual winter school in the woods of Cerknica, Slovenia, in January 2000. The 28 December letter from

the Universal House of Justice regarding the further application of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas was studied and served to inspire the gathering.

As part of the popular morning show "Good Morning Croatia," broadcast on Croatian national television, two twelve-minute

segments profiling the Indian Baha'i House of Worship were aired, and the editor plans to produce further programs on Baha'i subjects.

SPAIN- A public presentation of the Spanish translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas took place on 12 November at the national Baha'i center in Spain, before an audience of two hundred. Two lectures emphasized the position of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas among religious holy books and its significance for Baha'is.

From 17 through 25 July, the Baha'i community of Elche, in collaboration with Miguel Hernandez University, organized the second summer course on "Music, the Cultural Feature of Gypsy People." Three Gypsy organizations also assisted in organizing this event, which was sponsored by Elche's city hall and attended by three hundred people.

The Trustee of I:Yuququ'llah, Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa, accompanied by Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre Firaydoun Javaheri, attended a Span-

ish conference on I:Yuququ'llah in Barcelona in October 1999.

Nearly five hundred Baha'is from twelve countries attended, and Dr. Varqa gave talks regarding the law of I:Yuququ'llah, its spiritual significance, and its influence on individuals and community development.

SWEDEN- More than 120 Baha'is attended the six-day-long Swedish Baha'i summer school in July. The focus of the summer school

was The Seven Valleys, one of the primary mystical works of Baha'u'llah, recently translated into Swedish. Baha'i writer Julio Savi came from Italy to conduct classes, some of which focused on Islam, Baha'i identity, and the reality of man. Artistic works were also produced on the themes of The Seven Valleys.

SWITZERLAND- On 20 September 1999, representatives of the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, the Catholic and Protestant churches, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism spoke and prayed before a crowd of

three hundred people in Baden. The Baha'i Choir of Zurich/Aargau gave its first public concert at the event. During the afternoon the various religions offered typical dishes from the diverse cultures represented in their communities. The Baha'i speaker quoted

'Abdu'l-Baha concerning neighborliness: "Be kind to the strangers ... Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are

staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier." This quotation appeared in an article written about this event. Newspapers and the regional radio and television station publicized this activity, which grew out of an

interreligious study group in which several Baha'is have been participating over the last year and a half.

The 1999 graduation ceremonies of Landegg Academy, concomitant with the second international symposium "Converging

Realities: On Integrating the Spiritual and the Scientific," took place at the Swiss-based school from 22 to 25 April 1999. Ten young women and men from Canada, Ghana, Macau, Sri Lanka, Togo, the United States, and elsewhere-the founding class of the Academy's bachelor of arts program-were welcomed by the rector and eighty other dignitaries and guests. "In its diversity," said

Dr. Hossein Danesh, rector of Landegg, "the graduating group em-

bodies the beginning of the implementation of the vision of the Academy, to become a microcosm of the world and to eventually welcome to its campus at least one student from each country on the planet." Seven master of arts graduates also received their diplomas. Professor Moshe Sharon, incumbent of the Chair for Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Hans Hohener, former president of the Swiss Canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden and long-time minister of Education, gave the keynote addresses at the Converging Realities conference, which attracted a number of accomplished academics. An additional event

Baha 'is
of Gypsy
descent hold
a Na w Ritz
celebration in
Sivas, Turkey.

celebrating the tenth anniversary of the World Order Studies certificate program at the Academy was held 24 July.

TURKEY- For the second year in a row, the Turkish Atatiirk Thought Society approached the Iskenderun Local Spiritual Assembly for assistance in preparing an artistic program for a celebration of May's National Children's Day. In recent years, the event has been adapted to include children from all cultures and is a national holiday. The Assembly's consultations with the organizers resulted in popular musical and dance performances.

Within two days of the devastating earthquake of August 1999, members of the Turkish Baha'i community were on the disaster site endeavoring to help the survivors. A committee formed by the National Spiritual Assembly set up two tents where differ-

ent daily activities were provided for nearly one hundred women and children, and a group of Baha'i doctors also volunteered. The tent project continued for six months following the earthquake, and regular visits to relocated families continue.

The Turkish-Greek Women's Peace Initiative (WINPEACE),

organized a two-day conflict resolution seminar in Ankara, which the rector of Landegg Academy was invited to facilitate jointly with another expert. Financial assistance for the seminar was received from the Soros Foundation.

UKRAINE- Baha'i youth and their friends from Belarus, Canada, Croatia, Luxembourg, Moldova, and various parts of the Ukraine gathered in Kiev for three days in July 1999 for the "Act Now" conference, organized by the European Baha'i Youth Council to give further impetus to the European youth movement towards unity and peace. Inspired by the conference's practical workshops, study sessions, and artistic presentations, the youth held several open firesides and welcomed ten people into the Baha'i Faith.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Ukraine became legally registered on 27 July 1999, enabling the Assembly to own land, manage funds, publish literature, establish charitable institutions, and sponsor public activities.

UNITED KINGDOM-On 3 January 2000, representatives of the Baha'i community of the United Kingdom joined members of eight other major religions in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords for a major interfaith celebration of the new millennium. The event took place in the presence of the duke and duchess of Gloucester, Dr. George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury, and Prime Minister Tony Blair. A member of each of the religions gave a presentation on shared values, such as community, care and compassion, justice and respect, to an audience of members of Parliament, religious leaders and faith community members from across the country. The British Broadcasting Corporation showed thirty minutes of highlights of the celebration immediately afterwards, and there was national newspaper coverage the next day, sending a highly public signal about the importance of interfaith dialogue. In his welcoming remarks, Chris Smith, secretary of state for Culture,

YEAR IN REVIEW

The Unity Dance
Workshop
performs for
the "Century of
Light " awards
ceremony in
Belfast, Northern
Ireland, in
November 1999.

Media, and Sport, referred to the event as a gathering of the "nine major religions of the United Kingdom," a statement that marks recognition of the Baha'is as a major faith community by the royal family, the government, and the Church of England.

Baha'is observed the centenary of the arrival of the Baha'i Faith in the United Kingdom with events around the country. One of the notable events was "The Wayfarer's Journey," a musical drama based on Baha'u'llah's work, The Seven Valleys. Using the famous Cheddar Caves as the venue, the story was told in music, poetry, and art as the audience passed through each cave to experience another aspect of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. Some five hundred people attended the presentation, more than a hundred of whom were not Baha'is.

Sixteen members of the European Baha'i Business Forum and representatives from the Baha'is of the United Kingdom attended the Enterprise Summit, which was held in conjunction with the State of the World Forum from 4 to 9 May 1999, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. More than eight hundred people, representing varied sectors of society, were involved. Baha'is shared their perspective on progressive business practices in the changing world economy during the joint plenary sessions, special events, receptions, and informal discussions.

More than 1,100 people, and over two hundred dignitaries attended what is believed to have been the largest public event

ever organized by the Baha'i community in the United Kingdom.

Held in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on 18 November 1999, the program included performances from different cultures.

Special awards were presented to local people and organizations that fostered equality, peace, elimination of prejudice, and human rights. Ulster Television, Radio Ulster, and regional and local newspapers covered the event.

The 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions brought more than seven thousand religious representatives from 111 countries around the world to Cape Town, South Africa, in December.

PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

For the first week of December 1999, residents of Cape Town, South Africa, witnessed a remarkable metaphor in action.

Seven thousand teachers, scholars, leaders, and religious believers gathered, as representatives of hundreds of millions of their coreligionists in some ninety countries, to consult with, learn from, and share fellowship with each other. Religion, so long viewed as divisive in human affairs, has been engaged for several decades in a process of rediscovering itself, chiefly driven by interfaith dialogue. The contraction of borders, economies, and cultures has

changed the face of more than governments. Globalization is forcing the world's religions to take a fresh look at their existence in a wide spectrum of faiths. The Parliament of the World's Religions represents a high point in this movement towards introspection and consultation. One of the chief results of the Parliament was the seventy-page document *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, a plea to those people and institutions responsible for shaping the future course of humanity- religions; governments; organizations of agriculture, labor, industry, and commerce; educators; the arts

and media; science and medicine; and non-governmental organizations. The Call underscores the commonality of moral virtues and their potential role in solving global social problems, touches upon issues as diverse as sustainable development, global governance, media ethics, and debt relief. In short, it offers a blueprint for religious and secular partnership in addressing the new millennium's global challenges.

Held six years after the Parliament in Chicago that marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, the 1999 event offered a glimpse of some of the currents in the worldwide interfaith movement.

"We find ourselves at a moment when people everywhere are coming to recognize that the world is a global village," the Call says. "Unique to this moment is the possibility of a new level of creative engagement between the institutions of religion and spirituality and the other powerful institutions that influence the character and course of human society . . . What is needed now is a persuasive invitation to our guiding institutions to build new, reliable, and more imaginative partnerships toward the shaping of a better world."

"We're convinced that the international interreligious movement is one of the most important features of the modern world,"

said Jim Kenney, international director of the Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions, which cosponsored the event along with the Parliament of the World's Religions, South Africa.

"Our motivation for holding the Parliament comes from the fact that the world is shrinking and that diversity is more and more apparent," said Kenney. "Twenty years ago, a Westerner might never have encountered a Buddhist or a Baha'i or a Muslim or a Hindu. Now ... the followers of all these traditions live adjacent to each other."

Events like the Parliament embody an ideal of the Baha'i teachings . In the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, the central book of the Baha'i revelation, Baha'u'llah exhorts His followers to "[c]onsort with all religions with amity and concord" and states elsewhere that the doctrines of holy war, ritual impurity, and other hindrances

to interreligious unity have been categorically abolished. "So powerful is the light of unity," says Baha'u'llah, "it can illuminate the whole earth." 1

The Call was one of two new efforts of this year's gathering intended to stimulate faith groups to take their involvement in the Parliament to the level of joint action. The other was the offering of "Gifts of Service to the World," a listing of several hundred faith-inspired service projects.

The Parliament

The Parliament opened with a colorful procession of religious leaders and believers through the streets of Cape Town. As several thousand Baha'is, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, African indigenous leaders, and others wound their way through the city, they were at times heckled by fundamentalist groups and even threatened with violence. The protests were reflections of the challenges that surround interfaith dialogue. 2

The daily program of the Parliament began with morning prayers and meditations, followed by numerous workshops and talks, and evening plenary sessions and artistic performances. Scholars, activists, and religious leaders addressed topics ranging from the basic teachings of the world's religions to an exploration of faith-inspired solutions to world problems.

"Much time and energy was devoted to discussing practical problems such as poverty and discrimination, social injustice and the stifling of ancient traditions, environmental pollution and global ethics, economic exploitation, and health issues," said Varadaraja V. Raman, professor emeritus of physics and humanities at the Rochester Institute of Technology in the United States and a representative of the Zygon Center for Science and Religion. "Thus, for example, in one session a speaker expounded on the human rights violation suffered by millions of 'untouchables' in India, while in another, an eminent scholar interviewed some Baha'u'llah, Cleanings .fiwn the Writings of Baha'u 'Lah (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 288 .

For more on interreligious dialogue, see "World Watch," pp. 265-84 .

Native American elders on how their religions and cultures have been marginalized in modern America."

More than one hundred Baha'is from around the world attended the Parliament and many were integrally involved in its organization and operation, including Dr. Amy Marks, who acted as cochair and spoke during the opening and closing plenary sessions. Several other Baha'is served as trustees on the Parliament's South African and international boards of directors; Lally Warren, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Africa, read a prayer as one of the twenty dignitaries on stage during the

opening devotions; Shohreh Rawhani, secretary of the South African National Spiritual Assembly, was a main speaker; nine Baha'is served as representatives to the high-level Parliament Assembly; a Baha'i youth dance group and Kevin Locke, a native American Baha'i, performed at two of the plenaries and there were Baha'i booths and displays.

During the final three days, an Assembly of some four hundred religious and spiritual leaders gathered for consultations and to make further commitments to joint action. Joining the Assembly were secular leaders from business, agriculture, academia, the media, and international organizations such as the World Bank. The closing ceremony featured a short speech by the Dalai Lama, leader of Tibetan Buddhists. He said he was encouraged that so many people could honor each other's religions and expressed the hope that such meetings would result in concrete social action.

A Noble Heritage

The 1999 Parliament builds on the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, which brought together several hundred scholars, theologians, and religious leaders of East and West. The 1893 event is viewed by some as the dawn of interfaith dialogue, and also holds the distinction of being the first time the Baha'i Faith was introduced to the public in the Western hemisphere. ³

³ In his address to the conference, the Reverend Henry H. Jessup, D.D., director of Presbyterian missionary operations in northern Syria, quoted Cambridge

Orientalist E.G. Browne's description of Baha'u'llah.

PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

Religious leaders,
including Baha'i
representative Amy
Marks (third from left),
stand with Nelson
Mandela, former
president of
South Africa.

The Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions was established after a highly successful 1993 centenary of that event drew more than ten thousand participants to Chicago. Among the major products of the 1993 Parliament was a document called Towards a Global Ethic, a statement of global ethics as defined by the world's major religions.

Council officials said they chose South Africa for the 1999 Parliament because of the role that religion played in the struggle against apartheid. "We believe that there is a unique role that religion and

spirituality play in social transformation," said Dirk Ficca, executive director of the Council. "It provides resources for the people to get a clear vision of where they might go, and an outline of the most peaceful and just way to get there."

Addressing the Parliament, former South African president Nelson Mandela acknowledged, "without the Church and religious institutions, I would never be here today," explaining that it was Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Jewish religious groups that were instrumental in providing him and other young blacks with an education-and later in giving comfort to political prisoners and their families. "I appreciate the importance of religion," he said. "You have to have been in a South African jail under apartheid where you could see the cruelty of human beings to each other in its naked form. Again, religious institutions and their leaders gave us hope that one day we could return." He went on to say that "religion will have a crucial role to play in guiding and inspiring humanity to meet the enormous challenges we face" in the next century.

Once the decision was made to hold the 1999 Parliament in South Africa, much of the planning and implementation of the event was turned over to the Parliament of the World's Religions, South Africa (PWRSA), an autonomous interfaith organization. "The South Africa religious community, humble as it was, rose to the immense task of playing host to the Parliament," said Amy Marks, cochair of PWRSA and a member of the South African Baha'i community. "In truth," said Marks, "it can be said that the 1999 Parliament of the World's Religions was achieved on the interreligious foundations built by those who were key players in the struggle against apartheid." The next Parliament was tentatively scheduled for 2005.

A welcoming message from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of South Africa, which appeared on the front page of Vukani, the official newsletter of the Parliament (and which was distributed as an insert in the municipal newspaper Cape Times), summed up the spirit of the Baha'i contribution to the gathering by speaking of the

vast majority of the peoples of the world [who] accept and understand that we are one people- one people rich in the diversity of our cultures, languages, temperaments and thought ..

As a new century opens, the overriding challenge facing all of the world's peoples is to understand and wholeheartedly accept ... that the time has come to rise above our petty differences of national and religious rivalries and work constructively and enthusiastically to build new order in the world.

A gathering of some of the

participants at the 1999
Parliament of the World's
Religions in Cape Town,
South Africa.

THE BAHÁ'Í
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY

The Bahá'í International Community both encompasses and represents, at the United Nations and in other international fora, the more than five million Bahá'ís living in at least 235 countries and dependent territories around the world. Its 181 national and regional affiliates are engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at realizing the Bahá'í Faith's central principles of peace and justice. For the last several years, four major themes—human rights, moral development, the advancement of women, and global prosperity—have shaped the Bahá'í International Community's activities at the local, national, and international levels.

The Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Office and its Office of Public Information play complementary roles in the promotion of this work. The United Nations Office, with over fifty years of experience offering Bahá'í perspectives on global issues and supporting UN programs, has in recent years significantly increased efforts aimed at assisting its national affiliates to influence relevant programs and developments in their countries. The Office of Public Information, which also represents

111

the Bahá'í community internationally, disseminates information about the Bahá'í Faith around the world, oversees production of the award-winning newsletter *One Country*, and maintains the official Web site of the Bahá'í International Community.

United Nations

First affiliated with the UN in 1947, the Bahá'í International Community has long supported the work of the United Nations. As an international non-governmental organization (NGO) at the UN, the BIC was granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1970, with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1976, and with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 1989. A working relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO) was also established in 1989. The BIC has United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva and maintains representations to United Nations regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, and Santiago, and to UN offices in Nairobi, Rome, and Vienna. Its Office of the Environment (established in 1988), and its Office for the Advancement of Women (established in 1992) function as

adjuncts of its United Nations Office. Over the course of the last decade, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office has increasingly encouraged its national affiliates to expand their involvement in the work of the United Nations.

Human Rights Education initiative

As National Spiritual Assemblies have assumed a greater role in Baha'i diplomatic work, many have joined in a global campaign to encourage active engagement in the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). To promote this Human Rights Education initiative, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office developed a training program for national Baha'i communities. Ninety-nine of the National Spiritual Assemblies that have chosen to participate in this global campaign sent representatives to one of fourteen regional diplomatic training sessions held between October 1998 and November 1999.

Seminars were offered in Australia, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark, Romania, Thailand,

BAI-IA' I NTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Participants in a human rights education training session in Trinidad.

Trinidad and Tobago, the Ukraine, the United States, and Uruguay. Materials were made available in English, French, Russian and Spanish, and at least one training session was offered in each of those languages. Moreover, the training sessions themselves were highly participatory, encouraging trainees to draw on their personal experience and to explore how to identify and apply relevant spiritual principles to diplomatic situations they encounter in their own countries.

Following the seminars, the trained external affairs representatives briefed their National Spiritual Assemblies on what they had learned in order to help develop national plans for promoting the Decade for Human Rights Education. Many of these same trainees have also begun offering the training to others, thereby systematically increasing the human resources available to carry out diplomatic initiatives at national, regional, and local levels. The United Nations Office is supporting this work with a Human Rights Education Newsletter and a Human Rights Education CD-ROM.

Human rights

The Baha'i International Community's support for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education is a natural extension of its efforts since 1947 to promote human rights and responsibilities as the foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world order. This year, as in years past, the Baha'i International Community

addressed the UN Commission on Human Rights. Its statement on the right to education was circulated as an official UN document (E/CN.4/2000/NGO/13) in English, French, and Spanish to the Fifty-sixth Session of the Commission, held March-April 2000. 1 The BIC also joined other NGOs in signing joint statements on violence against women, human rights defenders, and the right to education. Preparations are also being closely monitored for the next major UN human rights conference, the World Conference against Racism, to be held in South Africa in September 2001 .

Protecting the right of Baha'is throughout the world to practice their faith is also an important aspect of the work of the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office, and a major focus of the office in Geneva. With the help of its national affiliates, the BIC has, for more than twenty years, brought the perilous situation of the Baha'is in Iran to the attention of the international community, providing reliable information to national governments and to the UN offices, commissions, and committees that monitor compliance with the various UN human rights agreements. During the Commission's deliberations on human rights in Iran, the BIC offered an oral update on the situation of the Baha'is in that country. 2 It also monitored sessions of the ECOSOC and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, where it was anticipated that the issue of the Baha'is might be raised.

Advancement of women

Fifty-two national Baha'i communities now have Offices for the Advancement of Women, and numerous others have committees or task forces. These offices assist National Spiritual Assemblies in their efforts to promote the full participation of women both in the life of the Baha'i community and in the world at large. They are kept abreast of initiatives at the UN, opportunities for regional involvement, and projects being carried out by other national communities through a newsletter circulated by the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women.

For the Baha'i International Community's statement on the right to education , see pp . 295-300.

For the Baha' i International Community 's statement on the current situation of the Baha'is in Iran, see pp. 291 - 94. For additional information, see the article on pp. 157- 64 .

B AHA' I I NTERNATIONAL C OMMUNITY

Throughout this year, the Office has been engaged in a variety of activities pertaining to women and girls. At the request of African Action on AIDS, an organization dedicated to providing for AIDS orphans in Africa, the Baha'i International Community cohosted a program at its New York office entitled

"Celebrating Human Rights by Promoting the Rights of AIDS Orphans." This program honored the president of the Fiftyfourth Session of the General Assembly, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, and his wife for their support of this cause. In October 1999 a Millennium Young People's Congress was held in Honolulu, Hawaii, sponsored by Peace Child International, the State of Hawaii, UNEP, and UNESCO. At the Congress, the Baha'i International Community, which has become known as an advocate for the girl child, was invited to serve as one of several mentors for teens from 110 countries. The Community also convened the Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden for Women, as it has since 1988.

At the March 2000 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Baha'i International Community continued to exercise leadership in the NGO community. It chaired two important groups for the NGO Committee on the Status of Women: the Planning Group for NGO Consultation Day and the Task Force on National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women. Speaking on a panel entitled "NGOs for Women 2000: Setting Targets for Beijing + 5," which was organized prior to the Commission by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the director of the Office for the Advancement of Women shared her expertise on national machinery for the advancement of women. After surveying the progress various countries had made in establishing mechanisms to ensure that the concerns of women would be taken into account in decision making at every level of government, she focused primarily on constructive examples of countries whose national mechanisms are working. The issue of national mechanisms for ensuring equality was just one of the twelve issues addressed during the eleven days of the March 2000 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, during which

governments prepared for the upcoming special session of the UN General Assembly. "Beijing+ 5," as the special session is called, will evaluate progress in implementing the platform for action adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

At the request of UNIFEM, the Baha'i International Community and the NGO Committee on UNIFEM cohosted two receptions for the UN committee monitoring implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A number of UN officials and diplomats were among the approximately sixty-five guests who attended the first reception and the eighty who attended the second.

Participants in the World Faiths Development Dialogue, held in Washington, DC, November 1999.

Environment, development, and global prosperity

For the last two years the Baha'i International Community has participated in the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), sponsored by the president of the World Bank and the archbishop of Canterbury. The second formal session of the Dialogue was held in Washington, DC, in November 1999. Participants from the first WFDD held at Lambeth Palace met at World Bank Headquarters to review progress made by the Dialogue since its inception in February 1998. The historic Lambeth Palace gathering brought together development experts and spiritual leaders from nine major religions for two days of consultation on the relationship between material and spiritual development. The Washington conference drew many of the same high-level participants as the

B A H A ' I ' f I N T E R N A T I O N A L C O M M U N I T Y

Lambeth Palace event, as well as the executive director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to consider an overview of development work involving the World Bank and faith communities and to discuss the future of the Dialogue.

Consultations, which centered largely on spiritual values, produced a remarkable consensus around many principles central to the Baha'i understanding of development. Trustworthiness and honesty were repeatedly mentioned as foundations for development. The need to work for global solidarity, for recognition of the unity of the human family, and for a global ethic was highlighted again and again. Representatives of the World Bank and the IMF, in their public remarks, also spoke of spiritual values as being at the heart of development. Indeed, recognition of the need to end the artificial separation between material and spiritual development appears to be growing, as evidenced by the continued attention in development circles being given to the Baha'i statement *Valuing Spirituality in Development*, which was prepared for the Lambeth Palace event. 3

Participants agreed that the Dialogue should continue for the next five years at least and that the IMF should become a partner in it. A team of independent advisors will make recommendations to the cochairs and the WFDD executive committee regarding the future coordinating structure of the Dialogue, and the high-level group attending these first two meetings will meet again within the next two years.

Yet another significant interfaith activity was the third session of the Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 1999. 4 A representative of the Baha'i International Community participated in drafting *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, the central document of the Parliament, and was one of nine Baha'is accredited to the three-day high level Parliament Assembly. The Baha'i International Community was also represented in Amman, Jordan, at the Seventh World Assembly of the World

Conference on Religion and Peace.

See The Baha'i World 1997- 98, pp. 233- 59 for the full text.
For more information on the Parliament, see pp. 105- 10.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Secretary-general of
the BJC, Albert
Lincoln, greeting
Pope John Paul II in
Tel Aviv, during the
pope's historic visit to
Israel in March 2000.

Future of the United Nations

In preparation for the Millennium Assembly- as the year 2000
UN General Assembly session has been designated-and its
Millennium Summit of heads of state and government, the NGO
community has been organizing its own Millennium Forum to be
held at UN Headquarters in New York in May 2000. The goal of
the Forum is to give organizations of civil society the opportunity
to articulate a new vision for the future of the United Nations
and for ways whereby the peoples of the world can participate
effectively in global decision making. The Baha'i International
Community, as cochair of the organizing committee for the Millennium Forum, has
been immersed throughout this year in a
process intended to bring as many as fourteen hundred representatives of NGOs
and other groups of civil society to the United
Nations in May 2000.

Meetings

The Baha'i International Community chaired three NGO committees and task forces
this year: the NGO committees on
UNIFEM, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and Human Rights; and
the NGO task force on National Machinery for Gender Equality.
Other meetings and UN sessions monitored by the Baha'i International
Community this year included the Eighth Session of the
Commission on Sustainable Development; the Thirty-eighth
Session of the Commission for Social Development; the Twentyeighth Session of
the Economic Commission for Latin America

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

and the Caribbean; the Substantive Session of the ECOSOC; the
Second Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly,
"World Summit for Social Development + 5"; a
high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for
Asia and the Pacific to review implementation in Asia and the
Pacific of the Beijing Platform for Action; the Fifty-fifth Session
of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination;

the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Sessions of the CEDAW; the Fifty-second World Health Assembly; the first planning meeting of the Fourth World Youth Forum of the United Nations System; meetings of the UNICEF executive board; and the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Program.

Public Information

Based at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel, with a bureau in Paris, the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information coordinates and stimulates public information work throughout the worldwide Baha'i community.

During 1999- 2000 the Office facilitated more than two hundred visits of some 2,500 people from eighty countries in its special visits program . Among the visitors were ambassadors from Australia, China, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Myanmar, Lithuania, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, and Uzbekistan.

Also visiting were the first lady of Kazakhstan; a member of Parliament from Spain; the titular archbishop of Belcastro; the

Members of the

Agritech '99 exhibition
visiting the Terraces of
the Shrine of the Bab
in Haifa , September
1999.

state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary; the ministers of tourism from Jordan and Israel; Shimon Peres, former prime minister of Israel; four of Israel's Knesset members; the president and members of the Faculty Senate from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The agriculture exhibition Agritech '99 brought a delegation of approximately 240 dignitaries, including ministers and deputy ministers of Agriculture from more than thirty-five countries.

Film crews, reporters, and photographers representing national and local media from Canada, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Ukraine, and the United States visited. Resulting coverage included a thirty-minute documentary entitled "On the Way to the Land of Unity-the Baha' i Religion," shown on German public television, channel Sudwestrundfunk; an article in Eden, a gardens magazine published and distributed in Germany; a segment on Dutch television entitled "Y2K News"; brief segments showing images of the Baha'i gardens for a millennium television program that was broadcast throughout the world; and a program on Israel's National Geographic Channel. The Baha'i World Web site, 5 now in its fourth year, has experienced a four-fold increase in visits since its launch, and at the

end of 1999 averaged approximately 25,000 visits per month. The site is now available in five languages, with the addition of Arabic this year, and there are plans for additional languages.

The Paris branch of the Office of Public Information was active in support of the Royaumont Process, which was initiated by the European Union to promote stability and good relations between countries in South Eastern Europe. 6 Training seminars were held in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia (FYROM), and Romania in 1999. Close and continuous communication was maintained with the representatives of the government of Luxembourg and the office of the EU for the Royaumont Process. In

5 The URL for the Baha'i World Web site is <www.bahai.org>
See The Bahri 'i World J998- 99, pp. 145- 50 for a full report on the Baha'i International Community's involvement in the Royaumont Process.

B AHA'f I NTERNAT IONAL C OMMUNITY

In September 1999,
participants in a
training seminar in
Sarajevo created and
~. . . p e l./Or111ed a dr an latic
sketch about inlerethnic
tensions.

October 1999, the Romanian Ministry of Education officially adopted "The Happy Hippo Show" 7 as part of a pilot program implemented in three school districts of Bucharest, with the possibility of extension to other cities.

The Baha'i community in the Netherlands and the European Baha'i Youth Council, in collaboration with the Office of Public Information in Paris, actively participated in The Hague Appeal for Peace Conference held in The Hague, Netherlands, from 11 to 15 May 1999, marking the hundredth anniversary of the first conference held in the same city. The Baha'is made a presentation that featured a short video highlighting the aims and purpose of the project "Promoting Positive Messages Through the Media: The Happy Hippo Show" and its implementation in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia. A young Croatian Baha'i radio journalist, Robert Zuber, together with a representative of OPI Paris, cohosted a live adaptation of his weekly radio broadcast- a "Happy Hippo Show" devoted to the subject of multiculturalism.

One Country, the quarterly newsletter of the BIC, reached an estimated 50,000 subscribers in its eleventh year of operation. It is published in six languages and is circulated in more than 180 countries, with an electronic edition available on the World Wide

Web. 8 Its coverage this year included a profile of the Kalimani

For more information on the Royaumont Process and "The Happy Hippo Show," see *The Bahri 'i World* 1998- 99, pp. 145- 50.

The URL for the One Countl" y Web s ite is <www.onecountry.org>

Women's Group, which exercised skills of consultation and partnership to build a water storage system in an arid region of Kenya; the Uganda Baha'i Institute for Development, which trained community health volunteers and helped to significantly increase immunization rates and raise awareness of basic hygiene in the Kumi and Soroti regions of southern Uganda; the STAR project in the United States, which offers a motivational athletic program and after-school tutorial sessions aimed at empowering and uplifting African American youth; and the Oedi Sewing Club in Botswana, a program that trains mostly poor single mothers in a marketable skill. One Country also continued to profile Baha'i involvement in major international conferences such as the Fortythird Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations, the Parliament of World's Religions, and the preparatory meetings for the Millenium Forum.

Conclusion

During 1999-2000, the Baha' i International Community continued to encourage national support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education around the world, promoted the advancement of women, encouraged the application of spiritual principles in development, and sought to promote the voice of civil society at the United Nations. In its work with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world, the United Nations, and other NGOs, the BIC continued to pursue its goal of the establishment of a just, peaceful, and prosperous civilization for all humankind.

Establishment of the First

CHAI! ~OR

BAHA'I

STUDIES

"I Jhile thousands of volumes have been written about the V V Baha' i Faith during the first centmy and a half of its existence, the vast majority of them have fallen largely outside the boundaries of formal institutional study. Furthennore, this body of literature is primarily of two types: either produced within the Baha'i community for a Baha' i audience, or written by opponents of the Faith with the aim of discrediting and undennining it. The establishment of the first academic Chair for Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem-with the mission of promoting understanding of this new Faith and studying its history, its teachings, and its role in the modem world-represents a significant step in the institutionalized study of the Baha'i Faith.

In the words of Professor Menachem Magidor, president of the Hebrew University, the establishment of the Chair signifies "interfaith, intercultural, and interethnic discourse between people of different convictions and different beliefs." And as he remarked at the dedication of the Chair, "While we are definitely a Jewish

university, we should be an intellectual bridge between Jewish culture and other religions."

The establishment of the Chair was announced on 29 March 1999, and an inaugural ceremony was held on the Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on 7 June 1999. Systematic study of the Baha'i Faith at the university began in the mid-1990s, when Professor Moshe Sharon, the Chair's first incumbent, began teaching a class on the history and sacred literature of the Baha'i Faith.² Professor Sharon's own interest in and study of the Baha'i Faith were the impetus for the creation of the Chair, which was funded by an anonymous private donor.

In his inaugural address, Professor Sharon spoke briefly about the history of the Faith and its adherents, naming ignorance as the main enemy of the Baha'is and saying, "The aim of this Chair is to fight ignorance, applying to the study of the Baha'i Faith the strict rules of scholarship." He characterized the responsibility of overseeing the Chair as both "heavy and exciting."

The Baha'i World Centre was represented at the function by a delegation which included Albert Lincoln, secretary-general of the Baha'i International Community, who spoke at the ceremony. "The Baha'i Community welcomes the academic undertaking represented by this Chair," he said, "in full realization that the process will not always be a comfortable one ... Whether we like it or not, our understanding of our religion and our community will be affected by the work of this Chair. ..." Mr. Lincoln lauded the university for its "academic values" and "freedom from prejudice."

See *The Baha'i World* 1998-99, p. 35.

Professor Sharon earned a doctorate from the Hebrew University in 1971 and currently teaches in the university's Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies department, and has published works in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. His research interests include the early history of the Baha'i Faith, early Islamic history, the history of the Holy Land under Islam, messianic thought in Islam,

Arabic epigraphy and papyrology, and the interaction between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Professor Sharon is currently at work on translating the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* into Hebrew. He also has plans to translate other major works of the Baha'i Faith into Hebrew.

CHAIR FOR BAHAI STUDIES

Professor Moshe Sharon
(center) and other members
of the Hebrew University
delegation at the Seat of
the Universal House of
Justice for the commemorative event in Haifa.
Secretary-general of the
BIC Albert Lincoln stands
to the left.

He expressed hope that the creation of the Chair would have a catalytic effect, sparking development at other universities. Following the event at the Hebrew University, a second event commemorating the foundation of the Chair was held on 25 June 1999 at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa. This gathering focused on the evolution of Baha'i scholarship and the unique nature of the relationship between the Hebrew University and the World Centre, particularly the Centre for the Study of the Texts. The cooperation between these two institutions will allow the university access to historical documents crucial to the development of Baha'i studies.

Albert Lincoln once again spoke on behalf of the Baha'i Community and during his speech read the text of a letter from former president of Israel Itzhak Navon to the President of the Hebrew University, congratulating him on the formation of the Chair. Mr. Lincoln also elucidated the commitment of the Baha'i World Centre to working with the university in pursuit of its scholarly goals.

A large delegation from the Hebrew University attended, including the president, vice-president, and rector of the university. It marked the first time that the university senate had ever convened outside Jerusalem.

Menachem Ben-Sasson, the university's rector, spoke about the longstanding relationship between the Baha'i Faith and the Hebrew University, which dates back to the founding of the school in April 1925, when Shoghi Effendi wrote in a cable, "...B A H A ' I S HOPE AND PRAY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS SEAT OF LEARNING MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE REVIVAL OF A LAND OF HALLOWED MEMORIES FOR US ALL AND FOR WHICH A BDU' L-B A H A C H E R I S H E D T H E H I G H E S T H O P E S ."

Dr. Peter Khan, member of the Universal House of Justice, addressed the gathering on the topic of Baha'i scholarship, pointing out that one goal of Baha'i scholarship was the search for unity through study of the Faith and avoidance of the divisiveness of opposing doctrines that has caused splintering in religious thought throughout the ages. "We do not foresee our scholarly activity reducing to a set of schools of thought centered around prominent or charismatic individuals," he said, "rather, we see a community in which there is a sense of equality, not a rigid or

stifling egalitarianism but a sense of a community of people searching for the truth, sharing it with each other, and providing mutual encouragement and support. "

Professor Sharon gave a talk on the subject of Baha'i studies, emphasizing the importance of studying the sacred texts in

their original languages of Arabic and Persian and highlighting the cooperation between the Baha'i World Centre and the school.

He called the partnership "essential for the achievement of the scholarly goals which lie ahead of us." He also noted the significance of this venture, saying, "There is no doubt in my mind

that... we are writing a chapter in the history of the Baha'i Faith ... "

In January 2000 an account of the proceedings both at the Hebrew University and the Baha'i World Centre, was published by the university.

By Professor Sharon's estimation, the research of the Chair will require "a century, if not more" of effort on the part of both the university and the Baha'is. The Chair faces the challenge of studying not just a collection of writings and laws, but a vital and ever-changing community that is emerging from obscurity but is often surrounded by misunderstanding.

Baha'is are still in the early phases of the growth of their own understanding about their religion and its community. The establishment of the Chair will enhance the understanding of the Baha'i Faith not only in academic circles, but also by its practitioners around the world.

For an expanded version of Dr. KJlan's views on Baha'i scholarship, see pp. 197- 221.

Brazil's Response to

WHO'S

WRITING

THE FUTURE?

In 1999 the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information released the statement *Who is Writing the Future?*,¹ which offers a reflection on the twentieth century from a Baha'i perspective. It opens with a description of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies' commemoration of the centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing, during which one of the deputies asserted that Baha'u'llah's writings constitute "the most colossal religious work written by the pen of a single man." The statement comprises five sections on themes central to the development of humankind, including the essentially spiritual nature of life, the need for a social and intellectual evolution, and the creation of a unified global society.

The Baha'is of Brazil, wishing to share the document

with their fellow citizens, initiated the publication of *Quern esta escrevendo o futuro? 25 textos para o Seculo XX!* [Who is Writing the Future? 25 Texts for the XX! Century]. The book is a compilation of twenty-five essays contributed by Brazilian

1. For the text of this document, see *The Baha'i World 1998-99*, pp. 255-68.

(From left to right)

Frei Beto, Luiz

Gushiken, Neissan

Monadjem, and

Jonas Resende

participate in a

panel discussion at

the release of *Quern*

esta escrevendo o

futuro? 25 textos

para o Seculo XXI

philosophers, scientists, theologians, journalists, and politicians, each of which offers a response to the vision of the twentieth century proposed in the Baha'i International Community's statement. Though the authors were not Baha'is, Baha'u'llah's vision still resonated with them. Twenty-one photographs by internationally known photojournalist Sebastiao Salgado illustrate the essays.

The book was published as a joint venture between the Baha'i community of Brazil and the Brazilian publishing firm Letraviva Editorial, with the authors' rights to the material being transferred to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

It was released in Rio de Janeiro on 8 December 1999, at a seminar sponsored partially by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Ten of the authors participated in panel discussions and offered further views on the book's themes and ideas to the audience of approximately one hundred participants. Canal Futura, a Brazilian cable channel, conducted interviews with the authors, and both the launch of the book and the seminar received coverage in Brazil's national newspapers.

Following are three essays from the book, translated from the Portuguese.

Luiz Gushiken, labor leader and former federal representative, talks about paradoxes of the twentieth century and the importance of morality in human development as we progress into the next century.

EDUCATION
AS RESISTANCE TO
FORCES OF
DISINTEGRATION

I

The invitation to comment on the text *Who is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century* is extremely disturbing. In addition to the very breadth of the issue, which mocks us as we face the challenge of unveiling it, this is a document whose vigor, depth, universality, and synthesis intimidate anyone who attempts to expound on it.

What follows, then, are modest considerations or, perhaps, concerns of a political militant who, at times, strove to raise some issues relating to strategies for the future.

An old Eastern sage says that one of man's most complex challenges is the act of breaking old habits and learning new ones. This difficulty of our spirit in adopting new ways to act is, paradoxically, one of the dilemmas of today's world.

Paradoxical because the century that is now ending has unleashed creative forces unheard-of in the history of humankind but, at the same time, is not showing itself to be capable of providing adequate answers to old problems- the impoverished state of huge numbers of people, the disproportionate wealth of certain nations and individuals, the ravishment of nature, rampant individualism, various forms of fanaticism, etc.

What is even worse, however, is that instead of being reduced, these multiple problems are, on the contrary, expanding and reaching dangerous and unbearable levels-in spite of the vigorous and increasing mastery of our knowledge in the most diverse areas of science and technology.

This seems to be the paradox of the late twentieth century: man can master nature, but not his own nature.

In defining strategies that might countervail the evils that assail the world today, this lag is clearly expressed in the preface of this publication, the text of which says:

The task of delivering humankind . . . requires that we question some of the most deep-rooted assumptions developed in the twentieth century regarding what is right and what is wrong.

What are these unquestioned assumptions? The most obvious one is the conviction that unity is a distant, almost unattainable ideal, to be sought only after we have solved- no one knows exactly how- myriad political conflicts, material needs, and injustices .

This comment raises the crucial issue of developing alternative strategies for

the future and the foolishness of believing in the primacy of old formulas and old mindsets, to the detriment of the new, whose essence is a concerted effort to create broader and broader social units—an effort based on the concept of humankind as a vital source.

This is an idea that was in the past evoked by visionaries, but that has today become a necessity corroborated by the evidence of facts .

II

We belong to a privileged generation of politicians who always ardently sought a "utopia," understood as an expression of a socially necessary and morally justifiable ideal that would promote concrete action and vitalize the spirit.

In our political upbringing, of particular importance was the influence of an internationalist ideal as conceived by a variant of

WHO li WRITING TH E F UTURE?

revolutionary Marxism and which might be summed up in the renowned phrase, "the proletariat is without nation." That is, only within a worldwide-scale socialist organization would it be possible for humankind to shake off the fetters of capitalism and find new bases to build a more just and humane society.

This internationalist ideal shaped our ideas about the future and acted as a kind of strategic focus from which a new institutional, moral, and cultural concept might lead to concrete political actions .

The text *Who is Writing the Future?* raises all these issues once again, but on a higher and deeper level.

In 1992, I had the privilege of organizing in the House of Representatives a solemn session honoring Baha'u'llah. On that occasion, the considerations I made regarding our Honoree were entirely relevant in terms of the strategies for the future and I therefore transcribe below an excerpt of my speech in the tribune of the House: "The focal point in the writings of Baha'u'llah is the unity of humankind, expressed in the celebrated phrase: 'The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens.'"

From this simple sentence derives the most ambitious political project ever conceived: a supranational state, accepted as legitimate by the entire world, endowed with coercive power, expressing the summit of a worldwide organization in which all nations, races, and beliefs are united in a single body, free from the warmongering influence of governments and peoples, with its economic resources duly organized and exploited, its markets duly coordinated and developed, and the distribution of products regulated by equitable principles. A federated system of nations, with legislative, executive, and judiciary powers on a world level, capable of deploying an international military force but allowing for internal armed forces in each country, organized to maintain

and uphold the norms of a new international code based on the principles of mutual cooperation, solidarity between peoples, and the protection of humankind.

For Baha'u'llah, the great problems of the contemporary world are rooted in social structures and their value systems.

A new covenant among nations-setting up new institutions,

ordering new and well-defined objective clauses on the rights and obligations of each government, establishing frontiers and limits for each country, and rigidly limiting and controlling the weapons of each country-must become the supreme effort to which the rulers of the world and the entire human race dedicate themselves in order to usher a new age for humankind. As long as this does not happen, according to the prophecies of Baha'u'llah, it will be impossible for the world to achieve serenity, and humankind will not be able to avoid great tribulations.

This new world order, prescribed by Baha'u'llah as the only remedy for the ills of humankind, does not derive from the belief that men and nations are perfect in their moral behavior or devoid of material interests. It does not seek any homogenization of peoples or individuals; on the contrary, it takes into account ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversities as well as those of thought and habit as natural expressions, and it nurtures the differences in the human race. This new order will in no way conflict with noble and intelligent sentiments of healthy patriotism, but nationalist rage and racial hatred will definitely be abolished.

Thus, the imperatives of a world unified upon new bases will increase the autonomy of countries while avoiding the excesses of an exaggerated centralism.

The principle of the unity of the human race, the central axis of Baha'u'llah's prophetic revelation, is not an emotional appeal to principles of human fraternity, nor a mere idealist proposition, but rather the objective expression of the current stage of humankind-now pleading for an organic unity on the political sphere, seeing that in the realms of economics and communications interdependence is now taken for granted.

The nation-state, bulwark of a certain stage in our development, has become exhausted as a means of organizing humankind.

National sovereign states must now evolve into a new system that joins them in a worldwide federated body, whereby the concept of "citizen of a nation" is extended to the concept of "citizen of the world."

An issue that is always raised when one debates these matters, usually expressed as an argument to reject the propositions

WHO IS WRITING THE FUTURE?

mentioned above, runs like this: How can an ordinary citizen participate in the

building of something as grandiose as a supranational institution if he or she is far from the decision-making centers and does not even have the minimum necessary knowledge for such an endeavor?

This is a valid objection, albeit badly formulated.

A body politic organized on a worldwide basis is certainly the ultimate expression of the principle of the unity of the human species in its institutional form. Bringing it about must result from a joint decision by the great representative leaders of all nations and will constitute the synthesis of a multiplicity of efforts in widely varied fields of human activity.

The principle of unity is, above all, a sentiment that, if apprehended by the human spirit—either by logical reasoning, a moral sense, or the evidence of facts—may swiftly become an active principle. This sentiment may be shown in multiple aspects of our lives. In its propagation we will find the bases to teach new values, and the new institutions will structure themselves and acquire legitimacy.

When we rebel against all kinds of prejudice—racial, religious, sexual, etc.—it is the principle of the unity of the humanity that pulsates in our hearts. When we exalt ecological values to preserve nature as an attitude to be heeded by every individual, regardless of where one lives, it is the feeling of unity that is moving us. The moral indignation of a citizen from another country in the face of ethnic prejudices that generate violence (against the citizens of Bosnia, for instance) is a feeling that derives from the same principle. And when this very same citizen demands an international force to sustain military action to defend those citizens, he or she is expressing, in his or her own way, the principle of unity in active form. Likewise, when we agree that a certain tyrant, a former head of state such as Pinochet, should be judged by an international court of law, we are expressing the same principle.

Thus, the struggle for unity is a manifestation of the will to open up increasingly broad areas in the vast universe of cultural, economic, political, and social relations. It is a manifestation of the will that, at times, expresses a merely bureaucratic view of unity, acknowledging its functional effectiveness, but that, sooner or later, will be adopted by most citizens of the world as a moral imperative.

Whatever the reasons that compel individuals to struggle for unity, and regardless of the importance they attribute to these acts, they are certainly following the natural path to the future and are thereby abbreviating the "time of suffering" of the birth of the new world order.

III

Another strategic aspect of the future world order pertains to the type of relationship between people in their collective processes, that is, the form by which people will get together to decide or settle issues within the scope of the social group to which they belong- e.g., family, neighborhood association, or club of friends--or even within the context of more complex groups, such as public agencies and corporate enterprises.

According to an old tradition, the most appropriate form of working in groups is that based on the principle of verticality, of a superior authority, whereby those who are below usually do nothing but take orders emanating from above--offering, at the most, opinions. This authoritarian method is one of the main factors hindering the liberation of creative potentialities inherent in each individual. Contemporary societies are being deprived of a monumental source of human energy because of a pernicious habit intent on perpetuating itself.

Many are becoming aware of this flawed model of human relationships and are proposing other forms. The Worker's Party [PT] in Brazil, for instance, has pioneered the principle of "Participative Budgeting" as a distinctive element in its program. This social and political mechanism enables us to increase the participation of people in the destiny of their cities, encouraging popular organization and, through representation, opening up the decision-making process whereby the use of public resources is discussed. Many companies have similar approaches to ensure the participation of all employees in defining products, marketing policies, etc.

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However, these extremely propitious initiatives seem to have a major conceptual limitation. In politics, the method of group consultation and participation is understood as an extension of the concept of democracy, a kind of enhanced power sharing (no small feat, actually). In companies, consultation and participation are seen as mere instruments to leverage the organization.

As I see it, the framework for consultation and participation should derive from other premises.

When we speak of direct participation, we are referring to the direct involvement of ordinary citizens in issues that bear upon them--in the places of actual social intercourse. This implies a multitude of places and relationships in which human energy is actually concentrated and from which a new creative and transforming force will be bred.

When different individual capabilities are brought together, the result is more than the mere sum of these skills, for a double-edged operation is set in motion. First, the faculty of perception is enhanced, making for discoveries or understandings of realities that had heretofore remained hidden or undiscovered. In other

words, the scope of our knowledge of increasingly complex levels of reality expands and, therefore, we acquire greater control and command over the object of investigation or debate.

Second, the reciprocal influence between participation and enhanced knowledge turns the consultation method into a dynamic, progressive, and proactive factor endowed with synergistic capabilities—quite unlike pyramidal decision structures that are by nature static. Thus, it is not hard to imagine the gigantic force that might be extracted from a society if its members were allowed greater freedom of consultation and participation in decisionmaking processes. But the most important aspect in the consultation and participation method is that it promotes loyalty and commitment among people, a feat that is achieved when individuals are allowed to understand the meaning of what is right and wrong in the issues with which they are involved.

Societies have long forgotten and forsaken an ongoing pursuit of justice as an element to stimulate action and propagate

loyalty. The notion of justice has always been associated with formal normative precepts (laws, regulations, etc.) and with the institutions that enforce them—either those properly pertaining to justice (the tribunals) or those of a punitive nature (police stations, for instance). However, although fundamental for progress and civilization, this concept of justice, which is predominantly associated with concepts of restriction and punishment, does not measure up to that feeling of "justice" we all have deep within ourselves, telling us what is right and wrong in each concrete experience.

Consultation and participation as elements of interactive processes among people extend and liberate our primal perception of a sense of justice, an attribute inherent in the human spirit that can promote infinitely more powerful forms of commitment and loyalty—and, for this very reason, is also capable of stimulating action.

That is why I believe it would not be altogether incorrect to state that consultation is, in and by itself, an expression of justice on the simplest operational level. In this manner, paraphrasing Baha'u'llah: if you base yourself on it, you will see with your own eyes, and not those of others; you will know through your own understanding and not through that of your neighbor.

Considering that the behavioral mien that predominates in collective activities is the spirit of distrust and individualism, one may question whether men are prepared to introduce the method of consultation, as outlined above, in their day-to-day matters. This is a cogent doubt and our response to it, as with other great issues, will depend on a tremendous educational effort to make people aware of something that exists potentially in their spirit and has an incomparably superior transforming power over other social mechanisms.

The method of consultation and participation, seen from this perspective, is much more than a mere instrument of social action; it is a veritable generative source that forms social units capable of countervailing the dangerous process of social fragmentation that characterizes life in most contemporary societies.

As a last observation on the method of consultation, we must stress that it achieves its maximum strength when individuals

WHO @ WRITING THE FUTURE ?

participating in collective processes are imbued with feelings of candor, honesty, and honorable intentions.

IV

A reflection on the matter of morals is another important aspect in defining the elements that comprise a strategy for the future. Any diagnosis of the serious problems we are now facing will come upon a worrisome phenomenon, namely, the increasing fragility of the moral structure of individuals and contemporary societies.

A clue to understanding this complex problem may be found in the history of this century's great ideologies.

Capitalist ideology, in its desire to value individualist traits, has in effect led us to neglect the social dimension as the fundamental goal of moral purpose. In capitalism, social problems are seen not as results of specific policies engendered by those who wield economic and political power, but as anomalies of an abstract entity called "marketplace"- the regulation of which, however, is generally abominated. These psychological mechanisms, on the one hand, dilute responsibilities for social ignominies and, on the other, tend to lead us to see the unemployed more as volunteers for idleness than as casualties of economic policies of exclusion.

In capitalist ideology, the stimulus toward self-sufficiency and individual competition is taken to such extreme degrees that values that inspire cooperation and solidarity very rarely find a place in people's hearts. But while sophisticated forms of extolling individual values (which this system is prodigal in creating) may at times camouflage its intrinsic perverse selfishness, in the end they cannot but entangle people in the traps of hypocrisy and guilt. It is undeniable that the exacerbation of individualism, which seems to be reaching an apogee now, bears close relationship with the increasingly swift social deterioration of our days and with our enormous confusion regarding values such as liberty and mutual respect. Socialist ideology, in turn, has encouraged people to blame only society for the existing evils and deviations, ignoring individual responsibility and thus paving the way for upsurges of

authoritarian and arrogant feelings, and stifling emotions such as

respect and compassion. All the violence that has been committed against millions of people in the name of socialism will remain indelibly imprinted on our perception of the twentieth century as a tremendous paradox, whereby policies aimed at a supposed social good transformed the state into a veritable machine of terror.

Realizing this particular moral vision certainly implies a new strategy for the moral transformation of individuals. In this process, morality is to be understood not as reverence for human virtues but as an operational principle that stimulates action and is valued as a dynamic factor. In this manner, people will feel impelled both toward their own individual progress and toward the implementation of changes in their environment. Thus, we need a dialectic capable of expressing this double objective: from the personal point of view, it must seek to develop the talents and qualities that distinguish human beings and that constitute their natural gifts; from the social point of view, it must strive to promote the well-being of the human species, assuming justice and solidarity as essential values of social intercourse among individuals and nations.

Only by availing themselves of strategic long-range supports, including the perspective of educating future generations, will leaders at all levels, the media, and our various institutions be imbued with convictions consistent enough to build a true civilization, providing society with the skills it needs and counteracting the disruptive forces that are being unleashed at the end of this century.

The march of events in the historical stage we are now living in is so vigorous that every gesture and every thought, from the most trivial to the most complex, end up by disturbing and putting our convictions to the test.

We must seek new paradigms.

For the time being, however, we are unfortunately being engulfed by the greatest of tragedies: our own banalization.

Leonardo Baff,' theologian, write1~ and professor at Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro, discusses the crisis of destruction fa cing humanity, and the means by which it can be survived.

THE
DANGEROUS
PASSAGE TOA
WORLD REPUBLIC

' " } Then a tree has fulfilled its intrinsic potentialities, we say it VV has attained its climax. It then dies and falls. When people

have spent their individual energy supply, they grow old and die. When, over the next ten billion years, the sun exhausts its stock of hydrogen and, later, of helium, it will become a shining star and die, slowly turning into a white dwarf and, ultimately, a black hole-but having earlier dragged into itself the entire solar system and our own planet earth. The entire universe and each one of its beings, particularly the organic ones, fall under the law of entropy. They have limited potentialities: one day they will all disappear.

Doesn't the same thing happen with social systems? Isn't our system of social intercourse losing or wasting its potentialities and on the way to dissolution? It is undoubtedly facing a major crisis. The question is, is it a crisis of circumstance that, once overcome, will usher in a new age of prosperity, or is it a structural crisis paving the way for a terminal outcome in an intensive care unit? I adopt the hypothesis that we are in the heart of a structural and terminal crisis. It is structural because it affects every aspect,

as bacteria take over an entire organism, producing septicemia and, eventually, death. And it is terminal because it represents the depletion of a paradigm-of all energies, all dreams and all strategies that might be able to cope with the system's own internal contradictions. The system marches irrevocably towards death. Nothing can stop this.

Is it the end of the world, then? Yes and no. Yes, because it represents the end of this kind of world. No, because the world will go on. The end will bring forth the opportunity for a new world to emerge, that is to say, a new civilizing standard capable of providing us with a new meaning to life and all the peoples of the earth with a new horizon of hope for humankind.

This dual perspective of death and life is present in the original Sanskrit meaning of the word crisis. Crisis derives from kir or krl-to cleanse and purify. There is an undeniable affinity between crisis and crucible. The severe process of purification implies death and rebirth: the death of worthless gangue, of aggregates, of contingency; and the rebirth of the gist, of essence, of necessity.

Whatever is put into the crucible of a crisis, and remains, acquires the potential or virtuality of founding a new future . It is a catharsis we are undergoing at the present moment.

Two Mortal Crises in the Current System

Two crises have arisen from our current system of social intercourse, two crises that are unsolvable by the system's intrinsic resources: the social crisis and the ecological crisis.

The social crisis plots the rich against the poor as never before in the history of humankind. The production process, by using automated technologies, can produce goods and services with extreme swiftness and on an ever-increasing scale. However, these

goods are appropriated exclusively by a small elite of nations or by the upper classes in poor, dependent countries. This logic gives rise to an immeasurable injustice and a widening chasm between the haves and the have-nots.

There is a very real risk of a bifurcation in humankind: on the one hand, those benefiting from advances in biotechnology who will live on to age 130, surrounded by every kind of amusement and delight; on the other, the great masses condemned to

W I-O IB WRITING THE FUTURE?

suffer every type of want and deprivation, dying as they have always died, before their time.

It is all the more serious not only because of the perverse abyss between the ones and the others, but also the absolute lack of humanitarian sensitivity. Our sense of solidarity and responsibility for our neighbors and fellow creatures has become extremely meager. It is in keeping with the logic of the system to exalt the individual, to reward his or her performance and to impose a regime of private appropriation of goods that are produced by the labor of all. This logic inevitably creates inequalities: accumulation on one side, destitution on the other.

Today we are moving from dependence to relinquishment.

We relinquish those who are dependent, condemned to being seen and treated as economic and social nonentities. How long will they accept the verdict of death hanging upon them? We should not discard serious clashes between the North and the South, between those who are inside and those who are outside the reigning system, leading to unheard-of violence and devastation.

The second crisis is ecological. The current consumption-based system is predatory. By extolling maximum consumption of all natural and cultural goods, it submits all limited natural and cultural resources to a systematic process of depredation. The final result cannot but be the degradation of the quality of life for humans and all other creatures of the biotic community. We have assembled a poisoning machine that destroys and kills the air, the land, the water, the living organisms, the ecosystems and the planet itself. How much violence can earth's system of dynamic equilibrium withstand?

What is the limit of its sustainability-which, once disrupted, may bring disastrous consequences for the biosphere? In addition to being homicides and ethnocides, human beings may well turn out to be ecocides and biocides as well.

The system is like a wolf, whose nature is to devour sheep. It is of no avail to admonish mercy or to file down its teeth. Voracity is the wolf's intrinsic quality and nothing will stop it from being voracious. Such is our current system of social intercourse, implemented over the last four centuries for all of humankind, that has today achieved worldwide integration. This system lacks

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any internal value that might lead it to change its course, or even limit its iniquitous and undesirable effects.

Over the next years, these two crises will give the global system an ultimatum.

We are groping our way towards a worst-case scenario. It's like an airplane about to take off. After it reaches a certain critical point, it can no longer be stopped. If it does not rise in flight, it will crash at the end of the runway. We are currently all smiles, content in our scientific knowledge, traveling smugly along the broad highway of history, barely aware that up ahead the end of the line and the abyss await us.

We hear the bells toll. They toll over the world system, today so arrogantly victorious and alienated from the gravity of the disease that has taken hold of it and will lead to its death. Death may come from the two crises mentioned above. It is highly probable that it will stem from the collapse of the world economic and financial system that currently sustains our societies. The truth will surface. But when it does, it will be too late. We will then see productive capital (roughly 35 trillion dollars) breaking away from speculative capital (about 80 to 100 trillion dollars-no one knows for sure). The latter is solely paper, and pure image. In a major crisis, it will evaporate like a soap bubble, with no sustainability whatsoever, tumultuously dragging towards irrevocable disaster millions of people who will perish like flies-while others will seek refuge, surviving in preserved oases and envying those who died before them.

Or perhaps the purifying crisis will arise from ecological havoc. It is not impossible nor improbable that some important link in the earth's systemic equilibrium will burst: the regime of climates, seasons, and drinking water might break down; some horrendous contamination of radioactive waste might spread; the decline in human fertility might not stop (as seen in Central Europe); the outbreak of some deadly bacteria might decimate millions and millions of living creatures, humankind included, putting an end to the great adventure of the species homo sapiens et demens- or most of its specimens. The terrific fall of some low-flying meteor is not entirely avoidable, as has happened many times throughout the history of earth- 67 million years ago just

WHO ill WRITING THE F UTURE ?

such a piece of flying debris destroyed the greater part of the biosphere and all the dinosaurs. The technical expertise to track an approaching meteorite is still rudimentary.

Conclusion: the desolation of tribulation? Once again, yes and no. Yes, because globalization (particularly in its economic expression: competitive and noncooperative) has revealed the

interdependencies that exist among all of us and the system's inability to solve humankind's collective problems and avoid the imminent cataclysm. No, because such a cataclysm might pave the way for a new rearrangement of the Earth and of what is left of our tribes. A new kind of civilization will arise, more benevolent towards life, more integrative of differences, more spiritual and more ecological.

In every conceivable form, we approach the new millennium ashamed of ourselves, of our lust to subdue, attack, and destroy everything that is not like us-as so many wars have given witness, most recently those in Iraq and Kosovo. Ashamed of the way we treat our children, millions of whom toil as slaves. Ashamed of how we treat our elderly, abandoned in interminable queues in hospitals and welfare agencies. And ashamed of how we systematically prey upon and trample life on this planet, as if it were not our only common home.

We are now approaching the dangerous threshold of a purifying Good Friday. But as we have said, it will not be the end of the world. Only the end of this kind of world, worn out in its regenerative capability and lacking in reproductive energy. Another world will ensue. What will it be like? What may grow amidst its ruins?

The whitest lilies grow on the darkest swamps. Amidst the ruins of ancient Mayan cities grow the most luxuriant trees. Something similar will happen with the emerging civilization.

We are swiftly marching towards one single worldwide society-the first of a unified humankind. We're all arriving there from a lengthy exile, where we have remained insulated in regional cultures in the frontiers of nation-states. We are slowly returning to our common home, earth, and discovering ourselves as part of the human family. But this phenomenon, that Pierre Teilhard de

Chardin saw as the emergence of the noosphere (one mind and one heart united in diversity), must still enter human consciousness. To achieve this, we must supersede the current civilizing paradigm-a paradigm that atomizes, divides and contraposes and accept the new one derived from quantum physics, from the new biology, from cosmology, from ecology- in a word, from the sciences of the earth-capable of relating, including, and composing everything with everything else. But this new paradigm can become hegemonic only when the old one and the institutions that support it are dismantled. Then, for the first time, we will witness the collective management of the earth and the social administration of the demands of the peoples that inhabit the earth.

After World War I, the League of Nations emerged, the first attempt to collectively think through the political problems of humankind. It failed. World War II gave rise to the United Nations.

It lingers on, tottering, until today, wholly incapable of coping with the new challenges for which it was not created.

We are convinced that after the great and cathartic passing that is to come, there will most certainly be an articulation of peoples and civilizations, rather than of governments. The World Republic will bring about a caring feeling for the earth and its sons and daughters, and will learn to manage our limited resources so that they minimally fulfill the needs of all creatures alive today and of all those still to come.

Spirituality and Ethics, the Bases of the New World Society

The suffering caused by the collapse of the old world system will convince everyone that it's not possible to establish a new world covenant founded exclusively on human beings. The earth, the ecosystems, and all creatures must be included in a greater sociocosmic covenant of survival and fraternal intercourse. Such a pact is untenable in a culture that has a single paradigm-and a purely rational and material one to boot. The rainbow, symbol of the cosmic alliance between God and the survivors of the Flood, will act as common reference and inspiration. Diversities will coexist and converge into seeking the common good for all. A new sensitivity is thus required, whose roots are to be found in the logic of the heart and in mutual caring.

WHO IS WRITING THE FUTURE ?

This new sensitivity will give rise to a profound spirituality. Human beings will discover that the spiritual dimension is an objective dimension of the cosmos and of each one of us-the dimension of interiority and of each entity's inherent history, the consciousness that feels itself part of a greater whole, aware of the secret thread that interweaves everything, creating an unfathomable, dynamic, diverse, and converging unit. This living and irradiating guiding thread will be deciphered as God, revealed in our hearts as enthusiasm to live, struggle, create, and mould life and nature in accordance with a purpose of wisdom, love, and beauty.

This perspective founds a new ethic, erected on two fundamental values. Without these new values-namely, right measure and essential caring-it will be impossible to preserve both life upon our splendid blue-white planet and the planet itself. The right measure has assured that the living cosmos is still here with us today and we with it. Cultures survive inasmuch as they abide by this principle, known as the Golden Rule. By abandoning it, they become unstructured and die. Our culture is absolutely devoid of measures in every field. Thus the proximity of its dissolution.

And what is the right measure? It is a balance between the more and the less. It is the optimum relative. It is the wisdom to

deal with limited resources, both natural and cultural, in such a manner that they last as long as possible or can be regenerated and reproduced. The sustainability of each being and ecosystem depends on the right measure. It is the right measure that allows us to defy the inexorable law of entropy, the unrestrained wear and tear of all things. Without the right measure, everything ends before it should and dies before its time. With the right measure, everything is prolonged and lives longer.

The first paragraph of the new world constitution will begin with a solemn proclamation of the holy principle of the right measure. Wasn't it the same with the Greeks and their *meden agan* (nothing in excess)? With the Romans and their *ne quid nimis* (nothing in excess)? With the Chinese and their *wu-wi* and *yinyang* (the perfect harmony)? Without the right measure, the planet's

limited resources will not suffice for all humans and other living creatures. The new constitution will not decree, "Thou shalt not consume"; rather, it will state, "Thou shalt consume with solidarity." It will not say, "Thou shalt not show violence nor the shadowy dimension of human beings," but rather, "Thou shalt show it in the right measure, in a constructive manner, the pathological as pathological, so that it may be countervailed and cured by health and wholeness."

Without the right measure, the planet will not withstand the increasing rates of consumption. Without the right measure, the peoples of the earth will not coexist in peace nor will they converge in diversity. Without the right measure, no creative synthesis will be found between the symbolic and the diabolic in human history and in the heart of each one of us. Without the right measure, we will not find the balance between flying upward towards the divine Father/Mother and plunging downward towards the social procurement of our daily bread. Only by joining "Our Father" and "Our Bread" will we be able to truly say "Amen."

The second fundamental ethical value of a common future for earth and humankind is essential caring. To care means to enter into a loving relationship with reality and each created being. It is to invest in the heart, in affection, in subjectivity. Things are more than mere things-to-use. They are values we can appreciate, symbols we can decipher. To care means becoming involved with people and things, paying them due attention, placing ourselves close to them, feeling them within our heart, joining them in communion, valuing them, and understanding them in their interiority. Everything for which we care we also love. And we love everything for which we care. When we establish a bond of love between ourselves and people and things, we become concerned for them and learn to feel responsibility for them. As the ancients well taught and as has been repeated by one

of the greatest modern philosophers, Martin Heidegger, "the essence of being human is caring." If human beings are not cared for from the day they are born until the day they die, they will become unstructured, wasting away and finally dying.

WHO IS WRITING THE FUTURE ?

More than thinking, loving, and creating, humans must know how to care, a prerequisite for every other human expression. Caring determines the minimum ethos for humankind. Caring is the appropriate ethical attitude towards nature and our common abode, earth.

Caring will redeem love, life, social intercourse, and the earth. The new millennium will only be ushered in when the ethic of essential caring triumphs. Around the values of right measure and essential caring, there will be woven the social and ecological covenants providing firm bases for the new emerging world society.

This new society is suffering labor pains right now, striving to be born in all parts of the world. A little longer, just a little longer, and it will come forth full of life and hope. With the Portuguese poet Camoes, we may also say:

After blustery tempest,
Gloomy night and sibilant wind,
Morning brings forth serene clarity,
Hope of safe port and salvation.

Ricardo Young, national coordinator of the Pensamento Nacional das Bases Empresariais and founder of the Brazilian chapter of the World Business Academy, outlines the need for a spiritual evolution in the face of humanity's declining morality.

DETACHMENT
SHALL LEAD
TO REDEMPTION

"I Then I read Who is Writing the Future?, I was overcome by the pleasant feeling of having been thrust into one of the most beautiful retrospectives of humankind's history, where grandeur and the ability to redeem more than offset weaknesses and viciousness.

It has become a common theme in the late twentieth century to take the part for the whole, the moment for the process, the fact for history, reaction for reflection, the incidental for the norm.

Many times our vision is obscured by hopelessness that the complexity of the world seems to imply.

This text, however, affirms the opposite. It focuses on the

process that made the twentieth century the most challenging chapter in the history of humankind, wherein humanity, like a pendulum movement, has oscillated from holocaust to awareness of its unity and interdependence. The civilization that has evolved over the last one hundred years represents a geometric progression of achievements that make the preceding centuries pale, however emblematic they might have been. In this setting, the text is extremely insightful, maintaining that social evolution and

technological evolution are actually instruments for the ultimate fulfillment of human consciousness and human potential, and establishing a causal relationship between these two aspects.

If it's true that humankind's ultimate achievement is consummated in the maximum expansion of its consciousness and spirituality, together with a deep understanding of the meaning of its journey in this cosmic fragment, it follows that we've never been so close to an unprecedented leap in our comprehension of the meaning of life. The intense flow of events that culminated with the technological revolution has eliminated long-standing barriers of time and space, creating a proximity among individuals and a complicity among peoples which, painful as it is, summons everyone to a new dimension of solidarity.

The planet no longer passively accepts the wars and abuses of this or that government. The recent examples in Kosovo and East Timor show that humankind is increasingly alert against authoritarian ventures and the disrespect of human rights. In the case of Kosovo, one could not but notice the concern of allied forces to spare lives in their air raids-paradoxical as this might seem. The so-called surgical war would have been unthinkable a few decades ago.

We are living in extraordinary times that would have seemed miraculous to our forebears. However, side by side with this, human beings cannot dispel the threat of existential emptiness, the absence of values, the evanescence of references. Paraphrasing Marshall Berman's book about the modern experience, "all that is solid melts into air." In spite of all the revolutions we have made, it seems we've reached the threshold of the twenty-first century without having undergone a major transformation: understanding that the attainment of supreme happiness emanates from within ourselves. What moves human beings closer to the divine is not their ability to manipulate matter or control nature, but their ability to love. Behind every great transformation undergone by humankind, there is a story of faith, persistence, and detachment. Heroic or simple feats spring forth from the detached search for something one believes is essential. In this century, amidst many horrors, we have also seen Gandhis, Mother Teresas, and Mandelas affecting the destiny of millions and helping them

through painful passages in their search for dignity and a meaningful life. This is perhaps the last great challenge through which humankind will find redemption from its sufferings in the next century: detachment.

The now-global consumer society conjoins with the technological and communications revolution in a very perverse manner.

While notions of space and time disappear, local references, values, cultural traditions, and ethics appear to cede to the appeals of a glamorized global consumer society. This is nothing new: the consumer society is one of the landmarks of the twentieth century. What is new is the scale on which this is happening.

The media try to lead us to believe that only news has value and, at the same time, that any news is universal. The death of a child becomes a global fact while violence is banalized, exaggerated and nauseam by the media. What is the logic of this?

Sensationalism thrills people, vampirizes their energies, assures that TV sets are kept on, quantified in ratings that translate simply into greater visibility for advertisers. In the end, advertisers become accomplices to the exploitation of violence, even if their first intention was to promise additional degrees of happiness to spectators who consume their products.

A total change in mindset is called for. We must not mistake the enormous material progress achieved by humankind in the twentieth century on the material plane for attainments on the moral, psychic, and spiritual planes. We must achieve an awareness capable of reflecting on the meaning of life, an awareness

that strives to sunder values from material security, prestige from power, by seeking out those who may bring human beings into contact with enduring philosophy—that which has existed and guided human existence since time immemorial. Our education must concern itself with this philosophy, with learning to think, with the meaning of life, with the interdependence of beings, with the planet's systemic unity. We need to have citizens functioning in the world who are aware of their limitations and fascinated by the infinite possibilities of spaceship earth. We need to stimulate a new solidarity that understands that a fairer distribution of the

planet's wealth and resources is not a charitable action, but a necessity that imposes itself upon future generations. Financial capital will sooner or later be seen as accumulation of wealth on top of misery and, as such, something unsustainable that will lead to ruin and waste on an unprecedented scale—as the successive crises in Asia, Russia, Mexico, and Brazil have shown.

My intention in this article is not to proselytize but to highlight the fact that the "century of light" merely shows us a fascinating course of possibilities: from deliverance from illness to longevity; from mobility throughout the planet to the

elimination of distances; from multicultural to intercultural; from a connection between everyone to the integration of the whole. However, these possibilities will be awesome or merely ephemeral depending on how humankind evolves in bringing them about. We must reflect deeply on the role of education and knowledge in building our tomorrow.

Citizens of the world are those who acknowledge as their home any place on earth, who appreciate diversity by seeing in it infinite manifestations of unity. Because they understand unity, citizens of the world see the indissoluble role of synergic relationships and of interdependence. Citizens of the world perceive the relativity of the individual but know that only through their own identity will they be able to contribute to a mosaic whose richness is directly related to the multiplicity of manifestations.

The splendor of the stained glass in the main nave of Notre Dame Cathedral is not in the evanescent colors of thousands of tiny fragments, nor in the indefiniteness of their shapes. It is the pattern emanating from the thousands of pieces of glass that scintillate when they refract sunlight that leads us to trances of unbelievable beauty. The pattern of light and color emanating from Monet's Water Lilies results from thousands of attempts, expressed in infinite brushstrokes, to reproduce the unique sensation produced by light being reflected in the undulations of water in a small lake in Giverny. The richness of unity is in direct proportion to the richness of the multiples that compose it.

Thus, in the times to come, the more planetary the integration of the human species, the greater the need for cultural diversity, for preserving traditions, for cultural identity.

When we reflect on education, we must consider two fundamental aspects : the speed with which information transforms

acquired knowledge, and the formation of an individual 's character. This means, in practice, teaching how to learn and stimulating the development of critical and autonomous reasoning skills.

Domenico de Masi, the Italian sociologist, says the curriculum of the school of the future will have only three disciplines: mathematics (logic), philosophy (perennial knowledge and cognitive skills), and languages (cultural repertoire and the ability to understand and make oneself understood by others). Thus, while the twenty-first century heralds stimulating perspectives, it will also be a century during which humankind will have to reinvent itself. Reinventing oneself means gaining an in-depth understanding of our interdependence and our planetary responsibility. Are we prepared for this? Are we intellectually up to this? Have we evolved spiritually enough to attain an adequate awareness of what this represents?

I believe that the next decades will be marked by a profound

revision of education and society. We know that, in spite of numerous advances in technology, the future will not sustain itself if it continues to be based on the unlimited expansion of the consumer society, on the systematic dissolution of humanist values, on the culture of individualism, and on the expansion of extreme poverty and unemployment. It would be painfully ironic if humankind, after struggling for centuries to free itself from barbarism, were now to succumb to it. We will find a way out and we know it. However, this deliverance can be less or more painful, according to our awareness of what must be done. It seems to me that we must use progress in technology and communications to prepare ourselves for this tomorrow. The media, the entertainment industry and the means of communication in general should, instead of exploiting the darker side of our times and the easy emotions and credulity of citizens, convey the numerous silent and unseen ways by which millions of people

THE BATTLE OF THE WORLD

are transforming this planet, day after day, into a better place to live.

Instead of trying to control violence through fear, we should consider the causes of violence and demonstrate how to dismantle all forms of savagery in day-to-day actions. Are people who use drugs, for instance, aware of the direct connection between addiction and organized violence? We must dispel the built-in fear in sensationalism and nurture positive actions. We must stimulate solidarity as a force of collective transformation. We must give voice to the profound revolution now in progress, being carried out by non-governmental organizations and by civil society. We should stimulate voluntary work as a corollary to the increasing idleness that technology creates through unemployment. We must understand the deep changes in the very meaning of work at the onset of the millennium.

We certainly have much to do, but nothing that we must do is devoid of a greater meaning. Not for one instant should we belittle the transforming role of education in forming the character of individuals. Nor should we ever scorn the incredible resources that technology has now made available. The act of teaching is also that of learning. Thus, teachers must become the new navigators of our age, disclosing the infinite possibilities of this new world and transforming it in a laboratory of integrated learning. Interdependence, unity, equality, life, justice, and other concepts indispensable to forming the character of individuals must pervade every nook and cranny where education occurs. And we know that education is increasingly occurring everywhere, all the time. Each and every experience has an educational aspect and we are all summoned to become apprentices and teachers at the

same time. Are we prepared?

The future can be extraordinary. Humankind has not yet awakened to the powers it has developed. Only now are we beginning to perceive the extension of possibilities we have created for our future. Will we be able to think as a unit that is integrated with the planet and its ecosystem, elevating life to its divine condition? The awakening of our consciousness depends on this. We have never been so close to integrating everything in

WHO @ WRITING THE FUTURE ?

the whole- and, at the same time, never has everything seemed so distant from the whole. Spirituality, planetary consciousness, ethical values, an ordering vision, detachment, and loving care are concepts of ultimate importance that will acquire an enhanced sense of urgency in the next millennium.

Let us enter this fantastic age with open minds and peaceful hearts. With our eyes focused on the world, let's get down to work, because everything still remains to be done.

Update on
the Situation of the
BAHA'IS
IN IRAN

Since the Islamic revolution in 1979, the approximately three hundred thousand members of Iran's Baha'i community have been the targets of judicial and extrajudicial executions and of anti-Baha'i propaganda, propagated by both the government and the clergy. They have endured severe restrictions on their work, education, cultural and religious activities, and travel. More than two hundred members of Iran's largest religious minority have been killed simply for being Baha'is; thousands more have been imprisoned and tortured. Baha'is are consistently denied pensions, visas, work permits, property rights, legal process, and the prospect of education beyond high school. In the light of last year's attempted closure of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, the authorities' execution of Mr. Ruhollah Rawhani, and the sentencing in February 2000 of three Baha'is to death, the situation See The Baha'i World 1998-99, pp. 151-54 and 287-93 for a complete report on the attack on the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE). Despite the difficulties following the widespread confiscation of BIHE property and the detention and harassment of its workers by the authorities in Iran, the BIHE has resumed its activities for the new academic year.

of the Baha'is remains bleak, in spite of the much-praised ascendance of certain "moderate" factions within the Iranian government. The government's actions contrast sharply with the words of

President Khatami during a November 1999 press conference in Paris, when he responded to a question about the Baha'is by saying that no one should be persecuted because of his or her beliefs, and that he would defend the civil rights of all Iranians regardless of their beliefs or religion.

Baha'is are regarded as "unprotected infidels" in Iran. The Iranian constitution does not recognize the Baha'is as a religious minority, and their rights can be ignored with impunity. Victims have repeatedly been offered relief from persecution if they recant their faith. The root policy of this sustained, carefully calculated persecution has been given formal expression in a 1991 secret government document on "the Baha'i question," which was acquired and published in 1993 by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Written and approved by Iran's most senior clerical and civil authorities, including the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ali Khamenei, 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.

Recent changes in the situation

The most troubling recent development was the February 2000 reinstatement of death sentences on two Baha'is, Messrs. Sims Dhabih-Muqaddam and Hedayat Kashefi-Najafabadi, who had previously had their sentences quashed twice by the Supreme Court, and the sentencing to death of a third Baha'i, Mr. Manuchehr Khulusi . Mr. Khulusi was arrested in the summer of 1999, and Messrs. Dhabih-Muqaddam and Kashefi-Najafabadi were arrested

BAJ-IA.'fS L I I<AN

in late 1997. All three were detained for their Baha'i activities and given only twenty days to appeal their sentences. 2

The story of the reinstatement of the death sentences was widely reported in the media, with several major news organs around the world picking it up from the Associated Press newswire. International condemnation came quickly. France and Canada spoke out against the government's action, and in the United States White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said on 11 February, "In all three cases it is clear that the individuals were arrested, charged and sentenced to death solely because of their religious beliefs.

Executing people for the practice of their religious faith is contrary to the most fundamental human rights principles." Lockhart further stated that President Clinton was "deeply troubled" by the

sentences and "continues to hold the Iranian government responsible for the safety of the Baha'i community of Iran."

At the same time that these death sentences were imposed, a ten-year prison sentence was confirmed against Mr. Ata'u'llah Hamid Nasirizadih, who was first arrested in 1997 for holding "family life" meetings-the same charge brought against Messrs. Dhabih-Muqaddam and Kashefi-Najafabadi.

In other developments during this year, Baha'i students are now able to attend the final, pre-university year of high school, although they are still barred from attending university itself. Mr. Farzad Khajeh, Dr. Sina Hakimian, and Mr. Habibullah Ferdosian, who were arrested in the autumn of 1998 and sentenced on charges connected with their participation in the activities of the Institute for Higher Baha'i Studies, have been released. Nine other Baha'is remain imprisoned, two of whom are on death row, making a total of five Baha'is under sentence of death.

The Iranian government, through judiciary spokesman Mir-Mohammad Sadeqi, gave a somewhat convoluted denial of the death sentences, saying, "From the religious and legal point of view we believe that no one can be punished merely for their belief, let alone be given such a heavy sentence as death," but also that the case in question "dates back to eight months ago and no new ruling has been issued in recent months and the ruling in this case is not final. This case has gone through a long process. Death sentences were issued but the Supreme Court rejected them and ordered a new hearing."

Actions by Governments and the United Nations

The international community is continually engaged in attempts to persuade the Iranian government to respect its obligations as a signatory to, among other human rights conventions, the International Bill of Human Rights. These demonstrations of international concern have played a critical role in moderating the actions of the Iranian authorities and providing a measure of security to the Baha'i community.

A positive development related to the registration of marriages may reflect the success of international pressure on the regime. In early 2000, registry offices throughout Iran were informed that any couple appearing before registry officials to acknowledge that they are husband and wife may be registered without having to state their religious affiliation. Couples whose unions have been validated in this way will now be able to legally register their children.

Every year since 1980, the United Nations has expressed its concern regarding Iran's treatment of its citizens. On 17 December 1999, sixty-one countries voted in favor of the United

Nations General Assembly resolution concerning the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran; forty-seven voted against it, and fifty-one countries abstained. The resolution expresses the General Assembly's "serious concern at the continuing violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as reported by the Special Representative." The General Assembly also "remains gravely concerned at the unabated pattern of persecution against the Baha'is, including death sentences, arrests and the closure of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education."

A report submitted on 18 January 2000 by the Special Representative of the UN Commission on Human Rights devoted a subsection and a separate appendix to the situation of Iran's Baha'is, took note of the "prolonged imprisonment, confiscation of holy places, and denial of the right to assemble" which the community endures, and urged the government to "cease discrimination against Baha'is in all spheres of public life and services. "

BAHA'IS IN IRAN

In its 10 April 2000 resolution, the UN Commission on Human Rights expressed its concern at "the unabated pattern of persecution against the Baha'is, including death sentences and arrests," and called upon the Iranian government to "implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance relating to the Baha'is and other minority religious groups until they are completely emancipated." The United States government has been forceful in its defense of the Iranian Baha'is. The US secretary of state's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, in its annual report for 1999, notes that "Although the [Iranian] Constitution states that 'the investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden' and that 'no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief,' the adherents of religions not specifically protected under the Constitution do not enjoy freedom of activity. This situation most directly affects the 300,000 to 350,000 followers of the Baha'i Faith in the country ... Historically at risk in the country, Baha'is often have suffered increased levels of persecution during times of political ferment. .. Broad restrictions on Baha'is appear to be geared to destroying them as a community." The Committee, composed of twenty prominent religious leaders and academics, calls attention to problems of religious persecution around the world and issues advice on how to address them. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in a landmark address to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 23 March 2000, mentioned her government's "ongoing concern about religious discrimination in Iran against the Baha'is[s]."

A 26 August 1999 Voice of America editorial, broadcast in Iran, called upon "Iran's rulers to respect the right to worship of all the people of Iran, including Baha'is" and further stated that the US government has "long protested" the "twenty years of unrelenting persecution of Iranian Baha'is by the government of Iran."

On 3 April 2000, thirty-eight members of the US Congress and US senate wrote a letter to the chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights expressing "deep concern over the

16 1

continuing denial of internationally recognized religious and civil rights to religious minorities in Iran, including the Baha'i, Jewish, and Christian communities." Three paragraphs of the letter dealt with the specific kinds of persecution enforced by the Iranian government against the country's Baha'i community, and the letter concluded: "We ask that you share our concerns about the repression of religious minorities in Iran with member delegations to the Commission and urge the Commission to take the actions necessary to promote the emancipation of the Baha'i community in Iran, the release of Iranian Jews currently in prison and the protection of Iranian Christians."

In the United Kingdom in August 1999, British parliamentarians formally established the "All Party Friends of the Baha'is"

group "in response to the continuing problems of persecution faced by members of the Baha'i community in Iran and other states."

The first meeting of the group was held in December to decide on its constitution and plan its official launch, which was held on 21 March. Thirty-nine parliamentarians have joined the group so far. Membership is open to members of Parliament, peers, and members of the European Parliament.

Types of persecution

The Baha'i Faith has no clergy. Throughout the world, its community organization and governance revolve around democratically elected administrative councils. 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. While 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 disrupt meetings and sometimes arrest teachers of the children's or "family life" classes.

Numerous other restrictions have also been imposed. Baha'is are consistently denied inheritance rights on the basis of their faith.

Many Baha'is 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 inducing them to recant their

B AHA'fS IN IRAN

faith. Travel outside and even inside Iran is often impeded or denied by authorities. Iranian Baha'is outside Iran often 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 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. Requests by Baha'is for work permits are almost always denied. 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.

Since the early years of the Islamic Revolution, Baha'i youth have been barred from the regular 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, as outlined in the secret document on "the Baha' i question," is obviously designed to lead to both its intellectual and material impoverishment.

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 has been returned. In fact, many have been destroyed. Particularly 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 reduced to using areas of wasteland for the burial of their dead and are not permitted to identify gravesites.

Conclusion

For twenty-one 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 demonstrate that Baha'is are still being sentenced to death purely for their beliefs, that the

THE B AI-L' 'f W ORLD

arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of Baha'is is sanctioned, that their property may be seized with impunity, and their civil rights likewise disregarded. It is not the actions of the Baha'is but the circumstances of Iranian history that have conspired to make the "Baha'i case" a litmus test of sincerity for Iranian public figures who represent themselves as voices of reform and progress.

EssAYS,

STATEMENTS,

PROFILES

Amatu 'l-Baha Rilhiyyih Khanum

(nee Mmy Maxwell)

1910- 2000

Violette NalsfJjavani shares a personal portrait of the life of Hand of the Cause of God Amatu 'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum.

A Tribute to

AMATU'L-BAHA

RUHfYYIH

. KHANuM

Mary Sutherland Maxwell was born on 8 August 1910 in the Hahnemann Hospital, later known as the Fifth Avenue Hospital, in New York City.

She was the only child of May Bolles,

one of the foremost disciples of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Sutherland

Maxwell, a distinguished Canadian architect, whose home in

Montreal had long been known as a place of culture and spiritual

vitality. When Mary was just seven months old, in March 1911,

'Abdu'l-Baha wrote a Tablet to her mother, saying, "In the garden

of existence a rose hath bloomed with the utmost freshness, fragrance and

beauty. Educate her according to the divine teachings

so that she may grow up to be a real Baha'i and strive with all thy

heart, that she may receive the Holy Spirit." May took these injunctions to

heart, striving to educate her precious, God-given

daughter according to the divine teachings.

She had a full, free, and happy childhood. Her only sorrows

at this time, which she would speak of until late in life, were the

periods of separation from her beloved mother. May Maxwell was

a devoted and dedicated servant of the Cause, a member of many

THE BAHAF WORLD

Baha'i administrative bodies,

as well as one of the star teachers of the Faith. She suffered

greatly from the extreme cold of

Montreal and her ill health would

often keep her away from her

home for two or more months at

a time. She would go to New York

or Wilmette to attend meetings,

would become ill, and then could

not return home for several

weeks.

The physical attachment

and spiritual kinship that con-

May Maxwell and her

nected mother and daughter was
daughter Mary in Ram/eh,
Egypt, in 1923.

singular and strong. Ru } :iiyyih

Khanum often said, "If Baha'is

believed in such things as 'soul mates,' my mother and I would be like that." Her mother's words in a letter to her underline this deep bond between them: " ... however often I have been compelled to leave you since you were a little child, for the sake of this great Cause in which we are united, and however lonely you may have often been, you never suffered alone, because I was always with you, I felt for you more deeply than you can ever realize, and it is out of the pangs of this mighty motherlove that my spiritual motherhood to you has been born."

'Abdu'l-Baha visited the Maxwell home for three days during the fall of 1912, when Mary was two years old. His words

upon arrival on the night of 30 August were recorded by May Maxwell: "You are mine- your husband and child. This is my home." There is an especially touching story about this visit, told by 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself to His companions and recorded in the memoirs of A. A. Nakbjavani. 'Abdu'l-Baha told them, "Today I was resting on the chaise longue in my bedroom and the door opened. The little girl came in to me and pushed my eyelids up with her small finger and said, 'Wake up, 'Abdu'l-Baha!' I took

A MATU' L-BAI-IA RU I-IfYYIH KI-IANUM

her in my arms and placed her head on my chest and we both had a good sleep." When Ru } iyyih Khanum repeated this story in later years she used to say that once when her mother complained to 'Abdu ' l-Baha that she was naughty, the Master had said, "Leave her alone. She is the essence of sweetness."

The traditional educational methods of the time tended to be rigid and authoritarian, and May was concerned to provide her daughter with the freedom which 'Abdu'l-Baha had prescribed. For Mary's early training, May established the first Montessori school in Canada in the Maxwell home. Mary also had a year of schooling in Montreal, a few months in Chevy Chase Country Day School in Maryland, another year in Weston High School in Montreal, and was tutored at home by governesses and private teachers. Later she became a part-time student at McGill University.

Despite these inconsistencies of education she was to become a well-read and knowledgeable person, with a consuming interest in a variety of subjects. Her thirst for acquiring knowledge was insatiable, and throughout her life she clipped articles from the daily papers which caught her attention because they reflected Baba 'i themes or subjects of particular interest to her. And however arbitrary

and independent her formal intellectual education may have been, there are clear indications that her spiritual training was pursued with rigor and unrelenting discipline. It was a training whose hallmark was love and whose main characteristic was obedience to the Covenant.

As the years of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry were drawing to a close with World War I, and as a precursor to His Will and Testament, He sent the Tablets of the Divine Plan to the Baha'is of the West. Nine young girls were chosen to draw aside the curtains covering the original handwritten Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Mary Maxwell and her best childhood friend, Elizabeth Coristine of Montreal, were privileged to unveil the first and second of these Tablets for Canada in a tableau vivant at the Hotel McAlpin in New York on 29 April 1919. It was shortly before Mary's ninth birthday and the end of the Heroic Age of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

The passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, in November 1921, devastated the whole Baha'i community. Mary Maxwell was so shattered and shaken in body and soul that she might have become a permanent invalid had not Mr. Maxwell convinced her to visit the Shrines in the Holy Land and meet the Guardian face to face. It was decided that Mary should accompany her, and they set sail from New York for the Holy Land on 29 April 1923. This first pilgrimage left an indelible impression on twelve-year-old Mary, and in later years she recalled, in a personal letter, how she was touched by "the spirit of service" she discovered in Haifa, saying "a Queen or a beggar woman would be met with the same loving sweetness. Indeed it was this divine normality that really confirmed me here as a little girl of twelve years."

This was the first time she met the Guardian, and she often described the meeting with a sweet pleasure in the remembrance. She and her mother were installed in the Old Western Pilgrim House at the end of Persian Street and May, who had not been able to walk for over a year, was resting in bed. Since her mother's nights were frequently sleepless and her nerves delicate, Mary had learned from an early age to protect her from intrusion. She was in the hallway of the Pilgrim House when the door suddenly opened and a young man stepped in, with a swift, deft movement, and asked if he could see Mrs. Maxwell. Mary was a tall girl for her age, fully grown and physically well-developed. She said she pulled herself up to her full height and, looking him squarely in the eyes with considerable dignity and aplomb, asked to know who it was who wished to see Mrs. Maxwell. The young gentleman meekly replied, "I am Shoghi Effendi." Upon which she turned tail and fled into her mother's room in mortified embarrassment. Hiding her head, as she used to say "like a puppy," beneath her mother's pillows, she could only point to the door

and gasp, "He- he- is there! " when her mother asked her what the matter was. And when May Maxwell found out who it was behind the door, she said, "Pull yourself together, Mary, and go and invite him in."

AMATU' L-BAI-IA R UHIYYII-I KI-IANUM

When May returned to North America almost a year later, she was filled with joy and restored to health, redoubling her efforts in the teaching work and educating the friends in the Baha'i administration, in which Shoghi Effendi had carefully instructed her.

Two years later, Mary made a second pilgrimage, in the company of two of her mother's friends. Back in Canada afterwards, she threw herself eagerly into all kinds of youth activities, both within the Baha'i administration and elsewhere. Shortly before she was sixteen, she became a member of the executive committee of the Fellowship of Canadian Youth for Peace, serving as its treasurer. From then on she was continuously involved in membership on committees and in her efforts to promote the cause of racial amity. Soon after she turned twenty-one, she was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Montreal.

Her training in oratory and public speaking began when she was almost sixteen. Increasingly, she began to accompany her mother on teaching trips, during which she had occasion not only to observe her mother's manner of giving Baha'i talks but also to learn how to lecture herself, in the Baha'i spirit. Just before her nineteenth birthday, she spoke at the national Baha'i convention in a manner that touched many people's hearts and minds. Soon after, Mary received her first letter from the beloved Guardian, dated 29 May 1929 and written in his own hand: "I am much pleased to learn of your growing activities in the Cause & I will supplicate from the depths of my heart in your behalf at the holy Shrines that the Beloved may graciously guide you & assist you to render inestimable services to His Cause in the days to come." At the age of twenty, she delivered a lecture at the Friends' Meeting House in New York City on "Mysticism in the Baha'i Religion." The other speakers at this congress were all seasoned lecturers and famous orators, including Syud Hossain, the editor of *The New Orient*, who was billed as an "incomparable lecturer on the Orient, world peace and international relations." After her lecture she received a standing ovation, and on that same day was given the following cable: "HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR

BEAUTIFUL CONSCIENTIOUS AND ABLE PRESENTATION OF A GREAT AND DIFFICULT THEME I AM HAPPY AND PROUD OF YOU-SYUD HOSSAIN."

In addition to lecturing, she wrote books and plays and poetry, developing that diversity and range of skills that would serve

to make of her a perfect instrument of service in the hands of her beloved Guardian, who noted her progress with keen interest. Her highest hope was to one day become an author. Her study of the translation of Nabil's Narrative, *The Dawn-Breakers*, which was encouraged by Shoghi Effendi, resulted in the article entitled "The Re-florescence of Historical Romance in Nabil," later published in *The Bahri 'i World*, Volume V (1932-34). The ardent, youthful enthusiasm that it reveals must have informed the lectures she gave on the Heroic Age of the Cause in Montreal, Green Acre, Louhelen, and Esslingen in Germany.

Shoghi Effendi closely followed the development and spiritual training of this remarkable young woman, writing to May

Maxwell:

I feel that she should, while pursuing her studies, devote her energies to an intensive study of, & vigorous service to, the Cause, of which I hope & trust she will grow to become a brilliant and universally honoured exponent. I am sure, far from feeling disappointed or hurt at my suggestion, she will redouble in her activities & efforts to approach & attain the high standard destined for her by the beloved Master. Your plan of travelling with her throughout Canada in the service of the Cause is a splendid one & highly opportune. Kindly assure her & her dear father of my best wishes & prayers for their happiness welfare & success.

Your true & affectionate brother,

Shoghi

In May 1933, Mary spent several weeks in Washington, DC, teaching the Faith and concentrating her efforts on finding ways to draw the two opposing races together, for the cause of racial unity was close to her heart and the rights and responsibilities of both races was a subject that touched her keenly throughout her life. She also attended official functions with her father in Montreal during her early twenties, meeting the governor-general of Canada

AMATU'L-BAHA RUHJY'YIH KHA.NUM

at events such as the Royal Canadian Academy's Fifty-fourth Exhibition. This balance between her obligations to the Baha'i community in particular and society at large served her well in later years. She always had the ability to mingle with officialdom and humble folk with equal ease; her support of local Baha'i teaching work as well as social issues at the international level was equally enthusiastic throughout her life.

She very much wanted to learn Spanish, but when, in 1935, civil war threatened her plans to go to Spain, she was induced to accompany her cousins Jeanne and Randolph Bolles to Germany, where she taught and helped the Baha'is for the next year and a

half, while May spent most of her time in France and Belgium. May became enamored of Germany and learned the language with fluency.

At the end of their extended stay in Europe, she and her mother received a warm invitation to come to the Holy Land. In a letter addressed to May Maxwell in late January 1936 the Guardian's secretary wrote: "The Guardian is very much encouraged & gratified to learn of the progress & success of your dear daughter's activities in the teaching field. He wishes you to congratulate her most heartily upon the success that has attended her work in Munich ... " and a week later, a letter was written to Mary herself on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, stating:

Before your coming to Haifa Shoghi Effendi would advise you to visit the centers in Germany and if possible to extend your trip to Austria and the Balkans where we have now a chain of active and prosperous communities that link the Western with the Eastern part of Europe. He would even suggest that you follow that route when you come to Haifa, as this would be of great interest to you , and of invaluable encouragement to the friends in these new and somewhat isolated centers .

Shoghi Effendi added, in his postscript:

Dear and valued co-worker:

I wish to assure you in person of a hearty welcome to visit the Holy Land and lay your head on the sacred Threshold after having rendered valuable services in the Faith in both America and Europe. For those you have asked me to pray, in your letters, I will supplicate the blessings of Baha'u ' llah. Rest assured. Your true brother,
Shoghi

Mary Maxwell fulfilled the Guardian's injunctions, travelling to every community in Germany and meeting every isolated believer, group, or Assembly. By the time she had accomplished this task, a year had passed and the rumblings of war were upon them. It was impossible now to travel through the Balkans or Austria, and she and her mother were urged by Shoghi Effendi to come to the Holy Land directly.

It was during this pilgrimage, which began on 12 January 1937, that Shoghi Effendi told May Maxwell that her daughter now had the spiritual foundation on which she could be "moulded and disciplined," stating:

She has clear perception and sound judgement and is very just. Her judgements and attitudes are correct- sound- as I told her in regard to her attitude toward the government in

Germany. You must be very happy- hopeful and assured. Remember all I have written you and Mary about her future- it will all be fulfilled- and attained. She has many years before her. You will be very happy- very proud of her- so will her Father.

And it was during this pilgrimage that another chapter opened in the life of Mary Maxwell, when the mother of Shoghi Effendi told Mary Maxwell of Shoghi Effendi's offer of marriage to her daughter.

The wedding took place on 24 March 1937, in Haifa, and it was on this occasion that the beloved Guardian gave her the name Ru}fiyyih Khanum. In The Priceless Pearl, she described her wedding day, when she went with Shoghi Effendi to Bahji, saying, "I remember I was dressed, except for a white lace blouse, entirely in black for this unique occasion, and was a typical example of the way oriental women dressed to go out into the streets in those

A MATU'L-B AI-IA R DI:;IYYII-1 KI-JANUM

days, the custom being to wear black." The ring, which was a simple Baha'i ring in the shape of a heart, had been given to her the day Shoghi Effendi proposed. He had asked her then to wear it on a chain around her neck, and on the day of their marriage, in the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, he took it from her and put it on her finger himself. It was a ring that had been given to Shoghi Effendi by the Greatest Holy Leaf, and Ru}fiyyih Khanum later had one made exactly like it for the beloved Guardian. They were both buried with their rings on their fingers. After the recital of the marriage vow in the room of the Greatest Holy Leaf, the mother of Shoghi Effendi placed Ru}fiyyih Khanum's hand in the hand of her son, according to the old Persian tradition of dast be dast. News of the marriage electrified the Baha'i world, both in the East and the West. Cables composed by the Guardian and signed by his mother were sent to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran and the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada. The one to the West, dated 27 March 1937, read as follows:

ANNOUNCE ASSEMBLIES CELEBRATION MARRIAGE BELOVED GUARDIAN
STOP INES TIMABLE HONOUR CONFERR ED UPON HANDMAID OF
BAILL'ULLAH RUI-I IYYIH KI-IANUM MARY MAXWELL STOP UNION
OF EAST AND WEST PROC LAIMED BY BAHAI FAIT !! CEMENTED .
[signed] ZIA IYYIH, MOTHER OF THE GUARDIAN

For Ru}fiyyih Khanum the period of adjustment that followed her marriage was a training time that could not have been easy. She was parted from her beloved parents, living a great distance from her familiar life in Montreal, and plunged into an oriental

household together with all her in-laws under one roof. This must have been difficult for a young woman raised with a degree of freedom that was unusual even in the West at that time. Another difficulty was the language. Although the members of 'Abdu'l-Baha's family all spoke English, they communicated with each other in Persian. It was only natural, when comments were passed and jokes were shared which she did not understand, that she would have felt left out. Were it not for Shoghi Effendi, RU }fiyyih Khanum may well have been bereft.

But there were greater tests than mere loneliness and far greater trials than cultural isolation. In those early years of her marriage, the Guardian's family fell away from faithfulness one by one, until she was alone in that house at the side of her beloved. "Shoghi Effendi held me tight under his protective arms," she used to say, and she, in turn, became his shield and his sole support. It was also during this turbulent period that Shoghi Effendi pulled her up short one day and, gesturing to her hand, said, "Your destiny is in the palm of your own hand." This was a great shock to her and made her realize that she was not immune to her own tests of faith. "When Shoghi Effendi married me," she used to say, "I felt safe and snug and thought I had nothing more to worry about, my destiny was in his hand. But when he said that, there it was, back in my own hand." She would always make us laugh when she finished this very serious tale .

Her firmness in the Covenant, a manifestation of her deep faith, was her greatest protection in those early years of marriage. Perhaps the outpouring of her heart years later, in her poem "This is Faith," written on 4 April 1954, best exemplifies the depth of her understanding of this subject.

This is Faith

To walk where there is no path
To breathe where there is no air
To see where there is no light-
This is Faith.

To cry out in the silence,
The silence of the night,
And hearing no echo believe
And believe again and again-
This is Faith .

To hold pebbles and see jewels
To raise sticks and see forests
To smile with weeping eyes-
This is Faith.

To say: "God, I believe" when others deny,
"I hear" when there is no answer,

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"I see" though naught is seen-

This is Faith .

And the fierce love in the heart,

The savage love that cries

Hidden Thou aii yet there!

Veil Thy face and mute Thy tongue

Yet I see and hear Thee, Love,

Beat me down to the bare earth,

Yet I rise and love Thee, Love!

This is Faith.

Of her devotion to the Faith, the beloved Guardian had asserted to her mother: "She is imbued with the Baha'i spirit, not confused or mixed with other matters---or subjects extraneous to the Cause . . . She is wholly devoted to the Faith-extremely attached."

A year after her marriage, Rul;iiyyih Khanum wrote to her mother, "If anyone asked me what my theme was in life I should say, 'Shoghi Effendi.'" It is clear from this that she had thrown herself with heart and soul into her destiny, and her task required a rigorous discipline. Under Shoghi Effendi's strict tutelage she applied herself to conscientious study. Although she was an autodidact by nature and preferred to teach herself rather than receive instruction-a habit she applied to many subjects in later life-he was, in effect, her principal teacher.

The reciprocity between Rul;iiyyih Khanum and her parents was preserved despite the difficulties of distance and separation. She believed that service to the Cause performed by any one of them was a shared blessing for them all and of direct consequence to each, a theme echoed by May Maxwell in December 1939, when she wrote, "It is not only thru my passionate love for this great Baha'i Faith, but thru my love for her, and yearning to be more worthy of her, that I have considered going to South America to teach." And so it was that May Maxwell, seventy years old, with a weak heart and in very poor health, decided to make her supreme sacrifice. She arrived in Buenos Aires at the end of February, accompanied by her young niece, Jeanne Bolles, and the next day, on 1 March 1940, she died of a massive heart attack.

This was a terrible shock to Rul).iyyih Khanum. She received the devastating news from the Guardian, who told her, "Now I will be your mother," and comforted her with infinite compassion and patience. To Sutherland Maxwell, he cabled:

GRIEV ED PROFOUNDLY YET COM FORTED AB IDI NG REA LI ZATION BEF IT-
TING ON E SO NOBLE SUCH VALIANT EXEMPLARY SERV ICE CAUSE
BAH A'U' LLAH STOP RUI-IIYYIH THOUGH ACUTELY CONS CIOUS IRREPA-
RABLE LOSS REJO ICES REVE RENTLY GRATEFUL IMMORTAL CROW N

DESE RV EDLY WON HER ILLUSTRIOUS MOTHER STOP ADV ISE INTERME NT
BUENOS A IRES STOP HER TOMB DESIGN ED BY YOURSELF ERECTED BY
ME SPOT SHE FOUGHT FELL GLOR IOUSLY WILL BECOME HISTORI C
CENTRE PIONEERS BAHA 'I ACTIVITY STO P MOST WELCOME AR RANGE
AFFAIRS RESID E HA IFA STOP BE ASSURED DEEPEST LOV ING SYMPATHY.

On 4 March, Rul).iyyih Khanum cabled the National Spiritual Assembly of the
Baha'is of the United States and Canada,
saying: HUMBL Y GRATEFUL BELOVED MOTHER ANSWERED GUARD IAN'S
CALL TURNED SOUTHWARD SACR JF ICED LIFE HOLY FAITH . BEG PRAYERS
DAUGHTER MAY FOLLOW HER FOOTSTEPS.

Mr. Maxwell joined the Guardian and Rul).iyyih Khanum in
Rome in the summer of 1940, but their return to Palestine was
prevented by the war. They did, however, manage to reach France
and cross over to England on the last boat before the German army
closed the borders. Eventually they were able to sail to South
Africa and then travel north to the Holy Land via Egypt.

The war years were filled with activity and great achievements at the World
Centre. During this period Shoghi Effendi
commissioned Sutherland Maxwell to make the drawings for the
superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab, and their love and collaboration was
the greatest source of joy to Rul).iyyih Khanum.

She used to say, "I really learned to know and appreciate my
father through Shoghi Effendi." Also during this time, Rul).iyyih
Khan um assisted the beloved Guardian in the proofreading of his
masterpiece, God Passes By.

One of the most outstanding services performed by Rul).iyyih
Khanum during her twenty years at the side of the Guardian was
her role as his secretary, a task she undertook almost immediately

AMATU'L-BAJ-I.A RDBfYYII-TKEANUM

after her marriage. From 1941, when she became Shoghi Effendi's
principal secretary in English, until 1957, she wrote thousands of
letters on his behalf. She frequently described how Shoghi Effendi
trained her to be a good secretary. In the early years, he would
write down the points he wanted her to incorporate in pencil at
the bottom of the letter he had received, but later on, when he saw
how well she wrote, he would just tell her what to answer verbally. However,
she always stressed the fact that he read every
single letter she wrote for him before appending his own postscript. In later
years, she wrote not only his personal letters
but also his official correspondence with Spiritual Assemblies.
RuJ:iyyih Khanum told us that Shoghi Effendi encouraged
her to write, and once, as she was copying her own favorite poems in a book, he
asked to see them for himself. The next day he
gave her book back saying, "I read them all. They are beautiful,

they made me cry." At Shoghi Effendi's suggestion she wrote an article on the interment of the remains of the Purest Branch and his mother, Navvab, on Mt. Carmel next to the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf, which was published in volume VIII of The Baha'i World. His encouragement was also the main reason she wrote the book Prescription For Living. She often said she felt so sad for the young men who returned, confused and disillusioned, from World War II to a changed and unfamiliar world, she wanted to give them some light, some direction, and a way to see hope for the future.

In The Priceless Pearl RuJ:iyyih Khanum refers to the war in the Holy Land prior to the formation of the State of Israel, as gunfire echoed between sea and mountain, while she remained calm in the heart of the storm with Shoghi Effendi as her example. After the formation of the State in 1948, the situation changed and RuJ:iyyih Khanum enjoyed a degree of freedom that had not been possible for her before. Her social life became more varied and lively, and she gave wonderful dinner parties and soirees for the dignitaries of Haifa.

During the 1940s her father became severely ill, and in 1950 it was decided that Mr. Maxwell should go to Canada with his

Swiss nurse until the situation improved in Israel. When they parted at the end of that summer, it was the last time RuJ:iyyih Khanum saw her dear father. He died two years later in Montreal.

When the first International Baha'i Council was formed in 1951, RuJ:iyyih Khanum was a member and its chosen liaison with the Guardian. In 1952, after the passing of Sutherland Maxwell, Shoghi Effendi sent a cable dated 26 March to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States announcing that "MANTLE HAND

CAUSE NOW FALLS SHOULDERS HIS DISTINGUISHED DAUGHTER AMATU'L SAHA RUHIYYIH WHO ALREADY RENDERED ST ILL RENDER ING MAN IFOLD NO LESS MERITORIOUS SELF SACRIFIC ING SERVICES WORLD CENTRE FAITH BAHU'ULLAH." The following year, the Maxwell home in Montreal

was declared a Shrine, marking not only the great gift bestowed by 'Abdu'l-Baha on the Canadian Baha'i community but also the unique services of William Sutherland, May, and Mary Maxwell.

On 15 December 1952, the beloved Guardian announced that five intercontinental conferences would be held during the course of the Holy Year, 1953, and designated RuJ:iyyih Khanum as his representative at the one in Wilmette. She was, in his words, to

DELIVER MY OFFICIAL MESSAGE ASSEMBLED BELIEVERS ELUCIDATE CHARACTER PURPOSES IMPENDING DECADE LONG SPIRITUAL WORLD CRUSADE RALLY PARTICIPANTS ENERGETIC SUSTAINED ENTHUSIASTIC PROSECUTION COLOSSAL TASKS AHEAD.

She was also delegated by him to dedicate the Temple in North

America on his behalf and

UNVEIL OCCASION COMPLETION CONSTRUCTION MOTHER TEMPLE WEST
PRIVILEGED ATTENDANTS WILMETTE CONFERENCE MOST PRIZED REMEM-
BRANCE AUTHOR FAITH-1 NEVER BEFORE LEFT SHORES HOLY LAND TO BE
PLACED BENEATH DOME CONSECRATED EDIFICE STOP MOREOVER AS -
SIGNING HER TASK ACT MY DEPUTY HISTORIC CEREMONY MARKING
OFFICIAL DEDICATION HOLIEST MASHRIQUL-ADHKAR BAHAI WORLD
REARED EVERLASTING GLORY HONOUR MOST GREAT NAME HEART NORTH
AMERICAN CONTINENT [signed] SHOGHI

AMATU'L-BAJ-jj R LijfYYIH KHANUM

She had left North America eighteen years before,
when she was a young Baha'i
and was known as the daughter of May Maxwell. Now
she was returning as Amatu'l-
Baha Rul;iiyyih Khanum, the
consort of the beloved Guardian and a Hand of the Cause
of God. In Wilmette, she rose
to speak like the queen she
was, her delicate, gauzy mantilla framing her lovely young
face, and even from the
photographs it is easy to see
Amatu'l-Baha Rul;iiyyih Khanum
how she would have made representing the Guardian at the Allan
unforgettable impression America Intercontinental Conference in
on the Baha'is, as well as on Wilmette, Illinois, in 1953.
the non-Baha'i seekers and
distinguished speakers. After attending the 1953 forty-fifth annual
convention, the Baha'i dedication of the Temple in Wilmette, and
the public dedication the next day, she attended the All-America
Intercontinental Conference from 3 to 6 May.
Then, accompanied by Amelia Collins, a Hand of the Cause
and vice-president of the International Baha'i Council, Rul;iiyyih
Khanum went to Montreal to visit her father's resting-place. A
memorial gathering was held at the graveside on 10 May and that
evening she spoke at a public meeting at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.
While in Montreal, she also sorted out her parents' belongings
and, with Shoghi Effendi's consent, shipped her personal furni-
ture to the Master's House in Haifa, where she created an exquisite
library, which she used for special dinner parties, and a beautiful
drawing room. In an act that pleased the Guardian immensely, she
gave her Montreal home to the Faith, and it is now registered in
the name of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada.

In 1952, when some degree of safety and order was restored
to Israel, Shoghi Effendi reopened the opportunity for pilgrimage.
Small groups of pilgrims, from both the East and the West, began

to arrive. To welcome them, cater to their needs, and respond to their concerns was a task that consumed not only many hours of the Guardian's time but those of Amatu'l-Baha Rul-i-yyih Khanum, who planned and prepared the pilgrims' meals in the face of great shortages of all kinds of essential foods in the postwar years.

In 1957, the beloved Guardian and Amatu'l-Baha Rul-i-yyih Khanum left Israel together for their summer vacation for the last time. The Guardian was very tired. As usual, he maintained all his correspondence and carried with him all his notes for his map of the Ten Year Crusade, which was approaching its midway point.

In August that year he thrilled the Baha'is of the world with a twofold message. The first part was the announcement of five intercontinental conferences to celebrate this midway point of the Crusade, and the second was his appointment of eight more Hands of the Cause in different continents. Everyone was filled with anticipation. Everyone looked forward to jubilation and celebration ahead. We in Uganda were thrilled beyond belief, for we had learned with awe and excitement that our precious Amatu'l-Baha Rul-i-yyih Khanum had been designated by the beloved Guardian to represent him at the African conference in Kampala. She was going to come to us!

And then, on 4 November, the cataclysmic news of Shoghi Effendi's passing rocked the Baha'i world. He had died in London, we heard in disbelief. The community that had for thirty-six years looked to him for guidance, for encouragement, for leadership and, above all, for his encompassing love, was bereft. There was no one to turn to but Amatu'l-Baha, although she was the most forlorn of all at that time. It was up to her to take the next step to ascertain what should be done.

During their last summer in London, Shoghi Effendi had on one occasion told her, "I don't want to go back to Haifa, you go alone, you know what to do." At the time she had attributed this statement to his extreme tiredness and despondency, as he was ill

AMATU'L-BAHARD I-IYYIH KHANUM

with severe influenza. But later when she remembered his words, it gave her courage and self-assurance. The fulfilment of all the Guardian's hopes and aspirations for the Ten Year Crusade became of uppermost importance to her. His good pleasure became the goal and object of her existence. From that moment to the end of her life her priorities never wavered.

In the face of her own immeasurable personal loss, it is remarkable to consider with what self-abnegation her heart turned to her fellow believers at that critical time of trial. All around her, friends were prostrate with grief, helpless with sorrow, leaving her to rise alone to the painful tasks in front of her, for the sake of her beloved Shoghi Effendi. She had to inform the Hands of the

Cause and the Baha'i world of this tragic event in a manner that might lessen as much as possible the shock waves it was bound to cause. She had to tell the heartbroken believers to come to his funeral and bid their Guardian a last farewell. She went around London looking for a befitting burial ground and found it. She searched for a shroud and chose the casket and bought it. She saw to every detail in the sad days that followed. And the day after the funeral, when she was driving away from the graveside, she saw in her mind's eye a vision of a column, an eagle, and a globe, and she conceived the monument above his grave. She remembered how fond Shoghi Effendi had been of beautiful columns, and how he had said it was a pity that in his gardens there was no place for a single column. With this thought in mind, she designed the graceful column rising over his grave and placed the globe on it, surmounted by the symbol of his victories: the majestic eagle, with its wings open.

On 15 November Rul:iiyyih Khanum arrived in Haifa, and three days later the first conclave of the Hands of the Cause began in Bahji. They searched for the will of Shoghi Effendi but did not find it, and so the Hands of the Cause informed the community that they must turn to the explicit directives in The Dispensation of Baha 'u 'llah to complete the goals of the Ten Year Crusade and to arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice at the end of that period.

The Hands of the Cause were strong individuals from both the East and the West whose primary aim was to direct and hold together the affairs of the Cause of God. Amatu'l-Baha played a vital role in their early conclaves, serving as a bridge between cultures and languages- a Westerner imbued with Eastern understanding, whose horizons had been widened and stretched by Shoghi Effendi. Her deep sense of fairness and her ability to see clearly both sides of an argument facilitated the narrowing and negotiating of the gaps between the different Hands. During that first year after Shoghi Effendi's passing, Rlli:iiyyih Khanum spent most of her time in Bahji and slept in the Mansion. Apart from carrying out all her heavy administrative duties, she threw herself into physical work, cleaning the Shrine and working in the gardens. She could not bear the emptiness and the loneliness of her apartment in Haifa. The next five or six years were perhaps the saddest and hardest in her entire life. But she demonstrated her own commitment to service when she accepted to attend the first of the series of the Intercontinental Baha'i Conferences called by the beloved Guardian to mark and celebrate the midway point of the Ten Year Crusade. Initially, her grief was so intense that she did not want to go, but her fellow Hands convinced her that since it had been the wish of Shoghi Effendi, she

must do so.

Although Rlli;yyih Khanum was in mourning and wore black for one year after Shoghi Effendi's passing, she altered this custom for the duration of her trip to Africa. She told me afterwards that all her clothes for that conference had been seen and approved by the Guardian the previous summer, and this was one of the reasons why she did not come to Kampala in mourning clothes. She also wanted to create a sense of jubilation during this conference, the way Shoghi Effendi had anticipated it should be.

More than nine hundred people stood up in sorrowful awe as she entered the conference hall in Kampala on 24 January 1958.

And then, four hundred African Baha'is raised their voices and began to sing "Allah-u-Abha," softly and spontaneously.

The air was so charged with love, so pent-up with emotion as

AMATU'L-BAI-IA R OI:IYYIH KI-!Ai !U M

Amatu'l-Baha walked up the central aisle, that we were all shaken.

When she stood before us to address the conference, her voice broke and tears came to her eyes several times. But the waves of deep love and sympathy in that audience were tangible; they enveloped and caressed her, and at the end assuaged her sorrow. Her

love for the Africans and their continent became a permanent part of her life afterwards. She brought to that conference a wider perspective, a global outlook, an all-embracing point of view that we had been lacking, and she went back from it recharged with hope and courage to continue, travelling to different conferences and to the dedications of both Mother Temples of Africa and Australasia during the custodianship of the Hands.

In 1961, the election of the International Baha'i Council took place. This precursor of the Universal House of Justice greatly assisted the Hands in the preparations for that first international Baha'i convention, and Rlli).yyih Khanum, who had been asked by the Hands to complete the interior of the International Archives Building, turned for assistance to the Council's younger members. Beautiful Chinese and Japanese furniture purchased by Shoghi Effendi during the last year of his life for the purpose of decorating and displaying the holy relics, had to be carefully arranged and meticulously prepared for their precious contents. Artistry, a sense of proportion, a strict adherence to the placement of the objects according to the priority of their importance—all these guided Amatu'l-Baha in her task. These words written to her by the Hands of the Cause in the Holy Land on 28 August 1961 express the significance and results of her efforts:

We were so impressed by the effect that has been achieved in the Archives Building that we feel we should write to express to you our appreciation ... The interior is truly worthy of the

purpose for which the building was designed. Many generations of Baha'is will be grateful for the cumulative backbreaking efforts which were put into making the Archives Bui Iding a fitting place for the holy relics it will contain, though they may not be aware of the difficulties and strains under which the result was achieved.

The conclusion of the Ten Year Crusade in April 1963 was crowned by the election in Haifa of the long-awaited Universal House of Justice. The election took place in the House of 'Abdu'l-Baha, which had played such a significant role in the unfoldment of the administrative order of Baha'u'llah. To befittingly honor the occasion, Ruljiyyih Khanum had ordered thousands of roses and carnations to carpet the inner rooms of all three Shrines. She opened that international Baha'i convention and every successive one until that of April 1998. Then, after the election of the Supreme Body, Ruljiyyih Khanum and the Hands of the Cause of God rejoiced with seven thousand Baha'is in the Royal Albert Hall in London, England, at the first Baha'i World Congress. Amatu'l-Baha invited a number of indigenous Baha'is from Africa, South America, and Australia to attend this historic event as her personal guests. Her deeply moving and thought-provoking talk on Shoghi Effendi's life was a masterpiece of eloquence and poignancy, as we brought his Ten Year Crusade to its triumphal close.

Ruljiyyih Khanum's systematic travels around the globe began in 1964. Many times she talked about the genesis of these unique trips, recounting an incident in the lifetime of Shoghi Effendi. One day, as he was passing by her desk, he stopped and looked at her and said, "What will become of you after I die?" She was shattered by this unexpected remark and began to weep, saying, "Oh, Shoghi Effendi, don't say such terrible things. I don't want to live without you." He paid no attention, however, and after a pause continued, "I suppose you will travel and encourage the friends." She said that this was the only remark he ever made about what she should do with her life after his passing. And so it was that, when she was somewhat freed from her arduous administrative duties and the affairs of the Cause were placed under the infallible guidance of the Universal House of Justice, she took these words as his last instructions to her and did her utmost to fulfil his hopes.

One is reminded of May Maxwell's words written to and about her beloved daughter many years before: "I really feel, Mary,

AMATU 'L-BMIA RD I~Ii YYIH KI-vllillM

that the great spiritual blessings which are coming to you in guiding so many souls to the Blessed Cause, are not only due to

the power of spiritual attraction which 'Abdu'l-Baha gave you, but also to your strict obedience to the instructions of Shoghi Effendi."

In the course of her long life she travelled to 185 countries, dependencies, and major islands of the globe. While she visited just 31 countries in her first 54 years, she travelled in all the rest between 1964 and 1997. When I tried to count the number of territories she visited in these thirty-four years, I came up with the astounding figure of 154. Many of these countries were visited more than once, and some, like India, were honored by her presence as many as nine times. Her trips were of such a variety that the best way to look at them is through the range of activities that they involved.

Her role as ambassador of the Baha' i Faith, for example, was remarkable in itself. Everywhere she went she met with heads of state and high-ranking authorities at the national, local, or even village levels, moving with complete ease from one class of society to another. Although she herself was in every way queenly and worthy of honor and respect, she always approached these emblems of material power and political authority with deference and a natural humility. She would explain that her visit was in the nature of a courtesy call, and nothing more, stating that she had come from the World Centre of the Baha'i Faith and was visiting the Baha'is in that country, who were a strictly apolitical and nonpartisan people, well-wishers of the government and obedient to its laws. In all her encounters, she strove to be positive and looked for every opportunity to offer praise and appreciation in her dealings with state officials, even if very little was called for.

In Africa alone she met with seventeen heads of state and was instrumental in helping the Baha'is achieve many of their legal goals. The highest in rank and the leader she most valued meeting in all her travels was Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. She greatly admired his nobility, his courage, and his uprightness. The head of state whose meeting brought her the greatest

joy and pride was His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II of Western Samoa, the first ruling monarch to embrace the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

She always maintained a high standard of propriety, and when she shared the platform or sat at dinner with such people as Prince Philip of Great Britain or the archbishop of Canterbury, with governors-general and ambassadors, she invariably won their admiration and respect, not only for herself but most importantly for the Cause of Baha'u'llah. This was her ultimate concern.

RuJ:iyyih Khanum truly had no personal ambition; she was not in the least interested in meeting or moving in such company for its own sake or her pleasure. It was only for the Cause that she would

accept any appointments and invitations of this kind.

Another activity which she undertook in the course of her many travels was contact with the representatives of the media. She must have had hundreds of newspaper, radio, and television interviews in the capital cities around the world as well as in the large and small towns of every country she visited. Before going to meet a journalist or to be filmed in a studio she would always pray and ask for God's guidance, His assistance, and, above all, His protection. She used to tell the friends that when they met the representatives of the media, their principal aim should be to create a good impression of the Faith. "If these people only remember one thing, that the word 'Baha'i' means something good, you have achieved your purpose," she used to say.

Another vital service rendered by Amatu'l-Baha in the course of her many travels was her role as the representative of the Universal House of Justice at national and international Baha'i conferences across the planet. Standing on platforms on behalf of the sacred institution she served, in the course of Baha'i conventions at Rio de Janeiro, at youth conferences and native gatherings, at inaugurations of Baha'i temples and other great historical events to which the Bahais streamed from all the quarters of the globe, she was erect and regal and forever memorable, the essence of dignity and beauty. Her mastery of just the right word on each of these occasions, her ability to draw out her audience and touch

A JVIATU'L-B AHA RUI:IIYYII-I K HANUM

people's hearts, her clear and simple logic, and, above all, her wit and her bewitching sense of humor—these qualities endeared her to and charmed her audiences. When asked, she attributed her power of public speaking to the fact that at the beginning of her marriage Shoghi Effendi had recommended that she memorize the beautiful prayer of 'Abdu'l-Baha that begins, "O Lord, my God and my Haven in my distress! My Shield and my Shelter in my woes!" and which concludes with the poignant sentence, "Loose my tongue to laud Thy name amidst Thy people, that my voice may be raised in great assemblies and from my lips may stream the flood of Thy praise." She also attributed it to the advice given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to May Maxwell, to turn her heart to Him, pray, and then speak, for Rujiyyih Khanum herself followed this advice faithfully. She gave talks with the same degree of resourcefulness in French, German, and Persian.

One of the most memorable services in the course of Amatu'l-Baha's many travels was the time she spent and the attention she gave to perfectly ordinary people on the peripheries of society. When asked what was the place she had enjoyed most in all her travels, she would often say that it was in the villages and jungles of the world. She rarely missed the opportunity to validate people

in far-flung and remote places of whom few had heard and whose simple actions none might ever know.

How often in the course of these forty years by her side did I witness shy, unsure, sometimes dejected human beings uplifted

~

Amatu 'l-Baha Rilh iyyih
Khanum helping
Baha 'is in Gbendebou,
Sierra Leone, clean
vegetables, in 1971.

Amatu 'L-Baha
Ruhiiyyih Khanum
presenting prizes to
students of the Baha'i
school in Gangtok,
Sikkim, in 1971.

by her genuine kindness, her praise and patience. Her instinct was to approach people with an open, candid heart, simply and unselfconsciously. It was to look for positive qualities in people and verbalize these. But though she was the perfect diplomat in some respects, she was also very direct and often said things frankly and outspokenly. The driving impulse in all her encounters with the Baha'is was to stir them to action and rouse them up so that they would teach the Faith. And often, even when she was critical of individuals, her intent was to protect the Cause. If her manner may at times have appeared abrupt, and initially formidable to those who approached her, it was often the result of her own innate shyness, which few people guessed, for she was disconcerted, to the end of her life, by effusiveness and adulation.

Seldom did Ruhiiyyih Khanum travel, especially on her longer trips, without a pet. Her love for animals was such that she would gladly accept the extra hardship of tending and cleaning her pets for the simple joy of their company. Her motto was, "You only live once; why not get clean joy out of it?"

Ruhiiyyih Khanum was one of the most hardworking human beings that I have ever met, and she never asked anyone to do anything that she had not or could not also have done herself. Much of her hard work was centered on her home in Haifa, which was the hub of continuous activity until the last two and a half years of her life. She kept a regular entourage around her as busy as herself and trained them rigorously in the arts of practical maintenance.

.AMAT LI'L-B A HA R L! I~IfYY IJ-1 KI IANU. I

Her first and foremost concern was always the upkeep and

care of the Shrines. Her constant reminder was to keep these precious holy Shrines exactly the way Shoghi Effendi had arranged them. "This is not a place of innovation, but preservation" was her advice to all. She also undertook periodically to inspect and keep all the holy places in order, framing pictures, replacing the frayed and worn out fabrics, keeping an eagle eye on any deviation from the Guardian's ways. The renovation and furnishing of the House of 'Abdu'llah Pasha engrossed her interest for several years.

One of Amatu'l-Baha's important social roles in Haifa was as hostess. She loved setting a beautiful table, arranging flowers, and overseeing every detail of the event. Apart from formal dinners, she would also give many informal parties. After returning from India, every now and then she would be so homesick for that country that she would throw an "Indian Night" party. She would dress the few ladies working at that time in Haifa in her beautiful saris, trace the floors with exquisite patterns made of colored flour, play Indian music, and we would all enjoy delicious, spicy Indian food under her hospitable roof. And also do the cleaning up with her afterwards! Or there were her exciting "African Nights" when all the friends who were either African or connected to the work in Africa were invited to her home, usually outside in her beautiful garden, and after a scrumptious dinner would drum and sing to their hearts' content. How exhilarating were her dinner parties for the new Counsellors, too, where the guests, numbering over ninety at times, were squeezed into the main hall, as she would say, "with a shoe horn." Many hundreds of the friends who met Amatu'l-Baha on her travels enjoyed her delightful hospitality and loving attention when visiting Haifa. There was, of course, a stream of regular nine-day pilgrims with whom she also met, twice a month for nine months of the year. This was a custom and responsibility which went back to her earliest years at the side of Shoghi Effendi, and which she dutifully maintained until the last years of her life. She met with about two thousand pilgrims each year in the main hall of the

Master's House, giving talks that provided guidance and inspiration for many. She also kept up a voluminous correspondence, encouraging institutions and individuals and responding to questions and requests. Two particular events at the World Centre stand out, during which many hundred of pilgrims flocked through the doors of the Master's House. In 1968, the centenary of the arrival of Baha'u'llah in the Holy Land brought two thousand Baha'is to Haifa and Acre, and in 1992 three thousand Baha'is came for the commemoration of the centenary of the passing of Baha'u'llah. On the afternoon of 28 May at Bahji, they witnessed Amatu'l-Baha place the cylinder containing the Roll of Honor of the

Knights of Baha'u'llah at the entrance of the Most Holy Shrine. On the night of Baha'u'llah's ascension, after a devotional program in the I:Iaram-i-Aqdas, we all circumambulated the Shrine, which Rulfiyyih Khanum had carpeted with thousands of rose buds and carnations.

When one contemplates the fullness of her days and years, many of which were spent in travel, one is filled with wonder at how she managed to do so much writing. Throughout the years Amatu'l-Baha penned *The Priceless Pearl*, *A Manual for Pioneers*, *The Desire of the World*, and *Poems of the Passing*, an outpouring of her broken heart after the death of Shoghi Effendi, which was printed in 1996. Furthermore, her legacy also includes the compilation of the messages of the Hands of the Cause during the interregnum period, 1957- 1963, entitled *The Ministry of the Custodians*, and the production of two important films. The first, her two-hour documentary film "The Green Light Expedition," was the fruit of her six-month journey in 1975 through the Amazon Basin, the Peruvian and Bolivian altiplano, and to the Bush Negroes of Suriname. Her second film, "The Pilgrimage," offers a visual pilgrimage to the Baha'i Holy Places in Haifa and Acre, with Amatu'l-Baha as guide.

Rulfiyyih Khanum touched and filled the lives of numerous people everywhere around the world, but the primary source of her comfort and happiness in the last decades of her life was her love for the Universal House of Justice and her bond with this

A MATU'L-BA1-1A RD I~IfYYIH KH.ANUM

institution and its individual members. When all nine members of the Universal House of Justice came to her home for the last time three weeks before her passing and paid their respects, when she was quite frail and in bed, such a deep sense of happiness and contentment enveloped her that it was tangible, like sunlight, in the room after they left. She lingered quietly in that light a moment and then said, "I felt their love; they are my closest friends ." This bond, which symbolized her total dedication to the Covenant throughout her life, was strong and vibrant to the end and always reciprocal.

Her funeral was held in the central hall of the Master's House. The two Hands of the Cause were present, together with members of the Universal House of Justice, the Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre, and twenty-four Continental Counsellors from all over the world. Also attending were her family members and representatives from seventy-six National Spiritual Assemblies, senior officials from the Canadian and United States embassies, representatives of the Israeli government, the mayors of Haifa and Acre, other prominent Israeli citizens, and special invited guests.* Following the readings and the chanting of the

*Editor's note: Messages of condolence were received from many leaders and dignitaries, including HM King Michael I of Romania; HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; US President Bill Clinton; Jacques Chirac, President of France; President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson of Canada; Head of State of Samoa Malietoa Tanumafili II; as well as diplomats from various countries. In Brazil,

a proclamation was made in homage to Rt. Hon. R. Khanum in the Chamber of Federal Deputies. News wire services such as AP and AFP and major newspapers and other media around the world carried the story of her passing.

These

included the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and many other US newspapers, the British Broadcasting Corporation, Le Monde, the Sydney Morning Herald, Aftenposten (Norway), the Voice of America, and the Jerusalem Post. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and newspapers across the country, including the Globe

and Mail, the National Post, the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Citizen, the Montreal

Gazette, the Vancouver Sun, and the Calgary Herald also covered the story.

Albanian national television transmitted a thirty-minute program about the passing of 'Amatu'l-Baha by satellite throughout Europe and the Middle East.

Baha'i

communities around the world held memorial services in her honor.

Prayer for the Dead, she left for

the last time that house which

she had entered as a bride sixtythree years before. Her coffin

was carried out by members of

the Universal House of Justice,

then borne across the street and

lowered into its vault by believers representing a variety of

ethnic origins. Almost one thousand people, including pilgrims

and volunteers serving at the

Baha'i World Centre, stood outside her home, in the closed-off

street and in the garden where

Members of the Universal House of her grave had been prepared.

Justice bearing the coffin of The interior of the grave was

Amatu'l-Bahci Riihiyyih Khanum at carpeted on all sides with hundred

dozens of roses and carnations,

just as she had arranged for her beloved Shoghi Effendi forty-two

years before. And as the rain poured down, more prayers were

recited and chanted before her casket was lowered into the ground.

The rainstorm that began the night she passed away finally subsided to a

drizzle as her precious remains were laid to rest.

I think, to sum up such a life, there are no adequate words

but those expressed in the message of the Universal House of

Justice to the Baha'i world after her passing:

19 January 2000

To the Baha'is of the World

In the early hours of this morning, the soul of Amatu'l-Baha Rul,iyy ih Khanum, beloved consort of Shoghi Effendi and the Baha' i world's last remaining link with the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was released from the limitations of this eaihly existence. In the midst of our grief, we are sustained by our confidence that she has been gathered to the glory of the Concourse on High in the presence of the Ab ha Beauty.

A NIATU'L-BAI-rA RUI:liYYII-I KHANUM

For all whose hearts she touched so deeply, the sorrow that this irreparable loss brings will, in God's good time, be assuaged in awareness of the joy that is hers thruóough her reunion with the Guardian and with the Master, Who had Himself prayed in the Most Holy Shrine that her parents be blessed with a child. Down the centuries to come, the followers of Baha' u'llah will contemplate with wonder and gratitude the quality of the services- ardent, indomitable, resourceful- that she brought to the protection and promotion of the Cause. In her youth, Amatu'l-Baha had already distinguished herself through her activities in North America, and later, both with her dear mother and on her own, she had rendered valuab le service to the Cause in Europe . Her twenty years of intimate association with Shoghi Effendi evoked from his pen such accolades as "my helpmate," "my shi eld," " my tireless collaborator in the arduous tasks I sho ulder." To these tributes he added in 1952 his decision to elevate her to the rank of Hand of the Cause of God, after the death of her illustrious father.

The devastating shock of the beloved Guardian 's passing steeled her resolve to lend her share, with the other Hands of the Cause, to the triumph of the Ten Year Crusade, and subsequently to undertake, with characteristic intrepidity, her historic worldwide travels.

A life so noble in its provenance, so crucial to the preservation of the Faith's integrity, and so rich in its dedicated, uninterrupted and selfless service, moves us to call for befitting commemorations by Baha'i communities on both national and local levels, as well as for special gatherings in her memory in all Houses of Worship.

With yearning healts, we supplicate at the Holy Threshold for infinite heavenly bounties to surro und her soul , as she assumes her rightful and we ll-earned position among the exalted company in the Abba K ingdom.

The Universal House of Justice

Peter J. Khan examines some distinctive features of Baha'i scholarship, including basic concepts, approach to scholarly activity, and range of study.

Some Aspects of

BAHA' I

SCHOLARSHIP

The acquisition of insight and illumination must surely rank among the highest aims of the adherents of any religion. This pursuit takes a variety of forms, including scholarly endeavors. Baha'i scholarship, defined here as scholarly activity carried out by members of the Baha'i community, is a distinctive component of Baha'i studies. This broader range of scholarship occupies anyone, irrespective of religious affiliation, who is investigating topics that pertain to aspects of the Baha'i Faith and its teachings or their relevance and application to the wider society.

A close examination of the distinctive features of Baha'i scholarship is useful and timely for three main reasons: the spread of the Baha'i Faith to all corners of the earth, the diversification of its community to embrace people of differing cultural, ethnic, and educational backgrounds, and the growing interest in its achievements and potential by academics and other leaders of thought. While this article does not aim to provide a comprehensive treatment of the subject, it does seek to highlight some of the most significant elements of Baha'i scholarship and draw

attention to those aspects in which the Baha'i approach to scholarly activity is distinct from that prevalent in the wider society.

Basic Concepts

Worldview

Baha'is engaged in any form of intellectual activity begin with belief in the validity of Baha'u'llah's teachings. They perceive the universe as having spiritual as well as material dimensions. They accept the existence of God, described in the Baha'i writings as an "unknowable Essence,"¹ as an article of belief rather than a matter of conjecture or debate. They regard human beings as each having a nonmaterial entity identified as a soul, which exists after death in a state beyond the comprehension of those dwelling in this world, transcending space and time.

The implications of this worldview are extensive. Baha'i scholars consider forms of religious activity, such as prayer and meditation, and processes such as those that prompt motivation, innovation, and inspiration, which are usually examined from the standpoint of present-day psychology, from a wider and more

inclusive perspective. Their approach not only affirms the validity and relevance of conventional psychological insight, but also recognizes that human beings have a spiritual nature and are thus amenable to spiritual influences.

According to the Baha'i worldview, the forces operating in the world are not confined to those associated with the material realm and studied by disciplines such as physics. The enlarged view encompasses spiritual forces that operate through laws and processes described in the Baha'i writings and have certain features directly analogous to those studied in the world of physics, such as action at a distance, nonlocality, and nonlinearity in the relationship between cause and effect.

The novelty of the Baha'i perspective has, in recent years, raised some problems for those engaged in scholarly endeavor in both an academic setting and the wider society. Responding to

Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 98.

BALIAF SCHOLARSHIP

requests for guidance on these issues, the Universal House of Justice has provided a number of useful insights into the implications of the Baha'i worldview, some of which are presented here.

A number of problems arise from the dissonance between the Baha'i approach to scholarship and the approach based on materialistic interpretations of reality adopted in most Western academic circles. In a recent letter written on its behalf, the Universal House of Justice referred to "the implications for the study of religion of certain assumptions about human nature and the process of civilization that a purely materialistic interpretation of reality has imposed on scholarly activity of every kind, at least in the Western world." The letter continues:

A related paradigm for the study of religion has gradually consolidated itself in the prevailing academic culture during the course of the present century. It insists that all spiritual and moral phenomena must be understood through the application of a scholarly apparatus devised to explore existence in a way that ignores the issues of God's continuous relationship with His creation and His intervention in human life and history. Yet, from a Baha'i point of view, it is precisely this intervention that is the central theme of the Teachings of the Founders of the revealed religions ostensibly being studied. As a result of this insistence, opinions that should have remained matters of learned speculation have tended to assume the character of dogma. Equally regrettable is an intolerant attitude toward other perceptions of reality, which too often characterizes the expression of these opinions. In the

context of historical circumstance, this development is understandable. The rigid intolerance exhibited in the past by much of organized religion, together with the domination of scholarship long exercised by theological elites, could not but arouse strong negative reactions. From a Baha'i point of view, however, bigotry is retrograde and unacceptable in whatever form it chooses to present itself.²

issues related to the Study of the Baha 'i Faith: Extracts fi"om Letters Written on Behal/ of the Universal House of Justice (Wilmette: Baha' i Publi shing Trust, 1999), pp. 32- 33.

In another letter, the Universal House of Justice stated:

Although the reality of God's continuous relationship with His creation and His intervention in human life and history are the very essence of the teachings of the Founders of the revealed religions, dogmatic materialism today insists that even the nature of re ligious itself can be adequately understood only through the use of an academic methodology designed to ignore the truths that make religion what it is. ³

The Universal House of Justice also referred to the problems that would arise "if an attempt is made to impose, on the Baha'i community's own study of the Revelation, materialistic methodologies and attitudes antithetical to its very nature." ⁴ While it was natural that some Baha'i authors, seeking acceptance from their academic colleagues and from editors of academic journals, would attempt to write articles from a perspective similar to that of non-Baha'is, the Universal House of Justice pointed out that, in following such an approach,

they have inadvertently cast the Faith into a mold which is essentially foreign to its nature, taking no account of the spiritual forces which Baha'is see as its foundation. Presumably the justification offered for this approach would be that most scholars of comparative religion are essentially concerned with discernible phenomena, observable events and practical affairs and are used to treating their subject from a Western, if not a Christian, viewpoint. This approach, although understandable, is quite impossible for a Baba' i, for it ignores the fact that our worldview includes the spiritual dimension as an indispensable component for consistency and coherence, and it does not beseem a Baha'i to write ... about his Faith as if he looked upon it from the norm of humanism or materialism. ⁵

The Universal House of Justice, message to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 7 April 1999.

Issues Related to the Study of the Saha 'i Faith, p. 33.

Scholarship: Extracts fi'om the Writings of Saha 'u 'llah and 'Abdu 'l-Baha

and jawn letters of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Baha'i World Centre (Mona Vale: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1995), p. 37.

B AHA' f S CHO LARSHIP

Such an approach

leads to these authors' drawing conclusions and making implications which are in conflict with the Baha'i teachings and with the reality of the Faith. A good Baha'i author, when writing for such a publication, should be fully capable of adopting a calmly neutral and expository tone, without falling into the trap of distorting the picture by adopting what is, in essence, a materialistic and localized stance. 6

Baha'is may sometimes find themselves accused of ignorant fanaticism, or of having closed minds, by basing their scholarship upon acceptance of the Baha'i worldview. Such accusations are logically inconsistent. One of the fundamental principles of the Baha'i Faith is independent investigation of truth. The Universal House of Justice emphasizes:

not only the right but also the responsibility of each believer to explore truth for himself or herself are fundamental to the Baha'i teachings. This principle is an integral feature of the coming of age of humankind, inseparable from the social transformation to which Baha'u'llah is calling the peoples of the world. It is as relevant to specifically scholarly activity as it is to the rest of spiritual and intellectual life. Every human being is ultimately responsible to God for the use which he or she makes of these possibilities ... 7

Baha'is independently investigate the claim of Baha'u'llah to be a bringer of truth, a Manifestation of God, and having concluded that this claim is valid, they freely choose to identify themselves with this religion. The means by which this investigation is carried out, or the length of time required, is a matter of personal choice, and what constitutes conclusive evidence to one individual may not suffice for another. However, acceptance of Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God is the crucial element distinguishing Baha'is from those who admire the Baha'i teachings or regard Baha'u'llah as a very wise man and a source of

Scholarship, pp. 37- 38.

issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith , p. 39.

profound insight. As a direct corollary to this acceptance, Baha'is regard the teachings of Baha'u'llah as statements of truth—a view reflected in their scholarly endeavors. For Baha'is to write about the Baha'i teachings in any other way would be inconsistent or

deceptive.

The Universal House of Justice has affirmed:

The Baha'i community is an association of individuals who have voluntarily come together, on recognizing Baha'u'llah's claim to be the Manifestation of God for this age, to establish certain patterns of personal and social behavior and to build the institutions that are to promote these patterns. There are numerous individuals who share the ideals of the Faith and draw inspiration from its teachings, while disagreeing with certain of its features, but those who actually enter the Baha'i community have accepted, by their own free will, to follow the Teachings in their entirety . . . 8

This distinctive characteristic of the Baha'i community is evident in all aspects of its functioning, not least of which is its consistency in the expression of belief that Baha'u'llah is a Manifestation of God.

Authoritative writings

Central to Baha'i scholarly activity is the authority of Baha'u'llah's writings, which are much more voluminous than those of any other of the world's major religions. The greatest care is taken to establish the authenticity of that which is accepted as part of the revelation of Baha'u'llah. No credence is given to any oral statements that are unsupported by an authentic written text. The documents of that text are analysed rigorously, using modern techniques when necessary, to confirm their authenticity, and appropriate measures are taken to ensure their preservation.

To a Baha'i, the Manifestation of God has a nature intrinsically distinct from that of others, and perhaps no phenomenon is more intriguing or mysterious in the study of the Baha'i Faith than that of the process of revelation, by which the Word of God

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith, p. 27.

B AHA' I S CHOLARSHIP

is transmitted to humanity, often at great speed in a torrent of words, through the Manifestation.

It is clear therefore that Baha'i scholars approach the study of the writings of Baha'u'llah differently from colleagues who do not share their belief. In addressing issues raised by Baha'i academics, the Universal House of Justice urged them

to apply to their work the concept which they accept as Baha'is: that the Manifestation of God is of a higher realm and has a perception far above that of any human being. He has the task of raising humankind to a new level of knowledge and behavior. In this, His understanding transcends the traditions and concepts of the society in which He appears. As Baha'u'llah

Himself writes in the Hidden Words:

O Son of Beauty! By My spirit and by My favor!
By My mercy and by My beauty! All that I have
revealed unto thee with the tongue of power, and have
written for thee with the pen of might, hath been in
accordance with thy capacity and understanding, not
with My state and the melody of My voice.⁹

Baha'u'llah's writings address a wide range of subjects that
are directly relevant to the activities of Baha'i scholars. The Universal House
of Justice has referred recently to

the statements in the Baha'i writings which disclose the
relationship between the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the
knowledge which is acquired as a result of scholarly endeavors. Baha'u'llah
states that:

Unveiled and unconcealed, this Wronged One hath,
at all times, proclaimed before the face of all peoples
of the world that which will serve as the key for
unlocking the doors of sciences, of arts, of knowl-
edge, of well-being, of prosperity and wealth . . .

It is evident that the Baha'i Writings illuminate all areas of
human endeavor and all academic disciplines. Those who have

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith , pp. 38- 39.

been privileged to recognize the station of Baha'u'llah have
the bounty of access to a Revelation which casts light upon all
aspects of thought and inquiry, and are enjoined to use the
understanding which they obtain from their immersion in the
Holy Writings to advance the interests of the Faith. 10

A unique aspect of the Baha'i Faith is the Covenant of
Baha'u'llah. Adherence to its provisions is essential for the successful
pursuit of Baha'i scholarship. It is a powerful agent in
promoting creativity and freedom of thought, since it constrains
individual believers from claiming authority for their own views.
Through the provision of authoritative interpretations, it offers a
productive avenue for Baha'is to explore the meaning and implications of the
teachings and a means for them to avoid contention.

Since this Covenant has no parallel in religious history, its
novel features require careful consideration, and the implications
of its provisions merit thorough study by Baha'is embarking on
scholarly endeavors. In a document calling for greater impetus to
be given to fostering Baha'i scholarship, the Universal House of
Justice called for Baha'i institutions to render valuable services
"by promoting within the Baha'i community an atmosphere of
tolerance for the views of others. At the same time," the House of

Justice continued, "the fundamental core of the believer's faith should be strengthened by an increasing awareness of the cardinal truth and vital importance of the Covenant, and an ever-growing love for Baha'u'llah." 11

The essential feature of the Covenant is that Baha'u'llah, in clear and unambiguous writing, designated His eldest son 'Abdu'l-Baha as having the power and authority to provide an authoritative interpretation of His writings. In accordance with the explicit provisions of the Covenant, this authority was conferred subsequently on 'Abdu'l-Baha's eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, who was designated as the Guardian of the Cause. Neither 'Abdu'l-Baha nor Shoghi Effendi is regarded as occupying a station even remotely approaching that of the Manifestation of God, but their

issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith, p. 13.
Scholarship, p. 40.

B AHA'IS SCHOLARSHIP

interpretations are accepted by Baha'is as statements of religious truth with an authority derived directly from statements of Baha'u'llah. As Shoghi Effendi wrote:

The fact that the Guardian has been specifically endowed with such power as he may need to reveal the purport and disclose the implications of the utterances of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha does not necessarily confer upon him a station co-equal with those Whose words he is called upon to interpret. He can exercise that right and discharge this obligation and yet remain infinitely inferior to both of them in rank and different in nature. 12

The Covenant also establishes the institution of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative body of the Baha'i Faith, one of the functions of which is, as specified by 'Abdu'l-Baha, to "deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself." 13 The difference between this function and that of interpretation has been discussed in some detail in the Baha'i writings.

Baha'i scholars thus have access to a wealth of guidance through the authoritative Baha'i writings and the elucidations of the Universal House of Justice. These writings provide a stimulus to their intellectual activities and are a source of new insights that give additional impetus to their studies. Individual expressions of opinion and understanding can proceed freely as a necessary part of the creative endeavor without any apprehension that these diverse views will impair the unity of the Baha'i community.

In almost every instance, the Universal House of Justice observes this process with pleasure, as an indication of the community's intellectual vitality. However, in an extreme case, where

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'is: Selected Letters*, 1st pocket

sized ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 151.

The Universal House of Justice, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, Baha'i World Centre (Oakham: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 14.

differences arose over a fundamental issue of Baha'i belief and gave rise to contention between those involved, the Universal House of Justice commented:

the resolution of differences of opinion on such fundamental questions is not to be found by continued discussion, but in referring to the Universal House of Justice itself, as you have done. Prolonged, unresolved, public discussion of these fundamental questions can do nothing but breed confusion and dissension. 14

The acquisition of knowledge

One of the most unusual features of the Baha'i Faith is the strong emphasis it places on the effort to acquire knowledge from all sources. The Baha'i principle of the independent investigation of truth derives its origin from explicit statements of Baha'u'llah Himself, such as the following:

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone . . . Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world . . . 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 . 15

'Abdu'l-Baha reinforces this principle when He tells Baha'is: "Make every effort to acquire the advanced knowledge of the day, and strain every nerve to carry forward the divine civilization ... " 16 He further admonishes that Baha'is should

make every effort, as much as lieth within their competence, along these lines. The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities,

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith, p. 30.

Scholarship, p. I.

Scholarship, p. I.

BAI-IA'f S CHOLARS HIP

bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various
culTent branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and
of the arts. 17

To Baha'is, the effort to acquire knowledge is a spiritual duty
and an integral part of their worship of God. It is also necessary
for the realization of the Baha'i aim to contribute to the process
of building a new civilization and creating a society in which all
people can find the means to fulfill their potential. 'Abdu'l-Baha
emphasizes this spiritual perspective when He says, "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." 18 He has also written:

There are certain pillars which have been established as the
unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of
these is learning and use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and
insight into 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. 19

The pursuit of knowledge takes many diverse forms, one of
which is through Baha'i scholarship. Its significance for Baha'is
is described in the following excerpt from a letter written on behalf of the
Universal House of Justice: "The Universal House
of Justice ... regards Baha'i scholarship as of great potential importance for
the development and consolidation of the Baha'i
community as it emerges from obscurity ... " 20

Some religious systems look with suspicion upon immersion
in the secular pursuit of knowledge and encourage their followers
to remain aloof from academic studies, apprehensive that such an
endeavor will weaken the faith of their adherents or give rise to
irreconcilable differences between the findings obtained from

Scholarship, pp. 1- 2.

Scholarship, p. 2.

Scholarship, p. 9.

Scholarship, p. 16.

religious and those from scientific sources, eroding belief. In
contrast, Baha'is are strongly encouraged to participate in
academic studies, if circumstances allow. As the Universal House
of Justice has clearly stated:

Those believers with the capacity and opportunity to do so
have repeatedly been encouraged in their pursuit of academic
studies by which they are not only equipped to render muchneeded service to the

Faith, but are also provided with the means to acquire a profound insight into the meaning and implications of the Baha'i Teachings. They discover also that the perceptions gained from a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah clarify the subjects of their academic inquiry. 21

The potential for constructive interaction between academic studies and the Baha'i teachings is illustrated in two letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi in March 1944. In the first, he encouraged young Baha'is who were so inclined to give special attention to such subjects as history, economics, and sociology in their academic program, writing that these subjects are "all related to the teachings and aid in understanding the Faith." 22 A second letter referred to these subjects as "fields in which Baha'is not only take a great interest but also cover subjects which our teachings cast an entirely new light upon." 23 Baha'i students can thus approach their academic studies eager to learn, confident that they will obtain new and beneficial insights into the Baha'i teachings and that, as their knowledge increases, they may well be able to contribute to their academic field of endeavor through their understanding of these teachings.

With the prospect for such mutual reinforcement between academic studies and the Baha'i teachings, it can hardly be surprising that another letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi states: "What

issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith , p. 13.

Baha'i Youth: A Compilation, prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of United States: (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 15.

Baha'i Youth , p. 15.

B AHA'IS CH O LARSHIP

he wants the Baha'is to do is to study more, not to study less. The more general knowledge, scientific and otherwise, they possess, the better. Likewise he is constantly urging them to really study the Baha'i teachings more deeply." 24

The very strong encouragement of scholarship is allied with a call to Baha'is to honor and respect distinguished accomplishment in any form. Such respect should be unstinting and genuine, but no form of priestly authority should be conferred on Baha'is who have acquired academic expertise in any field which relates to an aspect of the teachings. Responding to a question on this subject, the Universal House of Justice has written:

In the study of the Revelation of God, an individual's proficiency in one of the physical or social sciences , in law, philology, or other fields of specialization will often throw valuable light on

issues being examined, and such contributions are greatly to be appreciated. The field of Near East studies, mentioned in your letter, is one that can assist in this way. However, no one specialization among the many branches of scholarly research can confer upon its practitioners an authoritative role in the common effort of exploring the implications of so staggering and all-encompassing a body of truth. Collateral with His summons to the pursuit of knowledge, Baha'u'llah has abolished entirely that feature of all past religions by which a special caste of persons such as the Christian priesthood or the Islamic 'ulama came to exercise authority over the religious understanding and practice of their fellow believers.²⁵

In these early days of the Baha'i Faith, it is especially important that no actions be taken to give unwarranted authority to those believers who have achieved academic eminence, lest the seeds be sown inadvertently for the later creation of a quasi-priestly caste, contrary to the explicit provisions of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Scholarship, p. 7.

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith, p. 20.

Baha'i Approach to Scholarly Activity

In the wider society, those planning to embark on scholarly activity are advised to pursue a subject in which they have a keen interest and a strong desire to contribute to its advancement.

Further, they are encouraged to prepare by acquiring a thorough familiarity with their subject matter. Preparation also includes the development of a well-trained mind and mastery of research techniques relevant to their field of inquiry. Little attention, if any, is paid to personal qualities and values, as they are regarded as totally irrelevant to scholarly pursuit. What does it matter whether scholars are arrogant or modest, contemptuous of the achievements of others or respectful toward their contributions, rude or well-mannered?

Much more is expected of Baha'is embarking on scholarly endeavors. They have access to guidance within the authoritative Baha'i writings which is specifically applicable to them, and which they are expected to strive to follow. In carrying out their work they must remember that they are not exempt from the responsibility laid on all Baha'is to strive continually to develop their spiritual nature and to follow the laws and principles of their religion. They are also reminded that the mysterious spiritual powers animating their Faith are a source of energy and inspiration for those who sincerely wish to use them. These inspirational powers are central to the creative process that lies at the heart of

discovery and the acquisition of new insights.

Much emphasis is placed on the spiritual virtues of humility and modesty about one's accomplishments, which the Universal House of Justice has related to the inspirational process:

[Baha' i scholars] are urged to be modest about their accomplishments, and to bear in mind always the statement of

Bahit'u' llah that: The heart must needs therefore be cleansed from the idle sayings of men, and sanctified from every earthly affection, so that it may discover the hidden meaning of divine inspiration, and become the treasury of the mysteries of divine knowledge. 26

Scholarship, p. 25.

BAHA' I S C H O L A R S H I P

The practice of such virtues confers many benefits, among which are the role it plays in the creation of a new kind of scholarly community that is distinguished by respect for accomplishment, mutual encouragement among all members, kindness and consideration to those who are struggling to acquire an understanding of any subject, and a spirit of unity in the quest for truth. It is far removed from the divisiveness, arrogance, and posture of superiority found in some quarters of the scholarly community at the present time.

So important is this subject that Baha'u'llah addresses it in His weightiest work, the Kitab-i-Aqdas, saying: "Amongst the people is he whose learning hath made him proud, and who hath been debarred thereby from recognizing My Name, the Self-Subsisting; who, when he heareth the tread of sandals following behind him, waxeth greater in his own esteem than Nimrod." 27 Here

Baha'u'llah refers symbolically to those who derive inordinate satisfaction from a following of devotees who hang upon their every pronouncement and who take their views as authoritative. His condemnation is trenchant and poetically evocative: "Say: O rejected one! Where now is his abode? By God, it is the nethermost fire." 28

In the same book Baha'u'llah calls attention to the hypocrisy and false modesty of those who pretend to be self-effacing and humble, while inwardly regarding themselves as entitled to the highest honors. He writes, "Amongst the people is he who seateth himself amid the sandals by the door whilst coveting in his heart the seat of honor," 29 and "And among the people is he who layeth claim to inner knowledge, and still deeper knowledge concealed within this knowledge." 30 The essential poverty of such an attitude is conveyed vividly in His words, "What thou dost possess is

Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book* (Haifa: Baha' i World Centre, 1992), K 41 . The main text of the presently published version of the

Kitab-i-Aqdas has sequentially numbered paragraphs, indicated here by the letter "K" followed by the relevant number.

Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 41.

Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 36.

°Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 36.

naught but husks which We have left to thee as bones are left to dogs." 31

While Baha'is with capacity and opportunity are encouraged to pursue academic studies, they are advised not to regard academic accomplishment as an essential prerequisite for Baha'i scholarship. The Universal House of Justice has called for Baha'i scholarship to include within its embrace "those believers who may lack formal academic qualification but who have, through their perceptive study of the Teachings, acquired insights which are of interest to others"³² and has warned Baha'is who are engaged in scholarly activities against the "assumption that only a person equipped with conventional academic training is capable of an unbiased attitude and of truly understanding the points at issue, leading to disdain of questions raised by 'unqualified' individuals."³³ In the wider society, such attitudes have been barriers to the advancement of knowledge and a source of the denigration of valuable insights from those who approach a topic of study with a fresh perspective.

The Baha'i code of conduct must govern all interactions between Baha'i scholars and others having similar interests, whether those interactions occur through personal contact or by electronic means. While this code does not inhibit the forthright promulgation of an individual's views, it does require that courtesy and consideration for the feelings of others inform all scholarly discussion by Baha'is. In this regard, the Universal House of Justice has commented:

As believers with various insights into the Teachings converse-with patience, tolerance and open and unbiased minds-a deepening of comprehension should take place. The strident insistence on individual views, however, can lead to contention, which is detrimental not only to the spirit of Baha'i association and collaboration but to the search for truth itself. 34

Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 36.

Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith, p. 16.

Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith, p. 5.

Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith, p. 38.

BAHAI SCHOLARSHIP

If creative interchange and discussion of differing views are replaced by contention, to the extent that the unity of the community is disrupted, the institutions of the Faith can be

expected to call for restraint and moderation.

The Baha' i worldview is the bedrock of the approach to be adopted by all Baha'is engaged in scholarly activities. It challenges believers studying subjects related to the Baha' i Faith to pursue an approach that, as stated by the Universal House of Justice, combines "absolute loyalty to the Manifestation of God and His Teachings, with the searching and intelligent study of the Teachings and history of the Faith which those Teachings themselves enjoin."³⁵ However, this approach also provides Baha' i scholars with the opportunity to make a notable contribution to the advancement of knowledge and understanding through taking "advantage of the divine Revelation for this Age, which shines like a searchlight on so many problems that baffle modern thinkers." ³⁶

The Range of Baha' i Scholarship

One of the objectives of the Baha' i Faith is to stimulate the intellectual life of humanity, and its teachings provide an impetus to studies in all fields. The Universal House of Justice has stated:

... the Baha' i Writings illuminate all areas of human endeavor and all academic disciplines. Those who have been privileged to recognize the station of Baha'u'llah have the bounty of access to a Revelation which casts light upon all aspects of thought and inquiry, and are enjoined to use the understanding which they obtain from their immersion in the Holy Writ-

mgs ... ³⁷

This broad definition of the range of endeavors falling within the scope of Baha' i scholarship stands in sharp contrast to the narrow definitions of legitimate scholarly activity in some disciplines within the academic community. The Baha' i Faith seeks to

Scholarship, p. 23.

Scholarship , p. 30.

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha' i Faith, p. 13.

establish respect and amity between those engaged in a wide range of approaches and endeavors. In guidance given to an Association for Baha' i Studies, the Universal House of Justice advised:

Your aim should be to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance within which will be included scholars whose principal interest is in theological issues as well as those scholars whose interests lie in relating the insights provided by the Baha' i teachings to contemporary thought in the arts and sciences. A similar diversity should characterize the endeavors pursued by Baha' i scholars, accommodating their interests and skills. ³⁸

Commenting on the diversity of interests which should be accommodated in Baha'i scholarly work, the Universal House of Justice has stated that " there should be room within the scope of Baha'i scholarship to accommodate not only those who are interested in theological issues and in the historical origins of the Faith, but also those who are interested in relating the Baha'i Teachings to their field of academic or professional interest."³⁹

It appears that the range of scholarly pursuits can be divided into the following five broad categories, described briefly below.

Historical origins

The early days of the Baha'i Faith were a time of great drama, due to the magnitude of the claims made successively by the Bab and Baha'u'llah, and the fierceness of the reaction which these announcements provoked. The martyrdom of the Bab and of many of His followers and the prolonged incarceration and confinement of Baha'u'llah rank as the principal features of this turbulent period in Baha'i history.

Much scholarly work is required to clarify these events and to assess their significance. A historian investigating this period is challenged by a multitude of factors, including the fragmentary eyewitness accounts which have survived, the conditions of emotional stress under which these documents were prepared, and the

s Issues Related to the Study of the Bah6 'i Faith, p.15.

Issues Related to the Study of the Bahll 'i Faith , p. 16.

BAHA'I S CHOLARSHIP

inevitable divergence of the various eyewitness accounts set down some time later. This lack of clarity is further complicated by the actions of antagonists of the Faith who maliciously prepared and widely circulated false reports designed to discredit or malign the central figures of the Faith or their adherents. A contemporary historian who is unable to comprehend the degree of animosity the Cause of the Bab and Baha'u'llah aroused within fanatical elements and who makes an uncritical synthesis of this material can be expected to reach grossly incorrect conclusions. Scholars might also give attention to the progressive growth in the early followers' understanding of the magnitude of the Bab's mission in terminating the dispensation of Muhammad, and the station of Baha'u'llah as the Inaugurator of a vast new cycle of human history destined to extend over untold millennia into the future. The early followers only dimly perceived the dimensions of the processes being set in motion and the revolutionary nature of the teachings being propounded. The gradual emancipation of the Baha'i Faith from its Islamic matrix and its emergence as an independent religion are important aspects of the relationship between the Baha'i religion and Islam to which scholars might

profitably direct their attention.

Studying historical facts, historians who are not Baha'is are likely to make inferences and come to conclusions quite different from those of their Baha'i colleagues, regarding the motives and the sources of information accessible to the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Their views must, of course, be respected; however, Baha'is cannot be expected to agree with materialistic interpretations of reality that ignore what believers hold to be the central issue—the intervention of God in human life and history through the appearance of the Manifestations of God. It is unfortunate that this legitimate divergence of viewpoint should have, on occasion, given rise to contention, with some Baha'is being subject to criticism for their intellectual honesty in writing from a perspective which reflects what they believe to be true. The Universal House of Justice warned the Baha'is about the intolerance of those who maintain

THE BAHAI WORLD

that the only way to attain a true understanding of historical events and of purport of the sacred and historical records of the Cause of God is through the rigid application of methods narrowly defined in a materialistic framework. They have even gone so far as to stigmatize whoever proposes a variation of these methods as wishing to obscure the truth rather than unveil it. 40

To be intellectually honest, Baha'i historians must include within the scope of their inquiry into truth the evidence which has led them to conclude that the claims of the Bab and Baha'u'llah to be Manifestations of God are valid.

Textual analysis

A vast arena of activity stands before Baha'is whose interests and accomplishments draw them to the scholarly investigation of many issues associated with the sacred texts of the Baha'i Faith.

As a religion that makes a sharp distinction between authoritative texts and unsubstantiated oral statements, the Baha'i Faith attaches great importance to the authentication of documents that record these texts. In some instances this will require prolonged study of the documents and their provenance. Issues of accuracy of transcription, the characteristics of the various amanuenses, and publication history may also have to be considered. Attention must also be given to interpolations in some of the texts made by malicious elements bent on deviating the Cause of Baha'u'llah from its intended direction and advancing their own personal interests. Both the context in which a passage was revealed by the Manifestation of God and the time sequence of the various components of the revelation are of great interest to the Baha'i scholar, as the progressive disclosure of Baha'u'llah's mission and the

gradual unfoldment of His laws and principles are clarified through study of the time sequence. 41 Of historical interest in itself, the context helps to clarify references and allusions occurring within the text. Caution is required, however, to avoid reaching

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith, p. 37.

Janet A. Khan and Peter J. Khan, *Advancement of Women, A Baha'i Perspective* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust 1998), pp. 98-102.

BA1-IA: F S CHOLARSHIP

misleading conclusions through attaching excessive importance to the circumstances under which a book or tablet was revealed; the Manifestation addressed a far wider audience than that immediately at hand. The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, for example, has an importance and relevance far beyond that of an appeal addressed to an inveterate opponent of the Faith who is no longer of any significant historical interest.

Another avenue of textual analysis lies in the quotations from distinguished poets and philosophers, references to historical figures and events, allusions to a variety of trends of thought, and the novel use of existing literary forms that are all found in Baha'u'llah's writings, which will all attract the attention of scholars for centuries to come.

The translation of the Baha'i writings from Arabic and Persian into English and other languages raises many challenging issues, since the translation process necessarily implies a degree of interpretation. The definitive work of Shoghi Effendi as authorized interpreter will continue to be the central reference in this process, which will no doubt be advanced through breadth of scholarship, mastery of the languages involved, and the gradual development of a comprehensive translation theory.

Study of religious concepts

Through a combination of profound faith in the validity of Baha'u'llah's revelation and use of the power of intellectual inquiry, Baha'is can make a unique contribution to the understanding of intrinsically religious concepts that are illuminated through examination of the Baha'i teachings.

Thorough and careful study of the concept of the Manifestation of God and of the historical details of Baha'u'llah's life that bear upon this theme would contribute much-needed illumination in scholarly circles. The existence of a Manifestation of God is foreign to everyday experience, and His claim must inevitably be treated with suspicion by a society that has seen the great harm wrought by those deluded and megalomaniac leaders who have attracted, for a time, a mass of followers prepared to follow blindly wherever they might lead.

Analytical study of the process of revelation, by which the

Manifestation transmits the Word of God as the basis for the religion, is also needed. Muslim scholars have carried out useful work in exploring the revelatory process of the Qur'an, but the material available for this kind of study in the context of the Baha'i Faith is greatly augmented by historical accounts of those who were with Baha'u'llah when revelation came to Him, and by references to the revelatory process in His own writings.

Concepts such as the nature of creation, the relationship of matter and spirit, the process of evolution, the nature and role of the human spirit, and immortality are a few areas in which Baha'i scholars find much to engage their interests and skills. Such philosophic issues as hermeneutics and epistemology are also illuminated through reference to the Baha'i writings.

Another fruitful area of Baha'i scholarship is the relationship between the Baha'i Faith and the other religions of the world, including subjects such as the concept of progressive revelation; prophecies and their fulfilment; the evolution of concepts of law, society and worship; the status of women; forms of organization; and the handling of divergences of opinion and dissent.

Application of the Baha'i teachings to contemporary issues

From the earliest days of the Faith, Baha'is have been urged to apply its teachings to the issues and needs of society and to relate these precepts to contemporary thought. Thus, 'Abdu'l-Baha called upon Spiritual Assemblies to encourage the members of their communities "to deepen themselves by attentive study of the sacred Texts, and to apply the divine guidance they contain to the circumstances, needs and conditions of society today." 42

Shoghi Effendi expressed the hope that Baha'i students would "be led to investigate and analyze the principles of the Faith and to correlate them with the modern aspects of philosophy and science" 43 and advised the believers "to be au courant with all the

Scholarship, p. 10.

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith , p. 14.

BAHA'IS CHOLARSHIP

progressive movements and thoughts being put forth today . . . so that they could correlate these to the Baha'i teachings. " 44
Baha'is who achieve expertise in a field of knowledge could well find it fruitful to pursue the relationship between issues and concepts in that field and the Baha'i teachings in areas such as the following : the dynamics of group decision-making, and the principles of conflict resolution and of mediation, related to the Baha'i approach to consultation and group truth-seeking; the principles of social organization and governance, considered through the theory of Baha'i administration and the Baha'i approach to world order; psychological theories of personality,

motivation, and creativity, related to the Baha'i teachings on the nature of human beings and their development of spiritual attributes; approaches to law enforcement, the punishment of lawbreakers, and the rehabilitation of criminals, considered in the light of the Baha'i concepts of law, penalties for the violation of law, rehabilitation, and behavioral change; marriage guidance, family development, and the principles of child education, related to the Baha'i teachings on these subjects; the developing field of peace studies, considered with the Baha' i approach to both the attainment of world peace and its maintenance in the face of aggression.

Baha'is with expertise in economics can find ways of contributing to their field, drawing on Baha'i insights about the role of values in economic activity and the necessity for a global perspective. Physicists can draw upon Baha' i insights to contribute to aspects of their work such as field theory, cosmology, and astrophysics. Baha' i biologists, environmental scientists, chemists, and medical scientists can also apply insights from their Faith to their work. In fact, the Baha' i teachings can provide an impetus to the entire range of human thought.

The Baha'i community

At this time when, after decades of sustained effort coordinated through a series of plans, the Baha' i Faith has spread to all parts

Issues Related to the Study of the Baha' i Faith, p. 14.

THE BAHAI WORLD

of the world and has penetrated almost all strata of society, the Baha'i community itself has become a topic for scholarly study. It would be useful to investigate the Baha'i community's progress on a national, regional and global scale, in the implementation of Baha'i teachings on such subjects as the growth of worldmindedness, the breakdown of class barriers, the achievement of interracial unity and genuine fellowship, the advancement of women and their full participation in Baha'i community and administrative functioning, and the long-term effect of the Baha'i commitment to education.

Dispassionate observers regard the growth of the Baha'i community in size, geographical spread, and cohesion as without parallel. The means by which this has been accomplished, including the community's approach to planning and the deployment of meager resources, is worthy of scholarly study. The effects of opposition, misrepresentation, and calumny from its antagonists on the growth of the community also merit analysis. Dynamic modelling, leading naturally to a forecasting model, is another area for scholarly study. While the growth factors for a belief system such as the Baha'i Faith necessarily include unquantifiable characteristics and

the growth modelling will be approximate, it should be sufficient to provide useful conclusions.

Baha'i social and economic development initiatives are multiplying rapidly in all parts of the globe, yielding impressive results and a wealth of experience. Studies of the achievements of long-term projects aimed at social advancement might examine the influence of the spirihial component that distinguishes these projects and is manifested in such characteristics as enduring attih1dinal change, cooperation, altrnism, and unity.

Historical studies, including biographies of Baha'is who have played a distinctive role in the progress of the Faith and accounts of events and processes related to the Faith, constih1te another area suitable for scholarly work, especially if considered within the context of the social, political, and economic milieu in the wider society.

BAHA'IS CHOLARSHIP

In assessing progress achieved and needs yet unmet, those investigating Baha'i community functioning and achievement must be realistic and intellectually honest. If they retain a process orientation, setting the present state within a perspective of evolutionary movement toward the ultimate attainment of the goals of the Faith, they should have no fear that their assessment and conclusions will have a discouraging effect on implementation endeavors. In so vast and fundamental a process of change, there will be some setbacks and reverses along the way, and some barriers to progress will prove stubbornly resistant as age-old prejudices and ingrained habits are encountered and ultimately overcome.

The Future

These are the earliest days in the development of Baha' i scholarship, and the future is rich with promise as the Baha'i Faith grows and advances along the path of stimulating the development of a world civilization during the course of the Baha'i dispensation and beyond. Shoghi Effendi provides some indication of the fuhire that lies ahead in his description of the feahires of the unified world that humanity is destined to attain. He refers to the consecration of the energies of the people of the world

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 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 the spiritual life of the entire human race.⁴⁵

World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 204.

Roshan Danesh examines the relationship between law and religion in the Bahri Faith and analyzes related issues in reference to contemporary debates.

BEYOND
INTEGRATION
AND SEPARATION
The Dynamic Nature
of Baha'i Law

contemporary legal scholar has observed that law and religion
A "cannot maintain their vitality independently of each other." ¹
History supports this statement. An integration of law and religion
has predominated in most human societies throughout the ages. "The
differentiation between the religious and the secular," one commentator writes,
"is itself a comparatively modern development in the
evolution of human society." ²

The historical reality of integration makes all the more significant the
conscious experiments with the separation of law and
religion that had their genesis in the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries and have come to dominate political and social discourse
in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While there have been
examples of separation throughout human history, the contemporary world bears
witness to the ascendancy of separation, and the

Harold J. Berman, preface to *Faith and Order: The Reconciliation of Law
and Religion*, ed. John Witte Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p. x.
Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953),
p. 3.

related but distinct idea of secularism, as legitimate controlling
norms. ³ As one observer comments:

Either implicitly or explicitly, there appears to be a modern consensus among
legal scholars and philosophers that the world has
been disenchanted. The world can no longer be viewed as an
integrated, meaningful whole under a comprehensive religious
or metaphysical worldview, and law can no longer be legitimized
by its religious or metaphysical foundations. ⁴

Central to this movement from integration to separation as a
framework for political and social order is the experience of the
United States. In the colonial period religion was in the foreground
of the legal enterprise—it was a central animus for the American
experiment. The neo-Calvinist congregational form of the Massachusetts Bay
Colony was explicitly theocratic. The Puritan mind

recognized no distinction between religion and politics, and called for rule by the holy. 5 In the postrevolutionary period, with the ideas of the free exercise and nonestablishment of religion entrenched in the Constitution, religion remained a framework in which American democracy operated. 6 But a shift began as the religious

_, Literature on the relationship between law and religion is mired in confusing

terminology. In this paper the terms "separationism" and "integrationism" are

employed as general categories. The central implication of separationism is that religious norms, institutions, and practices should have no controlling influence over political and legal order. In contrast, integrationism implies that

religious norms, institutions, and practices may have influence over political and legal order. Both categories could have a number of institutional variations.

While these categorizations are overly broad, they reflect the general connotations and meanings the author wishes to convey. A more comprehensive critique

of terminological usages in law and religious scholarship is not possible in this

brief study.

Mark Modak-Truran, "Habermas's Discourse Theory of Law and the Relationship Between Law and Religion," *Capital University Law Review* 26 (1997), p. 461.

For an excellent discussion of theocracy in colonial Massachusetts, see Perry Miller, "Puritan State and Society," in Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

Alexis de Tocqueville is the most famous chronicler of the American vision of

religion as providing the tools of a moral character and mentality without (cont'd)

B EYOND I NTEGRATION AN D SEPAI0-\TION

assumptions that were to guide legal and political institutions gradually moved to the background-assumed but often unstated.

In the post-Civil War period, and in particular since the 1940s, this has changed. A preoccupation of some sectors of the legal community has been to articulate clearly the principles of separation of law and religion and to adopt a stance that law must be secular in its orientation.

"If we had nothing else to boast of," one American jurist has written, it is sufficient that America first implemented "the greatest achievement ever made in the cause of human progress ... the total and final separation of church and state." 7 However, the

issue of religious influence in law remains unsettled despite the influence of this American myth of an achieved separation. There exist, within the United States and globally, competing models of integration and separation, and a concomitant increasing tension between the advocates of these models. In an age when the elements of a global society are being clarified, the unsettled nature of this relationship also remains, as it has always been, potentially dangerous.

On the one hand, separationism frequently inspires movement towards a destructive form of integrationism. The resurgence of Hindu nationalism in India, the growth of the so-called religious right in the United States, and the Islamic Revolution in Iran are only a few examples of the recent emergence of political movements with integrationist intentions. ⁸ On the other hand, integrationism in the contemporary world has often taken on a fundamentalist form that distorts the motivating religious doctrine. The doctrine of *vilayat-i-faqih* (rule by the clerics) in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the rise of the Taliban Islamic Movement of

which American democracy would fail. See his *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: G. Dearborn and Co., 1838).

David Dudley Field, "American Progress" in *Jurisprudence* (New York: Martin B. Brown, 1893), p. 6.

Perhaps the best example has been political movements attempting to reestablish the authority of the *shari'a* in many Muslim societies in the twentieth

century. For an excellent discussion of Islam and politics, see Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

Afghanistan both contain substantive innovations in the light of historical, political, and legal practice in Muslim societies. In addition, in countries with a recent history of ideological hostility towards religion—such as Russia and China—religion is increasingly a destabilizing force, as witnessed in recent legislation limiting the definition of "legal" religious groups in Russia and the rise and suppression of the Falun Gong movement in China.

On this terrain, where there is both an enduring relationship between law and religion and an enduring skepticism concerning that relationship, the claims of Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, must be examined. At first glance, His central claims concerning law and religion position us on familiar territory and raise all of the conventional concerns of integrationism. "[T]he precepts laid down by God," ⁹ Baha'u'llah writes, are "to build anew the whole world." ¹⁰ These precepts "constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples." ¹¹ Further, He cautions us, "Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you,"

as the "Book itself is the unerring Balance." 12

Within these statements one recognizes the divine aim to order all of human life and a claim of universal relevance. In its broad outlines this presents nothing unique- the Jewish halakhah and Islamic shari'ah make similar claims. There is also a claim of epistemological distinction, of a higher ordering of reasoning rooted in the transcendent, against which all law is to be measured. The concerns this raises, if applied as a basis for social order, are obvious: exclusivity, the creation of a notion of "otherness," the use of the coercive force of law to implement a particular moral vision, and the possibilities of interreligious unrest.

Baha' u' Jlah , the Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 2. The main text of the presently published

version of the Kitab-i-Aqdas has sequentially numbered paragraphs, indicated here by the letter " K" followed by the relevant number.

°Cited in introduction to the Kitab- i-Aqdas (Haifa: Baha ' i World Centre, 1992), p. 1.

Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 2.

Kitab-i -Aqdas, K 99.

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

But one should be cautious about making any substantive assumptions from this formal claim that the source of legal norms and rules is the divine alone. If there has been one lesson from twentieth-century developments in American legal philosophy, it is to recognize the characteristic embeddedness of law. 13 One must look at the law in action, the ends it pursues, and its links to power, change, and tradition in order to reveal its true character.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the central text of the canon of Baha'i scripture and its book of laws, explicitly recognizes the embedded quality of law. The Kitab-i-Aqdas is also titled the Ummu 'l-Kitab, or "Mother Book," implying that within it one finds the entirety of the Baha'i revelation-including not only its legal but also its social, theological, and philosophical dimensions. This inseparability of law from other methods of inquiry and experience is similarly found in the history, structure, institutions, and reasoning of Baha'i law. It is these patterns of interaction and integration that must be examined if the content of claims to a divine law in the Baha'i context are to be uncovered.

There are three steps to such a task. First, we must review the current tradition of separationism and ask whether there is any merit to examining anew the possibilities of integrationism. Second, we must identify a framework for a Baha'i approach to issues related to the relationship between law and religion so as to clarify elements of separationist and integrationist thinking. Such a framework requires an explicit historical consciousness-it must take into account the

age of the Baha'i Faith and its stage of development, as well as the possibility that elements of the framework and the operation of Baha'i law are subject to change over time. Third, we must position a Baha'i approach to the tensions between integration and separation in relation to contemporary approaches and debates, so as to gain a critical perspective on the Baha'i approach and its potential implications.

This approach refers primarily to legal realism and its descendents such as CLS (critical legal studies). For a comprehensive introduction to legal realism

and some of its central works, see William W. Fisher III, Morton J. Horowitz, and Thomas A. Reed, *American legal Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

THE BAHAI WORLD

The Tradition of Separation and Contemporary Legal Crises

In 1975, a report submitted to the Harvard Law School and Harvard Divinity School raised the concern that the "implicit interaction of law and religion is no longer adequately or systematically treated on the level of academic study or interprofessional discourse." 14 This conclusion mirrors the more pointed observation that within American legal culture, and particularly in law schools, "it is not difficult to discover a palpable distrust of, and sometimes deepseated animosity toward, religious belief and practice." 15 This bias ranges from "the complete metaphysical denial of spiritual reality, usually accompanied by atheistic and materialist philosophies, to interpretations of rationalism expressed in logical positivism and psychological determinism." 16

In the twenty-five years since that report, debates concerning law and religion have intensified within American legal culture.

The dominant position, both in terms of philosophical sophistication and practical reality, argues against both the desirability and possibility of religious influence. The dissenting voices argue that law and religion should not, and in some cases cannot, be divorced. By examining these arguments in the American context, we gain an understanding of the tradition of separationism and its current dilemmas. To date, legal literature has largely ignored the potential contributions of new religious movements and voices for resacralization. 17 If Baha'i experience and scholarship have any contribution to make, they will have to engage successfully with these contemporary arguments and concerns.

Frank S. Alexander, *Religion and Law: Opportunities for Creative Dialogue* (Cambridge: Harvard Law School, 1975), p. I.

Randall Rainey, "Law and Religion: Is Reconciliation Still Possible?"
Loyola

al Los Angeles law Review 27 (1998), p. 153.

Ra iney, p. 153.

For a discussion of th i's point, see Rebecca R. French, " Lamas, Oracles, Channels and the Law: Reconsidering Re ligious and Socia l Theory," Yale Journal of Law and the Huma nities (Summer 1998) , p. 533 .

BEYOND I NTEGRATION AN D SEPARATION

The law must be separate:

arguments against religious influence

Until the twentieth century the main voices arguing for some sort of separation between religion and law were religious ones, and the central rationale was the protection of religion from state influence.

In the debates surrounding the drafting of the First Amendment religion clauses, a central justification for disestablishment of religion was that it was favorable to religion. It "is adverse to the diffusion of the light of Christianity," James Madison wrote, and "not requisite for the support of the Christian religion" to have laws that require public support of religious teachers. 18

Today the most potent arguments against religious influence come not from religious voices, but from nonreligious ones. Where once religion was viewed as a necessary backdrop to the political enterprise, the policy minded now perceive it as a threat. At the same time, religious voices, and in particular, elements reflecting a fundamentalist Christianity, 19 have introduced the possibility of restoring some form of religious state, ignoring the benefits, especially in the Christian tradition, of separation. Contemporary arguments commonly made against religious influence in law are based on political realities and the expediencies of social order.

These arguments are reflections of the liberal state. Pluralism, it is argued, requires that government, and in some respects individuals, wear blinders concerning notions of the good when engaged in public decision making and the ordering of the public sphere. This neutrality is to prevent both imposition and coercion, and the fracturing of society along sectarian lines. Epistemologically, this minimizing of religious influence is supported by a rigid distinction between faith and reason, and the characterization of religious ways of knowing as both distinct and unsuitable for public

These quotations are excerpted from Madison's famous Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments written in 1785 , one of the central texts in the hi story of the relationship between law and re li g ion in the United States.

The popular term for these movements in the United States has been "the religious right."

debate and decision making. These arguments for the exclusion of religious influence are expressed in a larger debate within legal

academia that has been ongoing since the Supreme Court of the United States began defining the religion clauses in earnest in the 1940s. Central to this debate is the desirability of the movement from the hegemony of a republican vision in which the preservation of liberty requires participation and sharing, and thus the cultivation of certain virtues, to a liberalism in which the "central idea is that government should be neutral toward the moral and religious views its citizens espouse." 20

Religion and law are inseparable:

voices in favor of religious influence

Against the backdrop of these dominant positions there are a growing number of arguments within American legal culture that separationism is a failed experiment and that contemporary legal crises, particularly in an age of increasing globalization, are deepened by the marginalization of religious influence. The best way to map the arguments in favor of religious influence is to view them against the backdrop of two interrelated contemporary legal crises: the weakening or loss of the internal and external fidelity of the law.

Crises of internal fidelity

Internal fidelity refers to the faithfulness of any particular legal rule or standard to a preexistent generative frame. "Law" is thus understood not only as positive rules but also as a relationship between rules and standards and the architecture of beliefs, traditions, and texts that support and give meaning to those rules.

A crisis of internal fidelity exists when legal rules and the institutions that create and interpret them have become unmoored from any generative aspirative frame. The result of such a crisis, it is feared, is legal hedonism. Separationism, it has been argued, raises dilemmas of internal fidelity. Many contemporary legal systems, whether currently separationist or integrationist, existed

° For the best example of this analysis, see Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's*

Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). See particularly pp. 3-54.

B EYOND I NTEG RATION AND S EPARATION

at the time of their founding within a frame that was explicitly religious. The evolution towards separationism has thus often required the displacement of the frame of reference for law. It is often argued that to restore the law's vitality, a rejuvenation of its religious roots is needed. 21

Humanity has had little experience with legal systems that are explicitly separationist, let alone secular, from the outset. As we currently struggle to refine legal systems to meet the challenges of globalization, this is an important cautionary note. Constructs for internal fidelity of the law are needed to ensure that law remains properly constrained. Historically, religion has been the prime provider of this

constraint, and separationism has not provided a suitable alternative.

As the displacement of religion has weakened bonds of internal fidelity, legal culture has increasingly lost its ability to talk about the transcendent, as well as about values. As a result, there has been a weakening of legal and political discourse. To achieve consensus and harmony within society, the orientation religious faith provides towards the ultimately unknowable Divine reality is fundamental. "It has the vital role of keeping the argument open" by carving out "a narrow ridge between the two abysses of nihilism and idolatry." 22 An orientation towards the transcendent prevents the appearance of either nihilism or idolatry, both of which "refuse the authority of political argument"-nihilism by reducing all of life to a selfish contest, and idolatry by fixing one set of truths and expecting conformity to it. 23

A paradigmatic example of an interpretive theory that would rejuvenate the religious roots of American law is originalism, which has, since the 1980s, become common in the decisions of the United States Supreme Court. Originalism argues that constitutional interpretation must be bound by strict fidelity to the meanings understood by the drafters at the time the Constitution

was written. Originalism calls for the law to show internal fidelity to a particular historical period and a particular document, thus reestablishing an internal

fidelity of legal rules to the original vision of the American constitution.

This

was and is seen as a way to constrain a tendency towards legal hedonism.

Charles Davis, "Religion and the Making of Society," *Northwestern University Law Review* 81 (1987), p. 729.

Davis, p. 729.

Crises of external fidelity

Any notion of a crisis of internal fidelity is incomplete without an account of external fidelity of the law. Commonly discussed in relation to the idea of "legitimacy," external fidelity refers to the relationship of faithfulness shown to the law by those subject to it. Ultimately, legitimacy is the authority a law is perceived to have and exert when it adheres to and resonates with a belief or recognized norm that is able to justify action.

External fidelity can be eroded in many ways. The perception that the internal fidelity of law no longer exists can lead to a questioning of the authoritative nature of legal rules. More destructive, however, is the erosion that occurs when the aspirative frame of the internal fidelity of the law has either been lost or is deemed obsolete by those subject to the law. If either of these conditions prevails, the law loses the functional ability to order society because individuals no longer recognize within the law the prerequisites

that would determine adherence.

An increasing number of powerful arguments are being made that law in the contemporary West is beset by a legitimation crisis.

This crisis, some have argued, has occurred because of misunderstandings concerning the historical, nonnative, and anthropological relationship between law and religion. 24

Writing in the 1970s and 1980s, the noted legal historian and philosopher Harold J. Berman identified a crisis of external fidelity. Calling it an "integrity crisis," Berman wrote that "our whole culture [the United States of America] seems to be facing the possibility of a kind of nervous breakdown," the symptoms of which include "the massive loss of confidence in law." 25 The "primary cause of the crisis," he argued, is "the disintegration of its [the law's] religious

Another response has been to deny the validity of talking in terms of legitimacy altogether. "The concept of legitimation," one critic has written, "has no

clear operational meaning, nor agreed upon empirical referent ... we would be better off abandoning the concept." Alan Hyde, "The Concept of Legitimation in the Sociology of Law," *Wisconsin Law Review* (1983), p. 426.

Harold J. Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (London: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 21.

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

foundations. 26 His conclusion is premised on the historical fact of the "dialectical interdependence" of law and religion, in which religion provides a consciousness of the ultimate meaning and purpose of life to the law, and law lends religion a medium to facilitate the expression of its ultimate values.

Law, Berman contends, is "an active, living human process" that involves "man's whole being, including his dreams, his passions, his ultimate concerns." 27 Reason, will, and memory, as capacities of human beings, exist in a state of constant interaction and interpenetration with one another. Within God-and as reflected within human beings-they are not in oppositional relationships with each other, but rather are different aspects of one reality. When concretized into law, they similarly comprise aspects of one law, not three ideas in conflict.

This integrative dimension of law is both realized and understood through religion. According to Berman, law and religion have in common four elements: ritual, tradition, authority, and universality. Both law and religion require these four elements to maintain their mutual integrity, but the crucial point is that law and religion share their symbology in these four categories. Law employs these symbols to connect the legal order to beliefs about the purpose and meaning of life, to indicate legitimacy. "In every society," Berman writes, "these four elements ... symbolize man's effort to

reach out to a truth beyond himself. They thus connect the legal order of any given society to that society's beliefs in an ultimate, transcendent reality." 28 The integrity crisis of which Berman writes can be recast as the product of a "secular-rational" model of law that veils "those elements law shares with religion," especially those elements that "transcend rationality."29 Berman's solution to this legal crisis is to reestablish the authentic relationship between law and religion.

Harold J. Berman, "The Religious Foundations of Western Law," in *Faith and Order: The Reconciliation of Law and Religion*, ed. John Witte Jr. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p. 45.

Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion*, p. 31.

Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion*, p. 25.

Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion*, p. 31.

How can this reestablishment occur in conditions of increasing social, religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity? Berman acknowledges that "our intended destination is global integration-not global homogenization, not diminution of cultural differences and territorial allegiances, but a bringing together of the diverse constituencies of the world into a transcendent human family." 30 He believes that we are entering into an "age of synthesis" in which "'either-or' gives way to 'both-and'" and we recognize that "the just is sacred or it is not just [and] the sacred just or it is not sacred." 31 By necessity, this requires a new logos or interface of spiritual faith rooted in our consciousness of the divine with the larger experience of the life of society as a whole. This demands that legal discourse be reoriented towards patterns of religious determinism in its own history, that religious thinking be allowed to influence the movement towards an integrative jurisprudence, and that the project of articulating generalizable norms based on this history and the relationship between law and religion occur. At the same time the revitalization of religion must occur, as the emergence of a "new law" and that of a "new religion" are inseparable. 32

Is Religion Relevant?

A Framework for a Baha'i Response

The Baha'i Faith is a young religion, and history suggests that there is typically a lengthy period between the formation of a religion and the appearance of any legal system heavily influenced by that religion. In the evolution of Sunni Islam, for example, it was not until more than two centuries after the death of the Prophet Muhammad that the great ninth-century legal systematizer Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i subsumed numerous localized schools of law into a method and set of sources rooted in Islamic norms and the experiences of Muslim societies. In the case of Christianity, it was not until the renaissance of the twelfth century-which witnessed the appearance of Gratian's *Decretum*, continued struggles between the

Harold J. Berman, "Law and Logos," DePaul Law Review 44, p. 161.

Berman, The Interaction of Law and Religion, p. 114.

Berman, The Interaction of Law and Religion, p. 125.

B EYOND I NTEGRATION AN D S EPARATION

regnum and sacerdotum, and a focus on the autonomy of the church that a legal system with deep roots in Christianity began to develop.

In regard to this interregnum between the birth of a religion and the appearance of a legal system bearing its name, the Baha'i Faith is no exception. Today, 150 years after the founding of the Baha'i Faith, there is no identifiable Baha'i legal system. There exist only fragments of a Baha'i procedural and substantive law, and no country whose legal system is heavily influenced by a Baha'i legal philosophy or method. However, important patterns have developed, providing a framework for understanding and analyzing the foundations of Baha'i law, the operations of a Baha'i legal system, and possible future patterns of development. By identifying this framework, possible Baha'i responses to contemporary questions of law and religion and the crises of fidelity can be identified.

Origins: agitation in nineteenth-century Iran

The immediate prehistory of the Baha'i Faith is of an Iran in a state of increasing agitation. Political, religious, and social fracturing and dissent—particularly around whether to modernize—contributed to periodic upheavals. In the political sphere, the formation of an increasingly separate and independent hierocratic order created an informal check on the exercise of government power.

Manifestations of this political dualism included episodes of protest instigated or inspired by the 'ulama'. On the external front the Qajar Dynasty was besieged by another form of dualism: the increasing awareness and impact of Europe. Russia and England both harbored hegemonic aspirations over Iran, whose political and economic life was forced into a consistently reactive stance. One manifestation of these pressures within the structures of Iranian government itself was irrational fluctuations between the dominant patrimonial forms of government and attempts at constructing a modern bureaucratic state. 33

The history of political reform in nineteenth-century Iran could be interpreted as a standoff between the conservative elements among the 'ulama', reformist ministers, and the Shah. Yet, while attempted reforms were often undermined or stalled, it is clear that reformist tendencies did take root, one culmination of this process being the Constitutional Revolution of (cont'd)

These forces of political disquietude were intensified by an intellectual and social climate characterized by new and more

potent voices of dissent. Shiah Islam-the state religion of Iran since the early sixteenth century³⁴-is a dissentist sect, formed in the nascent days of Islam as a reaction against the failure of 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib to be confirmed as the successor of Muhammad. These dissentist roots did not, however, translate into a history of active political resistance. Rather, due to complex forces including the occultation of the Imamate, ³⁵ the expectation of the Mahdi and the practice of taqiyyih (voluntary dissimulation), Shiah dissent, while religious and intellectual, was less often political and social. In the nineteenth century this changed. ³⁶ There was an emergence of political and social dissent divorced from religious moorings.

1906-11. For a discussion of political reform in Qajar Iran, see Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). It was during the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722) that Twelver Shiism became the state religion of Iran.

Twelver Shiism professes that upon the passing of the Prophet Muhammad political and religious authority legitimately rested in an imam, the first such imam being 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib. Twelver Shiism is so-called because it acknowledges that a line of twelve imams were specifically designated as such, with the Twelfth Imam- Muhammad al-Mahdi- disappearing into a state of occultation circa 873. The reality of the early history of Islam, which saw three caliphs assert political authority prior to 'Ali, and the fact that no imam after 'Ali held effective political authority, resulted in a substantial conceptualization and evolution in the concept of the Imamate. Generally, the unique station of the Imam came to rest on two factors: that he was specifically designated by his predecessor and that he alone was invested with personal qualities that set him apart from the community of believers, in particular the qualities of 'Ilm (knowledge) and 'Ismah (infallibility). The Imam's authority did not come to rest on his possession of political authority. However, the effect of this, both when there was a visible imam and in the period of occultation, was to challenge the legitimacy of all political authorities. In some respects, this resulted in the maintenance and appeal to pre-Islamic forms of legitimacy, political quietism, and tensions among the various actors positioned to assert authority during the occultation.

For a discussion of dissent in the Qajar period see Mango! Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socio-religious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982).

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

At the core of this intellectual program was a conviction that free inquiry and religion were incompatible. Traditional religious modes of learning were not rejected outright but were seen as unable to respond adequately to changing cultural and social conditions. An Islamic worldview was gradually subordinated to Perso-nationalist ideals of identification.

At the same time, religious dissent became politicized and explicitly focused on transforming not only religious thinking but also social, economic, and political structures. This development was linked generally to Shiah messianism and the expectation of the appearance of the Mahdi, 37 and specifically to ideas of renewal and regeneration that intensified in some circles in the early nineteenth century. Shaykhism³⁸ began to speak of revelation in terms of cycles-with the idea that religious law must be transformed to meet particular stages of human growth and development. Within this emphasis on progression, a religious doctrine often characterized by political passivity was gradually forming an orientation towards the possibilities of political and social change in the near future.

These various strands of dissent form the backdrop for the appearance of the Baha'i Faith. In 1844 Siyyid 'Ali-Mulhammad, the Bab, 39 a merchant from Shiraz, claimed to be the recipient of divine guidance. While this claim at first appeared as an extreme and revitalized form of Shaykhism, it became readily apparent that it was in many respects sui generis as a form of dissent. This was made apparent by three claims of the Bab. First, while completing the Islamic hajj (pilgrimage) in late 1844, He made a claim of the Mahdi, who is also referred to as the Qa'im, is a central figure of fulfillment in Twelver Shiism, and is expected to be the appearance of the Twelfth Imam from occultation.

Shaykhism refers to the movement founded by Shaykh Ahmad al-Rashti (1756- 1825), which served as a philosophical and religious precursor to the emergence of the Babi religion. For a study of the relationship between Shaykhism and the Babi religion, see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran 1844- 1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

For a discussion of the roots and evolution of the Babi religion, see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*.

messianic fulfillment when He publicly pronounced, "I am that Qa'im whose advent you have been awaiting." 40 Second, while on trial in 1848 the Bab was unequivocal concerning His station as the Mahdi and the authority of his writings as the Word of God for the times. Third, by the time of His execution in 1850 the Bab had clearly established in the Bayan and elsewhere that He was in effect a precursor to Man-yu-hiruhu 'llah (He Whom God shall

make manifest), for Whom all past divine revelations had prepared the way. The Babi movement was thus both religious and political. It challenged religious ways of thinking but also aimed at political, social, and economic reform. It was future oriented but did not forsake religion. Not surprisingly, therefore, it led to often violent convulsions in the 1840s as this religiopolitical program sought to transform Iranian society.

Within this context of nineteenth-century agitation, and in particular the Babi movement, the Baha'i Faith was born. Baha'u'llah had become a Babi in the early days of the movement and upon the death of the Bab rapidly became one of the movement's leaders. While imprisoned in 1852, Baha'u'llah received His first intimation that He was the expected Man-yu?hiruhu 'llah, the bearer of a new revelation from God. As He describes this event, "I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been."⁴¹ In 1863, while in exile in Baghdad, He made this claim public for the first time, and the notion of the "people of Baha," as distinct from both Babis and Muslims, was born.

Whereas the Babi movement had convulsed the internal dynamics of Iranian society, the religion of Baha'u'llah employed a different method and orientation. Enunciating the concept of unity as the pivotal construct of His religious, social, and political program,

[°] Cited in H. M. Balyuzi, *The Bab, the Herald of the Day a/Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1975), p. 71.

Baha'u'llah, *The Proclamation of Bahil'u'llah* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1972), p. 57.

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

Baha'u'llah's revelation revolved around the integration and fundamental harmony of material and spiritual reality, reason and faith, and science and religion. His teachings were global, universal, and progressive in their outlook and spoke of the unification and collective maturation of the human race. Baha'u'llah taught that there is one God, one religion, and one human family, and that "[t]he earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."⁴² The expectation was of the emergence of a peaceful world through effective means of education and social and economic development, the establishment of racial and gender equality, the end of religious and spiritual hierarchy and elitism, the deepening of democratic tendencies, the end of hardened nationalism, and the spiritualization of public and political life. In this scheme, individual loyalty and orientation were not to the faithful but to all humanity, and the aim was not to regenerate Iran but to "build anew the whole world."⁴³ In fact, the

regeneration of Iran and the regeneration of the world were not conceived by Baha'u'llah as exclusive projects. The pronouncement "Pride is not for him who loves his country but for him who loves the world" was not intended by Baha'u'llah to be, as E.G. Browne thought, "a fine sentiment."⁴⁴ It was actually the locus of Baha'u'llah's political and legal program.

The early legal history of the Baha'i Faith

The inclusive nature of Baha'u'llah's overall message poses a legal dilemma from the outset. Many contemporary approaches to law have argued that law is innately exclusive. Such approaches claim that legal reasoning cannot avoid being consequentialist-focused on ends and outcomes-and, as such, is determined by the realities of power, class, and ideology within society. By articulating a global vision of social change, with implications for a global law, it appears that Baha'u'llah's vision is caught between

Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, 2d ed. (Wilmette:

Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), 117, p. 250.

Baha'u'llah, cited in introduction to the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 1.

Edward G. Browne, cited in H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1970), p. 88.

two competing approaches to social change. On the one hand, Baha'u'llah speaks of His law as the "highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples."⁴⁵

Yet, if law is indeed innately exclusive of some members of society, then attempting to achieve Baha'u'llah's vision of global unity

through legal-rational modes would be self-defeating. On the other hand, Baha'u'llah refers to His laws as a "choice wine" and writes

that the rationale for obedience to them is the "love of [His] beauty." ⁴⁶

Thus, Baha'u'llah's vision of social change could perhaps be seen as antilegalistic, relying on a more diffuse moral-ethical mode of transformation. Yet when accompanied by the banning of religious hierarchy and authority, the demand that individuals search out truth for themselves, and the assertion that science and religion are in harmony, reliance on such informal dynamics makes Baha'u'llah's universal vision unlikely ever to be achieved. History has shown that while the dissemination of a dynamic moral-ethical vision can have a transformative impact, it inevitably remains limited in scope and application.

Underlying these variant approaches to social change are the fundamental issues of religious influence in law. Contemporary arguments that religion is obsolete as a force for change challenge Baha'u'llah's global vision as unattainable and dangerous both in relation to method (legalistic or antilegalistic) and content (what role will His religious vision play in His legal program?).

A pattern of response to these dilemmas is found in Baha'u'llah's

response to I:Jaji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i, a Baha'i anxious for the dissemination and implementation of the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Baha'u'llah writes:

Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it. However, in observing them one must exercise tact and wisdom . . . Since most people are feeble and far-removed from the purpose of God, therefore one must observe tact and prudence under all

Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 2.

Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 4.

B EYON D I NTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

conditions, so that nothing might happen that could cause disturbance and dissension or raise clamor among the heedless.

Verily, His bounty hath surpassed the whole universe and His bestowals encompassed all that dwell on earth. One must guide mankind to the ocean of true understanding in a spirit of love and tolerance. The Kitab-i-Aqdas itself beareth eloquent testimony to the loving providence of God. 47

In this statement, Baha'u'llah claims to bear a new and independent revelation from God and to fulfil past religions. Implicit within this claim is the role of divine Lawgiver. Indeed, the Kitab-i-Aqdas opens with a clear statement of divine law being made known through a prophetic intermediary and the necessity of humanity's obedience to such law. "The first duty prescribed by God for His servants," Baha'u'llah writes, "is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws [i.e., Baha'u'llah]." 48 Further, "It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station ... to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world." 49 Yet, in His response to I:Jaji Siyyid Javad, Baha'u'llah refuses to disseminate and implement His own laws despite the fact that they have already been revealed in the form of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Within Baha'u'llah's response we find a clear distinction between the act of lawmaking and the implementation of law—a common legal practice in many parts of the world today. Laws are often accompanied by legislated delays in implementation to allow preparation time for those who administer and those who are affected by the law. This delay is qualitatively different with a claimed divine law, however, inviting inquiry into the absolute and normative character of that law. How can it be the "highest means" for the ordering of the world's affairs, but not immediately applicable? Why is I:Jaji Siyyid Javad warned to be so cautious in relation to the law? Given that the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas reach the realm of 'ibadat (ritual observances) in addition to the realm

Baha'u'llah, cited in introduction to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 6.

Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, KI.

Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 1.

T I-IE B AI-IA.'f W ORLD

of mu 'amalat (societal relations), isn 't I:Iajf Siyyid Javad's own spiritual health and status as a believer potentially threatened by a failure to follow the laws in as complete a manner as is practicable at the time? It seems that the imposition of divine law on humanity is not justified simply because God possesses the power to impose it.

Thus, the first foundation of our framework for understanding Baha'i law is that divine legal will is not positivist. God's sovereignty alone does not legitimize His law. Divine precepts are to be mediated in their application to human beings, not applied absolutely and immediately solely due to the sovereign nature of their source.

Underlying this distinction between legislation and implementation in Baha'i law is a more general pattern of delay.

Indigenous Baha'i laws were rarely, if ever, publicly promulgated by Baha'u'llah until the completion of the Kitab-i-Aqdas in 1873.

In the period after Baha'u'llah's first intimation (1852) and before His public declaration (1863) this is not surprising. There was an absence of both a legal authority (Baha'u'llah had not yet declared Himself to be the bearer of a new revelation) and a subject community (the "people of Baha" did not yet exist). Baha'u'llah's legal silence is thus expected in this period.

After 1863, however, there was no question of Baha'u'llah's legal authority in light of both Babi legal theory and the claims of Manifestationhood of Baha'u'llah. Two basic legal propositions—supremacy and evolution—may be derived from the Babi religion.

The Bab positioned divine law, like religion, as historically relative. He stated, "The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth [of a Manifestation of God bearing a new revelation] will ... indefinitely continue ... " 50 A new Manifestation, with a new revelation and full legal supremacy over past Manifestations, is required at periodic intervals. This progressive orientation generated the Bab's abrogation of the Qur 'an and His promulgation of new

The Bab, quoted in Shoghi Effendi , *The World Order of Baha 'u 'llah: Selected Letters*, 1st pocket sized ed. (Wilmette : Baha' i Publi shing Tru st, 199 1). p. 11 7.

BEYON D I NTEGRATION AN D SEPARATION

laws in the Persian Bayan. Divine law thus evolves as each Manifestation possesses the authority to abrogate past divine legislation.

After 1863 Baha'u'llah was such a legal authority. However,

for ten years He remained fundamentally silent on legal issues, even in the face of repeated requests for legislation or clarification. Historical evidence suggests that while Baha'u'llah was in exile in Adrianople, from 1863 to 1868, petitions were sent to Him requesting the enunciation of laws. Baha'u'llah reportedly revealed a Tablet in Persian that included laws, but He decided not to release it. He wrote, "For a number of years petitions reached the Most Holy Presence [Baha'u'llah] from various lands begging for the laws of God, but We held back the Pen ere the appointed time had come," 51 and within the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself Baha'u'llah alluded to these earlier petitions, saying:

Various petitions have come before Our throne from the believers, concerning laws from God, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of all worlds. We have, in consequence, revealed this Holy Tablet [the Kitab-i-Aqdas] and arrayed it with the mantle of His Law that hap ly the people may keep the commandments of their Lord. Similar requests had been made of Us over several previous years but We had, in Our wisdom, withheld Our Pen until, in recent days, letters arrived from a number of the friends, and We have therefore responded, through the power of truth, with that which shall quicken the hearts of men.⁵²

The dynamics of revelation, social and historical realities, and legal reasons factor in this delay, but two important features may be noted. First, Baha'u'llah made a conscious choice to delay lawmaking. According to the Baha'i concept of Manifestationhood, the bearers of divine revelation are not mere channels or mouthpieces of God. 53 Manifestations have volition over the social

Baha ' u ' ll ah, "Notes" in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 219.

Baha'u ' ll ah, Kitab-i -Aqdas, K 98 .

For a discussion of the concep t of the Man ifestation in the Baha'i writings, see Juan R. I. Co le, " The Concept of the Manifestation in the Baha ' i Writings," Baha'i Studies 9 (1982).

expression of revelation. Thus, when Baha 'u ' llah chooses to withhold His "Pen," one contributing factor is social contingency.

Second, Baha'u'llah's motivation to create laws is a response to the requests He has received from His followers, suggesting that law is in a relationship with a larger reality to which the decision to create laws must be responsive.

In delay, therefore, we see a second element of a pattern for understanding Baha'i law—a stress on the relational aspects of law. The process of divine lawmaking, as described by Baha'u'llah, has an element of timeliness which depends upon the relationship between the lawmaking authority and the subjects of that law. Our exploration of the early legal history of the Baha'i Faith

has focused so far on two somewhat formal legal observations: the distinction between legislation and implementation, on the one hand, and the timing of lawmaking, on the other. The third observation, seen explicitly in Baha'u'llah's response to I:Jaji Siyyid Javad, takes us into a discussion of legal policy. Baha'u'llah emphasizes "love and tolerance" and the avoidance of anything that would "cause disturbance and dissension." These are potential substantive rationales for the distinction between legislation and implementation and for the pattern of delay identified earlier. The first draws a link between law and social harmony or unity. Baha'u'llah, a realist, recognizes that, as He states, most people are "far-removed from the purpose of God." Given this reality, Baha'u'llah appears to argue that the application of divine law could potentially have destructive consequences. The possibility that such application might lead to social agitation and disturbance would undermine the cardinal Baha'i principle of unity. Divine law, in the Baha'i conception, has thus been intimately linked to social realities. More explicitly, the interface between social meanings and revelation becomes the determining force of when, or whether, a particular divine law should be applied. Divine law gains the potential to operate within human society only when social meaning allows for some clarity concerning the "purpose of God." Baha'u'llah rejects, however, the possibility of effecting such changes in social meaning through either social engineering or coercion, either of which would cause the disturbance and dissension

B EYOND I NTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

He is seeking to avoid. Rather, He views these changes in social meaning in aspirational terms: humanity innately desires the "ocean of true understanding" and has the capacity to attain it. He writes, "The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God,"⁵⁴ and, as such, "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."⁵⁵ This suggests that changes in social meaning should be accomplished through education and dialogue, and inclusiveness is to be facilitated through "love and tolerance." This positioning of law in relation to social meaning has some startling implications and creates many potential problems. On the one hand, the conscious linking of law with changes in social meaning is often conceived of as liberating. Arguing in general terms that law must respond to changes in how a particular society understands reality is an effort to allow the law to be creative amid changing attitudes concerning issues of race, religion, gender, and ethnicity. On the other hand, this positioning suggests the possibility of law without any absolute principles; law which is ever changing at both the

normative and practical levels, just as "the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place." 56 But Baha'u'llah clearly does not intend such a malleable concept of law, ordering that the laws He has legislated Himself remain unalterable until the coming of the next Manifestation of God.

Although there are only approximately one hundred such laws, they touch on a wide range of legal topics including religious obligations, family, criminal law, property, sexual behavior, inheritance, torts and contracts, and government administration.

Baha'u'llah describes His laws in absolute and universal terms.

Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), pp. 267-68.

'Abdu'l-Baha, *Foundations of World Unity* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 60.

'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in introduction to the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, pp. 4-5.

"Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance," He writes, "they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder." 57 The metaphors Baha'u'llah employs

in reference to law reinforce the controlling normative dimension of His laws. Responding to I:Iaji Siyyid Javad, He states, "the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it." The implication is that positive law is potentially the social expression of greater and absolute laws of creation.

In the context of the late nineteenth century, Baha'u'llah's universalist message, while certainly progressive, was by no means unique. There were many theories and movements at the time that echoed Baha'u'llah's call for a universal auxiliary language and world government accompanied by greater social and economic justice. But Baha'u'llah articulates His vision within a framework that, as described by the Universal House of Justice, views "[t]he human race, as a distinct, organic unit, [which] has passed through evolutionary stages analogous to the stages of infancy and childhood in the lives of its individual members, and is now in the culminating period of its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age." 58 This view of the collective maturation of humanity rests on three basic postulates.

First, collective social maturation is seen as a reflection of the patterns of unity that underlie creation itself. "[R]eality," one Baha'i scholar has argued, "is an integrated whole but ... this wholeness is a unity in diversity, not a uniformity." 59 Within this integrated whole there exist four distinct levels of being-God, the Manifestations of God, the human soul, and material reality. Human beings represent yet another pattern of unity in diversity, integrating spiritual reality (the human soul) and material reality (the human body) within

Baha' u' llah , Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 7 .

The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace (Wilmette: Baha ' i Publish ing Trust, 1985), p. 16.

Wil liam S. Hatc her, "The Kitab-i-Aqdas: The Causality Principle in the World of Being" in Th e law of Love Enshrined, John S. Hatcher and William S. Hatcher (Oxford : George Ron ald, 1996), p. 114.

BEYON D I NTEGRATION AND S EPARATION

a single organic unit. In this vision, every created thing is seen as constructed according to patterns of unity in diversity and dependent on such integration. Unity in diversity is thus the organizing principle of life and existence.

This view of reality argues that society needs to evolve to reflect more fully the reality of unity in diversity so as to maximize its potential for social order and organization. Human social life is ever advancing. The social life of humanity has become more complex and integrated, and thus humanity must develop its ability to organize in patterns of unity in diversity.

Second, human society is not naturally in such a state of unity in diversity. Society is a human construct and, as such, can be reformed and changed. The Baha'i writings argue for a specific analysis of how free will has acted to construct human social organization: "Unification of the whole of mankind is the hallmark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving." 60

There exists a third dimension to this idea of collective maturation. If unity in diversity is the necessary pattern for social evolution but human free will determines the ultimate course of social organization, there exists no guarantee that humanity will rise to the challenges of social order. Religion becomes relevant here. The dynamic interplay between the Divine and humanity is the motivating force of maturation. Progressive revelation posits that through religion God speaks to humanity in terms relative to the degree of its maturation. Thus, religion provides the mindset and historical consciousness needed to meet the challenges of further maturation. Baha'u'llah draws a crucial nexus between the capacity for positive social change and the processes of divine revelation when He writes:

And now concerning thy question regarding the nature of religion. Know thou that they who are truly wise have likened

Shoghi Effendi , The World Order o.fBahit 'u 'lfith , p. 202.

the world unto the human temple. As the body of man needeth a garment to clothe it, so the body of mankind must needs be

adorned with the mantle of justice and wisdom. Its robe is the Revelation vouchsafed unto it by God. Whenever this robe hath fulfilled its purpose, the Almighty will assuredly renew it. For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God. Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared. 6 1

In the light of this controlling vision of unity in diversity, Baha'u'llah's linking of social meaning and law becomes clearer. Religious law must operate according to the degree of unity in diversity that humanity has achieved, and it must act only to deepen social meanings that reflect unity in diversity. Divine law does not only react to social meaning, which could evolve in any direction, but also must help in the creation of particular social meanings that reflect unity in diversity.

Baha'u'llah specifically legislated approximately one hundred laws. Their normative and absolute character represents a template for future laws, to be applied if and when configurations of social meaning are appropriate. This explains both why Baha'u'llah's laws are stated in such binding terms and why they are often not applied because of social conditions. Thus, Baha'u'llah's laws are socially contingent in reference to the macrocosmic shifts in worldview engendered by the reappearance of a revelation from God, but they are normative for a society growing beyond the "adolescent" phase of humanity's collective development.

The delay between legislation and implementation may now be reread as resulting from humanity's inability to understand the implications of that law, animated by a lack of development in social meaning and advancement in society. Implementation of the law could only have destructive consequences, such as the questioning of the authority who promulgated the law, rebellion, and nullification of the law's potential benefits. Thus, the laws remain out of force

Baha'u'llah, *Cleanings*, 34, p. 81 .

BEYOND I NTEGRATION AND S EPARATION

until such understanding and consciousness can be cultivated. The relationship between law and religion is viewed as relative and open to change as maturation and changes in social meaning occur. Separationism and integrationism, in a Baha'i perspective, will have to be read in this light.

Baha'i public law: fidelity and legislation

Because any discussion of Baha'i law must occur within the progress and process orientation of the Baha'i Faith, caution is necessary in drawing conclusions. The wisdom and meaning of this cautious approach is evident when we look at Baha'i public law or the law of

government institutions and their relationship with society. Perhaps the most striking feature of Baha'u'llah's legal writing is the attention He pays to public law. Baha'u'llah's writings clearly outline a particular system of government. In the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* He speaks of "houses of justice" playing a role in inheritance, family, criminal, tax, and education matters. More explicitly, these "houses of justice" are legal authorities to which "[i]t is incumbent upon all to be obedient," and "All matters of State (*umur-i-siyasiyyih*) should be referred to the House of Justice" 62 Baha'u'llah also goes into detail about other public institutions including tax authorities (the institution of *I:Iuququ'llah*) and centers of worship and community social service centers (the institution of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkilr*).

Baha'u'llah's emphasis on public law is not limited to a description of desired future institutions. He also goes into detail about how these institutions are to come into being and to function. Baha'u'llah envisions the development of these institutions in evolutionary terms. Patterns of community growth and development will dictate when and where these institutions evolve. In His own lifetime very little institution building occurred. It began in earnest—primarily at the local (or municipal) level—under His appointed successor, 'Abdu'l-Baha. National houses of justice came into being under 'Abdu'l-Baha's successor, Shoghi Effendi Rab bani, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith. The 1963 election of Baha'u'llah, *Tablet of Isha'rat*, the Eighth *Ishraq*, in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. 91.

the international ruling body, the Universal House of Justice, marked the completion of a movement from individual authority to government by elected corporate bodies. The current system of elected decision-making bodies operating at local, regional, national, and international levels reflects themes and directions rooted in the writings of Baha'u'llah Himself. It was Baha'u'llah Who advocated for government by consultation, praised elections and democracy, and emphasized the need to move away from autocratic or oligarchic forms of government.

This public-law focus within divine revelation is historically distinct. The amount of public law in the Bible and the Qur'an, for example, is negligible. For Islam, especially, this has been a source of tension. The Qur'an clearly contemplates a public authority to exist after the Prophet and potentially renders some public institutions as legitimate. "O you who have attained to faith!" the Qur'an states, "Obey God and obey the Apostle and those from among you who have been entrusted with authority." 63 There is even some discussion of consultation as the method of functioning of such institutions. 64 However, ambiguity and an absence of discussion of the placement of power in such institutions renders any discussion of Islamic

public and constitutional law highly problematic. 65
Beyond the public-law focus, Baha'u'llah's explicit grant of
lawmaking authority to this system of institutions, and in particular

Qu'ran (4:59).

For example, Qu'ran (42:38) states, "And those who respond to their Lord
and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among themselves, and
who spend out of what We have given them."

In the Sunni world it was not until the eleventh-century thinker Abul-
Hasan al-Mawardi that we find systematic attempts by Muslim scholars to
theorize about public law. Not surprisingly, al-Mawardi's important but
late

contribution *The Ordinances of Government* (Kitab al-Akham al-Sultaniyyih)
cannot be separated from his need both to rationalize historical practice
and

to manage and explain the inconsistencies of government practice in his
lifetime. Among Shiites it was through the notion of the imamate as a political
ally

and religiously constituted authority that the ambiguities of public law were
met. However, questions among the predominant Twelver Shiites concerning
the line of the Imams resulted in the doctrine of the Occultation of the
Twelfth

Imam that in some respects has confined the scope of public-law thinking.

B EYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

to the Universal House of Justice, is significant. "Inasmuch as for
each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution,"
He writes, "such affairs should be referred to the
House of Justice that the members thereof may act according to
the needs and requirements of the time." 66 'Abdu'l-Baha clarifies:

Those matters of major importance which constitute the
foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the
Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. 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 ... 67

Analyzing the theory of legislation that supports this grant
of power to the Universal House of Justice takes us one step closer
to the core issues related to religious influence in law. Questions
of the relationship between revelation and law, religion and legal
reasoning, and the dangers of a religiously motivated law are all
encompassed by Baha'i legislative theory.

Let us start with a conclusion that could logically be drawn
based on our discussion of the social-meaning approach to law
and the above statements about the powers of the Universal House

of Justice: that all legislation of the Universal House of Justice is purely utilitarian, dictated by the needs of society at any particular time. If this is so, then while the Universal House of Justice ensures society's smooth and efficient functioning, it does not seek to impose or implement a particular normative or moral vision. Support for this view may be found in Baha'u'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's statements that link the powers of the Universal House of Justice to the needs of changing times. This reasoning gives Baha'u'llah's often misunderstood division of interpretive authority (given to 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi) and legislative power (given to the Universal House of Justice) a degree of clarity. 68

Baha ' u' llah, Tablet of Ishraqat, the Eighth Ishraq, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 91.

'Abdu'l -Baha, cited in introduction to the Kitab-i- Aqdas, pp. 4- 5.

For a discussion of the relationship between the Universal House of Justice

and Shoghi Effendi, see letter of the Universal House of Justice, 9 March 1965.

If legislation is utilitarian, legislators should not be tied to the normative vision of revelation when regulating and, in fact, should not have the authority to claim that their legislation has nonnative legitimacy as religious statements.

One stark counterversion to this utilitarian reading of Baha'i legislative theory is rooted in experiences of Muslim societies. In general terms the Qur'an and Sunna are the foundation upon which lawmaking occurs, thus importing a degree of textualism into Islamic legal science. In the face of this textualism, the place of human reason within legal interpretation and the generation of legal rules has been a source of contention among legal schools. A general concern has been to maintain the primacy of the texts, as they provide the greatest degree of certainty. In some schools, however, and in particular Twelver Shiism, which is heavily influenced by rationalist mutazilite theology, reason and revelation are said to correlate in the creation of law. Within Islamic law generally, a predominant orientation remains towards textualism and the related idea of intentionalism. "The muslim jurists," one scholar writes, "always thought of texts as carriers of meanings intended by their authors. The decisive author ... is, of course, God." 69 Further, "the widely accepted contemporary notion that a text has a life of its own apart from its author, that the meaning may continually evolve and change," was a foreign one. 70 Thus, one predominant orientation of the law was towards finding absolute, divinely intended meanings.

What we have seen of Baha'i law so far would not necessarily contradict a textualist and intentionalist methodology. Divine revelation is positioned within the Baha'i Faith as the standard, the "unerring Balance" against which all things are to be measured. It forms

the template, which, by challenging and expanding the consciousness of humanity, allows for humanity's development to the next stage of collective maturation. A law that fails to

Bernard G. Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 53.

Weiss, p. 53 .

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

seek out divine intention within the text would seem poised to fail as an aid to this development.

There are ample reasons, however, to be cautious with legal intentionalism. It often narrows definitively the body of legitimate lawmakers and establishes a stark opposition between valid and invalid legal claims. The tensions this narrowing creates may be seen within the history of Islam. Intentionalism positions the religiously learned as central legal actors, as learning is a prerequisite to identifying divine meanings properly. This has sometimes resulted in a fractured public sphere and contributed to tensions in political life. 71

The potentially destabilizing effects of narrowing the foundations of legal legitimacy are increased by the epistemological dilemmas that accompany intentionalism. How do we discover divine meanings with certainty? Response from within Islamic law has been multifaceted. The sources of Islamic law in their orthodox Sunni form remain tightly bound to the texts and are employed as interpretive tools of the Qur'an and Sunna as opposed to independent sources of law. At the same time, the religiously learned recognized that questions of certainty may threaten an individual's status as a true follower of the Prophet. To forestall such violations of God's law, a distinction could be drawn between the degree of certainty needed for action versus belief. As well, the diversity of Islamic schools (madhhab) of law which emerged after the passing of the Prophet and in response to the growth of the Islamic empire, allows for a degree of flexibility and fluidity to counter claims of certainty that could potentially be socially disruptive among Muslim peoples. This diversity was necessary, not only to forestall more serious forms of social fracturing but also given the uncertainties and fluctuations in the process of humanity's reading of texts for divine intentions.

It was the 'ulama' who developed a textually bound and intentionalist legal methodology—al-fiqh—partially as a response to a struggle with the Caliphate and other rulers over control of the legal enterprise. The relationship

between the legal rules and methods of the 'ulama' and the legal and political powers of the Caliphate and other rulers has been a source of frequent tension

and exploitation throughout the history of Muslim societies.

Skepticism of an intentionalist approach to Baha'i law is rooted within its writings. We have already noted the emphasis on utility. The limitation of the interpretive authority of the Universal House of Justice also questions intentionalism. More broadly, given the future-oriented nature of Baha'u'llah's thinking and His emphasis on the relationship between law and social meaning, one would expect some deviation from an intentionalist and textualist focus. Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Baha premises his explanation of the Baha'i concept of lawmaking power on a critique of the historical evolution of Islamic law. He sets up the legislative authority of the Universal House of Justice in direct opposition to historical practice in Islam:

Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Baha'i community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken.

This statement has a familiar theme. The authority of the Universal House of Justice as a legislative body is founded upon the necessity to maintain unity and avoid "schism, division, and

'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in introduction to the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, p. S.

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

dispersion"-an echo of the idea that Baha'i law must act to reinforce patterns conducive to unity in diversity within society.

'Abdu'l-Baha also points us in important analytic directions. First, He denies any claim that the text of revelation contains within it all

the laws required for human society. This argument is rejected in both of its possible forms: that all the laws required are those explicitly stated as laws, and that all the laws required are to be found in complete, but often hidden, form within the text. Second, the process of the Universal House of Justice legislating is referred to as one of "deduction" from the "original revealed ordinances." This raises the possibility of a nonintentional approach to lawmaking that employs human reason as a device to move beyond narrow textual interpretation. At the same time, however, it is now clear that a completely utilitarian reading of the powers of the House of Justice is inappropriate, as the institution operates with reference to and in the shadow of the text of revelation, with the normative and moral implications that such operation demands.

Of more importance, however, is the fact that the nature of Baha'i legislation is slowly being clarified with a particular Baha'i understanding of revelation as a relative text. Revelation is a complete statement of truth, but it is also relative in two important ways. First, it is relative in its art. While its truth is not contingent on time and place, the manner in which Baha'u'llah expressed and organized the truth was dictated to some degree by His circumstances, the questions He was asked, and the society around Him.

Second, revelation is relative because it operates within human history. Shoghi Effendi stated that "[t]he fundamental principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah ... is that religious truth is not absolute but relative ... " 73 As one scholar has argued, this statement means that any knowledge or understanding we have of reality or the structure of being is relative because we are only able to understand it in relative terms. 74 The language of revelation, which is Shoghi Effendi, *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow: A Selection from the Writings of Shoghi Effendi, the First Guardian of the Baha'i Faith* (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 2.

Moojan Momen, "Relativism: A Basis for Baha'i Metaphysics" in (cont'd)

often metaphorical, allegorical, and imprecise, is, in fact, an agent for this relativism. It allows revelation to be both absolutely true and relative, capable of new meanings as the human capacity to understand evolves.

Applied to law, this understanding of relativism provides a clear framework in which the Universal House of Justice operates. The progressive nature of human society, as we have already seen, demands a law capable of change. If revelation is to play a role in the evolution of this changing law, then it must, in a sense, change as well. The relative nature of revelation allows for this. By effecting new understandings of revelation, it allows for the law to react to changes in social meaning.

The legislative act in the Baha'i Faith thus occurs at the meeting point of the spiritual and the social, of revelation and reason. A

legal rule will only be legislated and brought into force when the meanings society attaches to such a law reinforce the objectives of Baha'u'llah's revelation, as deduced by the Universal House of Justice. When this nexus is not present, legislation and the implementation of laws will not occur. Otherwise, the effect would be division and dissension, undermining the central objective of the revelation of Baha'u'llah.

The progressive orientation of the Baha'i Faith allows us to go even further. Social meanings and the understanding of revelation change, as both are relative, but they also change in the context of the collective maturation of humanity. Thus, any form of traditionalism or fundamentalism in the reading of revelation must be avoided if the Universal House of Justice is to remain legitimately within its scope of authority. Logically, the Universal House of Justice cannot assert any particular reading of revelation to be authoritative without undermining and destroying its legislative power by preventing the law from evolving in conjunction with changes in social meaning.

We began our discussion of a framework for understanding Baha'i law by noting two dichotomous positions on the process

Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions, vol. 5, Studies in Honor of the Late H. M. Balyuzi Series, Moojan Momen, ed. (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1988).

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

of social change: the ethical-diffuse mode and the legalistic mode. Both are found in the Baha'i definition of legislation: the Universal House of Justice has the legislative power to advocate for the necessary changes in social meaning that it thinks may be essential for the collective maturation of humanity, but it is prevented from legitimately employing the coercive force of law to effect the change prior to such changes in social meaning. Thus, the link between law and social meaning has resulted in a fundamental change in the meaning of legislation itself; it is not just the creation of generally applicable rules, it is also an informal mechanism to lay the foundation for these rules.

This changed notion of legislation also results in a changed notion of legitimacy. The legislation and application of Baha'i law are only to occur after the prerequisite construction of social meaning, implying that the Baha'i system contemplates and legitimizes other legal systems and sources of law. Current Baha'i practice reflects this practice. Baha'u'llah made it incumbent upon His followers to obey the laws promulgated by legal authorities. While often interpreted as political quietism, this injunction also reflects the legal logic that the religiously motivated legislation of the Universal House of Justice legitimately has the coercive force of law only when certain preconditions are met. In the interim,

existing legal systems are not only legitimate but also actually fundamental to the movement towards a time when the Universal House of Justice will legislate. In this context, Baha'u'llah's inclusion within the Kitab-i-Aqdas and elsewhere of messages to the leaders of the United States, Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, the Shah of Iran, and the Ottoman Sultan, as well as His writings to other world leaders individually and collectively, and the Universal House of Justice's contributions to international political discourse, all make sense as efforts to encourage the development of social meaning in particular directions. 75 Moreover, substantial areas of behavior that could be

There are excellent historical and contemporary examples of the central authorities in the Baha'i Faith presenting arguments for a change in understanding of contemporary practices and concepts. Baha'u'llah, in (cont'd)

subject to legislation are left to individual conscience. The formal explanation frequently given for this is that the time is not right. 76 There is one last concern. What prevents the Universal House of Justice from acting out of step with changes in social meaning? Any link between law and social meaning is ultimately a theory of institutional integrity as well. For a lawmaking institution to preserve its institutional integrity-its ability to act effectively in relation to its audience-it must not enunciate laws on issues that are highly contested within the public sphere. To the degree that it

His letter to Queen Victoria, states the following:

We have also heard that thou has entrusted the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people. Thou, indeed, hast done well, for thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized. It behoveth them, however, to be trustworthy among His servants, and to regard themselves as the representatives of all that dwell on earth. (The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah, p. 34)

Baha'u'llah is affirming the positive aspects of parliamentary democracy. Of much more importance, however, is the fact that He is arguing for a reinterpretation of the meaning of democracy. He does this in two ways. First, by

emphasizing trustworthiness He links democracy to a political ethic that has been ignored historically and in contemporary discourse about democracy.

Second, He calls for political actors within democracy to adopt a global orientation. For an analysis of trustworthiness within the history of political

ethics and Baha'u'llah's discussion, see Ariane Sabet-Sobhani, Die politischen

Botschaften des Religionsgründers Bahá'u'lláh: Ethik und Politik im

Weltordnungsmodell der Bahai (St. Gallen: 2000), pp. 116- 30 .

The best contemporary example of this process is the Universal House of Justice's 1985 contribution of *The Promise of World Peace* to global efforts towards peace. Within that document the Universal House of Justice argues for a redefinition of the meaning of peace and specifically the relationship between gender, race, or economic disparity and peace.

There are many examples of this in the letters and statements of the Universal House of Justice covering a wide range of issues, including personal worship practices, the consumption of alcohol, abortion, and sexual relations. For examples of the letters and statements of the Universal House of Justice, see *The Universal House of Justice, Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1963- 1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age*, comp. Geoffrey A. Marks (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996).

BEYOND INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

When an institution does speak on such contested issues, the audience for that institution becomes fractured, and the ability of the institution to speak effectively slowly erodes. It can only speak effectively when social meanings allow for the form and mode of speech of the legislating institution so as not to have a fracturing effect. To maintain their integrity, such institutions must advocate in the interim for the necessary changes in social meaning that would empower them. Baha'u'llah's concern that the implementation of law must not be a source of discord and dissension is not only to protect the polity from disturbance. He recognizes it as a functional necessity for the successful and enduring operation of legal institutions themselves. Without a clear understanding and responsiveness to the likely reception of their acts of legislation, lawmaking bodies will undermine and ultimately destroy themselves. If the Universal House of Justice acts out of step with the process through which social meaning is constructed, it ceases to be an effective legal body.

A Relative Relationship: Law and Religion Revisited

Existing literature on the relationship between law and religion in the Baha'i Faith is limited. Popular Baha'i belief and literature generally assume that the future will witness patterns of integration of law and religion in which Baha'i law will predominate, that this integration will be benign and a benefit to all humanity, and that Baha'u'llah intended this. ⁷⁷ These assumptions are not without basis.

Shoghi Effendi explicitly discusses the likely appearance of the Baha'i Faith as a "state religion," the creation of a "Baha'i state," and the formation of a "Baha'i theocracy"-all within a vision of unity in diversity that must be established without force or coercion. ⁷⁸

Recent academic literature, however, has taken the form of a nascent Baha'i modernism. ⁷⁹ This approach argues that Baha'u'llah

See Christopher Sprung, "Baha'i Institutions and Human Governance" in *Law and International Order* (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 151. For a discussion of these possibilities, see Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the*

Baha'i

World 1950- 1957, comp. Gertrude Garrida (New Delhi : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), pp. 78- 79.

Juan R.J. Cole, *Modernity and Millennium : The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

intended a rather conventional model of separationism. "They surely were among the first major religious figures in the region [the Middle East]," one scholar has argued, in reference to Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, to "embrace ... the principle of the separation of religion and state." 80 In this vision the Baha'i Faith embodies a political philosophy of "formative republicanism" which, as discussed earlier, is in contrast to the "procedural liberalism" that has dominated much of the twentieth century. 81

These strands of literature are both problematic-ironically, for similar reasons. As our discussion of Baha'i legal history illustrated, ingrained within Baha'i social and legal thought is a philosophical foundation that gives primacy to the process of becoming as opposed to being. The pattern of delay, the divorce of lawmaking from interpretation, the rooting of social theory within the category of maturation, the linking of law and social meaning, and the emphasis on the progressive and relative nature of religion all reflect Baha'u'llah's insight that the social life of humanity can be authentically analyzed and understood only through a framework that emphasizes the dynamism and fluidity of that reality.

Thus, what Baha'u'llah offers to debates concerning law and religion is not a fixed institutional architecture but a framework that seeks to explain anew the historical realities of law and religion and to indicate directions in which future thought, experimentation, and institutional development should occur. As such, literature that fixates on identifying elements of integrationist or separationist intentions in Baha'u'llah's writings negates the most essential and exciting aspect of Baha'u'llah's vision: its process orientation. In a sense, both the integrationist and separationist approaches to law and religion in the Baha'i Faith could be characterized as weak apologetics. They attempt to present and sometimes to defend the Baha'i Faith by arguing that its social role will be distinct from that of other religions-either by being capable of creating a benign and healthy form of integrationism or by being wise enough to be separationist in the first place. But both approaches accomplish this

°Cole, p. 46.

Cole, p. 191.

B EYOND I NTEGRATION AND SEPARATION

at an extreme cost: the obfuscation of the core of Baha'i social philosophy

itself.

Baha'u'llah's insistence that we attempt to discuss issues surrounding the relationship between law and religion within the framework of changes in social meaning, the category of maturation, and the understanding of movement towards unity as the predominant expression of maturation, offers some important insights.

A central dilemma within contemporary debates over religious influence in the law is that there are typically incompatible historical narratives on either side of the debate. The rhetoric of the mythology of American separationism often views legal history as a movement towards freedom of religion buttressed by the separation of church and state. As liberty has now been secured, this struggle for liberation has reached an end time. Thus, religious influence in the law is a threat to return to the past, to legal orders that, as we have learned, inevitably oppress.

Opposed to this narrative are ones that seek to return to an integrationist past, usually in a quest to reestablish the internal fidelity of the law. As this vision of history has difficulty affirming the appearance of separationist and ultimately secular legal systems, there is often no alternative for religious voices but to challenge these developments and, by consequence, the legitimacy of existing norms and structures.

Religion and law are positioned as antinomic in one narrative and inseparable in the other. Baha'u'llah offers a way out of this quagmire by arguing that the internal fidelity of the law must be dynamic, not static, and that fidelity is given to the process in which change occurs and not to an absolute state. Thus, law should change to reflect developments in social meaning that will advance the collective maturation of humanity by solidifying its movement to more sophisticated and inclusive patterns of unity in diversity. The fidelity of the law is therefore always forward looking and progressive. It denies attempts to recover the past or claim that an end time has been reached.

This approach provides a degree of legitimacy and defense for both separationism and integrationism, as conventionally understood. Depending upon humanity's maturation and the configuration of social meanings within a particular culture at a particular time, either of these general models may or may not be legitimate. Baha'u'llah Himself was scathing in His criticisms of religiously dominated political and legal orders, particularly in Muslim societies He observed personally. At the same time, He praised the advances in human freedom made by the founding of the American Republic. This does not, however, make Baha'u'llah a Jeffersonian, as some have suggested. ⁸² Baha'u'llah legitimates a separationist model within His vision of the process of social change and evolution, but while it is a necessary stage in the evolution of

social meanings towards His global vision, it is not the end time of this evolution.

Baha'u'llah has also created a new approach to the external fidelity of the law by refusing to effect the authority of law through coercion. Legitimacy in the Baha'i scheme rests upon the relationships among revelation, law, and social meaning as well as upon whether a legal rule will advance the cause of unity. It also rests upon a conscious voluntarism—the educated choice of people who are aware of the meanings of those laws and who agree to be bound by them. This approach is reflected in the Baha'i theory of legislation, which empowers the Universal House of Justice to advocate for changes in social meaning but does not grant it the coercive power of law to effect those changes.

Underlying this reasoning, however, is Baha'u'llah's expectation that religion must gradually assert a greater influence on the law. He is a harsh critic of tendencies towards secularization, which are unable to meet the challenges of humanity as processes of globalization accelerate. The creation of a global society, Baha'u'llah argues, entails the cultivation of individual and group ethics that are other-centered. Dichotomous notions of "us" and "them" must be abandoned. Baha'u'llah argues that an orientation towards discussing the transcendent and metaphysical, which religion often provides, can best accomplish this. But this necessary inclusion of religion in legal discourse is not unconditional. Religion may

Cole, p. 190.

B EYOND I NTEG RATION AND SEPARATION

be an animating force in humanity's collective maturation, but only in its progressive and growth-inducing dimension. As 'Abdu'l-Baha states, "if religion is only to be a cause of disunion it had better not exist." 83 In this framework, religious influence does not redeem a fallen humanity or correct our errors where we have gone astray. Rather, religion is a worldview that provides both the tools and, potentially, the substance for people to engage in discourse about the foundations of social unity. If religion fails to make this contribution, it should be ignored.

Bahci'u'llah is, in a sense, calling humanity to experiment with new institutional structures and modes of social organization. In His argument, social life will increasingly require religious influence, and so new forms of inclusive legal architectures must be attempted. His own administrative order is a template for such developments and should be studied and examined in this light. 84 Within Baha'u'llah's legal thinking, we thus find the attitude that the relationship between law and religion is relative, necessarily changing as social meanings, individual orientation and mindset, and understandings of revelation change. In Baha'i thinking, religion is the

generative force behind humanity's progression, but the social expression of this relationship is conditional and intimately linked to the state of society. Any claims of certainty concerning the future institutional relationship between law and religion must be treated with skepticism. Such a static worldview violates the dynamic core of Baha'u'llah's social philosophy. Inviting us to engage fully in the visionary process, Baha'u'llah advocates a discursive relationship between these two social institutions in which both the fear of the past-coercion, oppression, and unrest-and the idealization of it are subordinated to the process of creating a future in which law, religion, and society, acting relative to one another, may develop patterns that avoid the struggles of past and present.

'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911- 1912 (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 123.

There exists to date very little secondary literature analyzing the Baha'i system of government. A good starting point among the primary literature is the writings of Shoghi Effendi, in particular, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*.

creating a future in which law, religion, and society, acting relative to one another, may develop patterns that avoid the struggles of past and present.

Ann Boyles looks at advances made and challenges that lie ahead in the field of interreligious dialogue.

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Conflict rooted in the opposing claims of the world's religions has sparked bloody wars throughout the ages, and yet the desire to find solutions to what appear to be irreconcilable differences has almost as long a history. The thirty-fourth Psalm, for example, urges followers to "seek peace, and pursue it." But perhaps one of the most heartfelt pleas for interreligious understanding was penned by Nicolaus Cusanus, who wrote in 1453:

Thou art He, O God, who is sought in the different religions in different ways and is named with different names, for Thou remainest as Thou art, incomprehensible to all and ineffable. Be Thou gracious and reveal Thy countenance . . . If Thou wouldst be so gracious, then the sword, envious hatred, and all evil will cease and all will realize that there is but one religion in the variety of the religious customs. 1

Nicolaus Cusanus, from *De pace fidei*; cited by Udo Schaefer in *Beyond the Clash of Religions*, trans. Geraldine Schuckelt (Prague: Zero Palm Press, 1995), p. 150.

For four and a half centuries after that prayer was penned, religious cooperation was seen as an unapproachable ideal and religious conflict as the norm, but in the past hundred years significant changes have occurred. The peoples and cultures of the world have been drawn into closer and closer proximity through advances in communications, cultural and scientific interchange, economic necessity, and vastly greater knowledge about the world. This increased awareness of other peoples and their cultures has challenged theologians and religious thinkers to reconsider their own faith communities' long-held claims as the sole source of absolute truth. 2 Such reconsideration has, in turn, led to increased interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

The World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 is generally viewed as the beginning of the "modern" era of interfaith dialogue and "the first time East met West religiously on a formal platform."³ The Parliament was organized in conjunction with the World's Columbian Exposition, which marked the five hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America. Representation was overwhelmingly Christian (in fact, 100 of the approximately 170 speakers were Protestant), but Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, Jains, and Zoroastrians were also present. 4 While it is clear from their speeches that the majority of Christian speakers saw the Parliament as an opportunity to advance their campaign to convert peoples of other faiths, the gathering had an unexpected result. One writer refers to it as "an ecumenical breeze stirring America's evangelical atmosphere,"⁵ sparking interest in and respect for comparative religions among

Catholic theologian Paul Knitter, for example, has described Christianity as "a monocultural religion" which must become a "world religion" that is genuinely present in various world cultures." See Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names* :

Christian Mission and Global Responsibility (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1996), p. 148.

³ See the Web site of the Council for the Parliament of the World's Religions , at <www.cpwr.org> .

See Robert H. Stockman , *The Baha'i Faith in America: Origins 1892- 1900*, Vol. I (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 32.

Stockman, p. 32.

WORLD WATCH

members of the public-and fuelling hope for a more harmonious future. 6 In his closing address at the Parliament, Charles Bonney voiced the conviction of many participants that "Henceforth the religions of the world will make war, not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind. " 7 The spirit of brotherhood and openness that prevailed left a powerful impression on North American public

opinion.

Unfortunately, no permanent organization arose to continue the dialogue begun at the Parliament, and the twentieth century certainly did not witness the cessation of religious strife as the Parliament's organizers had hoped. Groups drew upon religious ideologies in the cause of war throughout the century. Nevertheless, the Parliament gave impetus to the interfaith adventure and stands as a landmark in this work, which eventually saw the formation of many large interfaith organizations, including the International Association for Religious Freedom, the World Congress of Faiths, the Temple of Understanding, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. 8

On the centenary of the first gathering, in 1993, Chicago hosted a second Parliament of the World's Religions, which was

The event also occasioned the first public reference to the Baha'i Faith in the Western hemisphere, which occurred, ironically, during a talk by a Christian clergyman on "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations" in "civilizing" the world's peoples through conversion to Christianity. See Stockman, pp. 32- 33 .

Cited in Marcus Braybrooke, " The Interfaith Movement in the 20th Century," p. I, in the Library of Interfaith Articles and Surveys on the Web site of the North American Interfaith Network, <www.nain.org>; also published in Faith and Interfaith in a Global Age (Grand Rapids and Oxford: CoNexus Press and Braybrooke Press, 1998).

Marcus Braybrooke, Chair of the World Congress of Faiths and Trustee of the International Interfaith Centre at Oxford, contends that while dialogue between clergy and other " official" representatives of various faith groups has certainly been significant, it has been the pioneering work of lay people who have joined together to form unofficial interfaith organizations that has smoothed the way for more formal interchange among religious communities through the years. See Braybrooke, "The Interfaith Movement in the 20th Century," p. 3.

much more representative in scope than the first, and, indeed, served as a reflection of society itself. Throughout the twentieth century, many forces worked to undermine people's attachments to traditional religious dogmas, and by the time of the centenary event the interfaith climate had warmed to the point where organizers were able to propose the adoption of a shared global ethic aiming to give voice to the common values underlying all religions. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions marks a new stage in interfaith work. It clearly reflects a respect for religious pluralism and a commitment to the belief that in the religions' essential spiritual teachings is enough common ground for the development of an ethic that can lead humanity further along the path towards peace and the preservation of the planet. The success of the 1993 gathering prompted the holding of a

third Parliament of the World's Religions in December 1999 in South Africa. At its opening, impressive images of some 10,000 followers of various faiths marching together flashed around the world via satellite, showing the spectacle of Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Baha'is, and members of many other religious groups walking arm in arm as a demonstration of their hope for the future. While the procession was visually impressive, the Parliament's core document, entitled A Call to Our Guiding Institutions, was what gave real substance to the gathering. The Call, which draws upon the 1993 Declaration, advances the work by offering an "invitation to a process of 'creative engagement,' in which religious and spiritual communities, groups, and individuals find new modes of interaction, dialogue, and collaboration with the other guiding institutions." It states:

Unique to this moment is the possibility of a new level of creative engagement between the institutions of religion and spirituality and the other powerful institutions that influence the character and course of human society. What is needed now is a persuasive invitation to our guiding institutions to build new, reliable, and more imaginative partnerships toward the shaping of a better world. 9

Introduction, A Call to Our Guiding Institutions, <www.cpwr.org>.

WORLD WATCH

In effect, the foci of the 1993 and 1999 Parliaments reflect two major aspects of interreligious work. The first is conceptual and rooted in ethical considerations. It attempts to find connections and build bridges across ideological chasms between religious groups, as seen in the 1993 Declaration. The second is more practical, involving collaboration among different religious groups to address the pressing needs and problems facing the human family. Building on the consensus previously established, the 1999 Parliament focused more heavily on this aspect.

In a world of religious diversity, one of the first steps toward finding connections and building bridges across ideological chasms must be the acquisition of accurate knowledge. This may sound obvious, but even in regions where such information can be easily accessed, often it is not. Diana Eck, director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University, has found that in the United States there is a high degree of "religious identity" but a much lower rate of "religious literacy."¹⁰ While knowledge does not necessarily create sympathy, as Marcus Braybrooke has pointed out,¹¹ the hope is that it will lead to greater tolerance, and dialogue plays an important role in such movement forward.

The emphasis on tolerance can be seen in the gradual broadening of approaches to interreligious work that occurred during

the twentieth century, as described in a Christian context by theologian John Hick:

It has become common in Christian discussions to distinguish three main responses to the problem presented by the spiritual reality of the other great world faiths: exclusivism (salvation is exclusive to Christians), inclusivism (all salvation is Christian salvation, but the benefits of Jesus' atoning death are available in principle to all people, whether Christian or not),

Diana L. Eck, "Challenge of Pluralism," *Nieman Reports "God in the Newsroom"* 47: 2 (Summer 1993); see "The Pluralism Project" Web site at <www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/>.

Marcus Braybrooke, "The Interfaith Movement in the 20th Century," p. 2.

and pluralism (the great world faiths, including Christianity, are different and independently authentic spheres of revelation and salvation). The majority of theologians have moved in recent decades from exclusivism to inclusivism. But a growing minority now think this insufficient, seeing it as a milder and less obvious form of the religious imperialism of the old exclusivism. 12

The "exclusivist" approach, or the claim that one's religious group possesses the ultimate, final truth, is problematic for honest interreligious dialogue, because interactions with non-believers have mostly been seen as occasions on which to attempt to convert others to one's "true" faith. The "inclusive" approach has led to greater tolerance, but tolerance in itself is not sufficient in a pluralistic world. As Diana Eck writes:

Tolerance is a deceptive virtue. In fact, tolerance often stands in the way of engagement. Tolerance does not require us to attempt to understand one another or to know anything about one another. Sometimes tolerance may be all that can be expected. It is a step forward from active hostility, but it is a long way from pluralism. 13

In fact, there is a need to move beyond tolerance along a continuum towards greater understanding and the achievement of authentic relationships with the "other," resulting in greater unity. Creative fellowship among diverse religious adherents is the ultimate expression of this idea.

An example of the challenges faced by organized religions in a pluralistic world is evident in the shifting response of the Roman Catholic Church to non-Christian religions during the latter part of the twentieth century. Moving from an exclusivist doctrine, the Church's Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, made at the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, affirmed that it "rejects nothing which

is true and holy" in non-Christian religions and "looks with

12 John Hick, preface to the 1993 re issue of *God and the Universe of Faiths* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993).

Eck, " Challenge of Pluralism. "

sincere respect" on their teachings and standards of conduct that "often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men." 14 Such a statement of tolerance opened the way to increased official interreligious dialogue, but it nevertheless posited that full salvation would come only through full recognition and acceptance of Christ. 15 Thus, the Church stopped short of validating the pluralist stance. While pluralism represents a major step forward in interreligious understanding, it posits that in this post-modernist world, no "meta-religious" standpoint is possible. As theologian Hans King has written, "Humanity is weary of unified ideologies, and in any case the religions of the world are so different in their views of faith and 'dogmas,' their symbols and rites, that a 'unification' of them would be meaningless, a distasteful syncretistic cocktail." 16 Nevertheless, he contends, "there can be no new world order without a world ethic," 17 and in this statement lies the basis of the Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions, drafted

Cited in John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, p. 126.

In the years since, Catholic theologians have advanced other approaches to greater reconciliation. Hans King, for example, has proposed that all the world

religions are the " ordinary" way to salvation and the Catholic Church is the "extraordinary" way, and that people of other religious faiths should be regarded as "pre-Christian" but directed towards Christ. Paul Knitter has called

for recognition of Jesus as "truly" but not " solely" the savior of humanity and

has advocated the discarding of adjectives such as "full," "definitive," and "unsurpassable," while reaffirming the adjectives "universal," "decisive," and "indispensable" (Knitter, pp. 72- 76). In his view, "particularity does not exclude universality. " The recognition of Jesus as "Kingdom centered" rather than "church centered" offers Christians a way to move beyond "christocentric" perceptions of other religions, creating centrifugal rather than centripetal energy flow and allowing for fruitful collaboration with people of other faiths

(Knitter, pp. 89- 92). Neither King's nor Knitter's approaches have been officially endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church; in fact, they are regarded as

highly controversial.

Hans King, introduction, *A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities: Two Declarations*, ed. Hans Kung and Helmut Schmidt (London: SCM Press, 1998), p. 41.

Küng, "Don't Be Afraid of Ethics! Why we need to talk of responsibilities as well as rights," in Küng and Schmidt, p. 105. In this regard, (cont'd)

by Küng, which says, "By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethic we mean a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes." 18

The challenges inherent in finding such common ground are evident in the drafting of the Declaration. Theological positions and issues upon which it was clear there could be no consensus were avoided from the outset, and some groups initially refused to endorse it because they felt that they had not been adequately consulted prior to the document's release at the Parliament. In spite of the controversy, however, the 1993 Declaration is historically significant in that it represents the first time that a joint statement of ethic has ever been produced as representative of all the world's religions. It begins:

We are women and men who have embraced the precepts and practices of the world's religions. We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic. We affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action. We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations, and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behavior which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the conditions for a sustainable world order. 19

The Declaration, which was signed by some 6,500 religious representatives, affirms: "The spiritual powers of the religions can theologian Paul Knitter argues that in a "globally responsible" or "correlational" dialogue of religions, "religious persons seek to understand and speak with each other on the basis of a common commitment to human and ecological well-being." (Knitter, p. 17)

The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions, in Küng and Schmidt, pp. 11 - 13.

Declaration, in Küng and Schmidt, p. 3.

offer a fundamental sense of trust, a ground of meaning, ultimate standards, and a spiritual home." And yet it also cautions, "Of course religions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice, and even hostile images,

and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts, and rituals of people who believe differently. " 20

At the same time that the Parliament was moving along in its process of interreligious dialogue, a number of other significant advances were made in the field. For example, the relationship between world peace and the achievement of peace among religious groups was discussed at a UNESCO forum in Paris in 1989 and then at the 1990 World Economic Forum in Davos, and a group called the InterAction Council took up an initiative that was separate from but complementary to the development of the Parliament's Declaration. The Council, a group of former heads of state and government founded in 1983 by former Japanese prime minister Takeo Fukuda, analyzes and encourages international collaboration on issues surrounding peace and security, the global economy, development, population, and the environment. Following consultations involving religious and intellectual leaders in 1987, Fukuda wrote, "I have long felt that world peace and the welfare of mankind concern religious groups as much as political figures. I felt that an understanding could be obtained from religious groups and that a certain common denominator might be found ." 21 The result, in 1997, was the Council's proposal of the text of a Universal Declaration of Global Responsibilities, which was submitted to the United Nations for consideration as an adjunct document to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Declaration, in Kung and Schmidt, p. 15.

Documentati on of the Inter Action Council : Peace, Development, En vironment, Population: Spiritual Leaders Meet Political Leaders (Rome, 1987), Preface, p. 2; cited in Johannes Friihbauer, "From th e Decla ra tion of th e Reli g ion s to th e Declaration of the Statesmen," in Kung and Schmidt, p. 86.

On more of a grassroots level, "the United Religions Initiative," initiated by the Rev. William E. Swing, produced a charter that gave expression to the same hope voiced in many of the other declarations and documents produced by various groups during the 1990s. It begins, "We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, hereby establish the United Religions Initiative to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence, and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings." Some three hundred people, representing thirtynine different spiritual traditions and forty-four countries, gathered to sign this charter in June 2000.

All of these initiatives represent positive steps forward in interreligious dialogue, but they generally go no further than the pluralist position. While the religious groups advocate tolerance and respect for the "other" and on occasion commit to joint action, they also

insist on the validity of their own theologies, dogmas, and practices. In effect, they regard each other as "separate but equal." The question then arises: Is further movement along a continuum towards unity possible or not?

According to John Hick, it is. He compares the paradigm of "exclusivity" to the way that Ptolemaic science positions the earth at the center of the universe and points to the need for a theory more in keeping with our broadened understanding:

... having noted that Ptolemaic theologies tend to posit their centres on the basis of the accidents of cultural geography, one can scarcely avoid seeing one's own Ptolemaic conviction in a new light. Can we now be content that our own religion should be a kind of spiritual horoscope read off from the time and place of our birth? And can we be so entirely confident that to have been born in our particular part of the world can-ies with it the privilege of knowing the full religious truth, whereas to be born elsewhere involves the likelihood of having only partial and inferior truth? Is there, one asks oneself, some vestige here of the imperialism of the [C]hristian west in relation to 'lesser breeds without the law?' It remains possible to retain the Ptolemaic point of view; but when we are conscious of its historical relativity we may well feel the need for a more sophisticated, comprehensive and globally valid theory. 22

In response to this need, Hick calls for a "Copernican revolution" in religious thought, in which the different faiths recognize that they are "encounters from different historical and cultural standpoints with the same infinite divine reality and as such they lead to differently focused awarenesses of that reality." 23 In this paradigm, God-not the religion-is the center of the universe, and the religions are seen as the planets circling around one indivisible Reality. Hick asks, "Why not simply accept that the transformation of human existence from destructive selfcentredness to a new centring in the ultimate transcendent Reality that we call God is taking place in and through all the great world traditions?" In this paradigm, the boundaries between the religions become more blurred. However, Hick does not stop there. He writes:

... now that the religious traditions are consciously interacting with each other in the 'one world' of today, in mutual observation and dialogue, it is possible that their future developments may be on gradually converging courses. For during the next few centuries they will no doubt continue to change, and it may be that they will grow closer together, and even that one day such names as 'Christianity,' 'Buddhism,' 'Islam,' 'Hinduism,' will no

longer describe the then current configurations of men's religious experience and belief. . . The future I am thinking of is accordingly one in which what we now call the different religions will constitute the past history of different emphases and variations within a global religious life . . . the discoveries now taking place by men of different faiths of central common ground, hitherto largely concealed by the variety of cultural forms in which it was expressed, may eventually render obsolete the sense of belonging to rival ideological communities. 24

Hick, p. 132 .

Hick, p. 141 .

Hick, p. 146.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Hick uses the analogy of the religions as different planets circling around one sun, God—a familiar concept to Bahá'ís from their own sacred writings, in which the Founders of the world's great religions (or Manifestations of God) are often referred to as "rays of one Sun," an image conveying the idea of their essential unity.

Bahá'ís believe that their understanding of the relationship between the various religions and of the purpose of interreligious dialogue represents yet another step forward on the continuum leading towards unity. The foundation of the Bahá'í approach arises from a conviction that "the religion of God is one religion, but it must ever be renewed." 25 Bahá'u'lláh writes: "There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God." 26 Further, He states: "These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated. " 27 Thus, from the Bahá'í perspective, the intent of the Founders of the world's great religions—Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Krishna, Christ, Muhammad—was not to create different faith systems but rather to progressively awaken a wider range of spiritual and moral capacities.

Now humanity stands at the outset of a cycle of fulfillment, when we are capable of recognizing the essential unity of the truth found at the heart of the religions of the world. Bahá'u'lláh affirms: "That the diverse communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Haifa: Bahá'í

World Centre, 1978), p. 52.

< ' Baha ' u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha ' u ' I/ah , 2d ed. (Wilmette:

Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1976), 111 , p. 217.

Ba ha' u' llah, Gleanings, 133, pp. 287- 88 .

WORLD WATCH

of the Faith of God and His Religion. " 28 In 1912, while visiting North America, His son 'Abdu'l-Baha told audiences:

You are blessed with men of learning, men who are well versed in the comparative study of religions. You realize the need of unity and know the great harm which comes from prejudice and superstition ... We must bestow commendation upon all people, thus removing the discord and hatred which have caused a l i enation amongst men. Otherwise, the conditions of the past will continue, praising ourselves and condemning others; religious wars will have no end, and religious prejudice, th e prime cause of this havoc and tribulation, will increase. This must be abandoned, and the way to do it is to investigate the reality which underlies all the religions. This underlying reality is the love of humanity. For God is one and humanity is one, and the only creed of the Prophets is love and unity. 29

Such statements clearly indicate that rather than a pluralistic approach, the Baha'i view represents a "unity paradigm," which, in the words of the German Baha' i scholar and jurist Udo Schaefer, "constitutes a positive basis for the study of religions: they are taken seriously, revered and portrayed in a sympathetic light." 30 Schaefer continues:

This is not mere indifference, an " anything goes" approach (which Kung rightly criticizes), but the acknowledgement that that which has developed over long historical periods and is testified to in frequently interrupted tradition originates from the same Source: the revelation of the li ving God. It is the realization that the sometimes major differences, even stark conháadictions, in doctrine, societal order and fon11S of worship are historically conditioned. 3 1

With regard to interreligious dialogue, the practical implications of this paradigm are evident in the following statement of

Baha ' u' ll ah, Gleanings, 133, p. 287.

'A bdu ' l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Talks Delivered by 'Abdu 'l-Baha during his Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2d ed. (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Tru st, 1982), p. 410.

Schaefer, p. 144.

Schaefer, pp . 144- 45.

Shoghi Effendi: "Its [the Baha'i Faith's] declared, its primary purpose is to enable every adherent of these Faiths to obtain a fuller understanding of the religion with which he stands identified, and to acquire a clearer apprehension of its purpose." 32 The Baha'i commitment to interfaith amity is thus doctrinal in nature-and therefore perhaps unique among the world religions.

A discussion of religious conflict as a barrier to the achievement of peace features prominently in a statement of the Universal House of Justice, titled *The Promise of World Peace*, which was released on the occasion of the United Nations International Year of Peace in 1986. It says:

Religious strife, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith. Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic questions which this strife raises, and to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders of mankind is to contemplate, with hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of human understanding and peace. 33

Surely this passage speaks to one of the great challenges facing religious groups in the closing years of the twentieth century. While consensus on many theological issues remains elusive and constitutes a great ongoing challenge in interreligious dialogue, religious groups have begun to address the second aspect of interreligious work- practical action to address the problems facing humanity. The central document to emerge from the 1999

Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters*, 1st pocket ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 58.

The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1985), p. 7.

WORLD WATCH

Parliament of the World's Religions in South Africa, titled *A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*, reflects this concern:

We find ourselves at a moment when people everywhere are coming to recognize that the world is a global village. Unique to this moment is the possibility of a new level of creative engagement between the institutions of religion and spirituality and the other powerful institutions that influence

the character and course of human society. What is needed now is a persuasive invitation to our guiding institutions to build new, reliable, and more imaginative partnerships toward the shaping of a better world. 34

Throughout the Parliament, discussions between secular and religious leaders focused on the means to increase collaboration, and the event also saw the unveiling of "Gifts of Service to the World," which comprise hundreds of service projects initiated by participating religious groups.

Interfaith efforts are now springing up to address issues of vital importance to humanity, including peace, human rights, the environment, sustainable development, the education and advancement of women, health, social justice, and the eradication of poverty. Organizations such as the World Conference on Religions and Peace and the Alliance for Religions and Conservation, and initiatives such as the World Faiths Development Dialogue have also brought faith groups together to develop common strategies for tackling specific issues.

The Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone, for example, was convened by the World Conference on Religion and Peace in 1997 to promote human rights and advance the growth of a culture of democracy. In a country ravaged by years of civil war, the Council is generally seen as one of the most trustworthy and effective advocates of peace, using its moral clout to establish peace talks among warring factions. Combining the resources of the country's religious communities for the first time, the Council speaks with one voice to articulate a shared ethical vision upon which the nation can rebuild. The WCRP is also involved in a number of other

Introduction, A Call to our Guiding Institutions.

interfaith activities in countries such as Indonesia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

The World Faiths Development Dialogue arose from a 1998 conference of religious representatives that was jointly chaired by James Wolfensohn of the World Bank and George Carey, archbishop of Canterbury. It has engaged representatives from a number of the world's religions in discussions that have resulted in a common understanding of poverty and development. This vision is now being translated into action through interfaith projects in several countries, and similar work in connection to post-conflict reconstruction is in the planning stages. The goal is to contribute substantively to policy, design, and implementation of World Bank programs. 35

It is clear that dialogue among faith groups is an important mechanism for weaving the moral fabric of an increasingly interdependent world and a means of fostering the development of shared value structures that can lead to the establishment of new

and peaceful patterns of community life. A major challenge that lies before official institutions of the various religions is to provide opportunities for greater grassroots interaction among their adherents, so that the results of what has been achieved through years of interreligious dialogue can bear fruit in the actions of rank and file believers. In this way, coming together to engage in interfaith activities, serving humanity and discovering the common bases of their beliefs, they can cultivate deeper and more meaningful personal relationships with each other.

The value of such contact has been noted by Leonard Swidler, editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University, who has identified three phases in interreligious dialogue. First, he writes, "we unlearn misinformation about each other and begin to know each other as we truly are. In phase two we begin to discern values in the partner's tradition and wish to appropriate them into our own tradition . . . If we are serious, persistent, and sensitive

For more on these projects, see pp. 116-17 and the World Faiths Development Dialogue Web site, at <www.wfdd.org.uk> .

enough in the dialogue, we may at times enter into phase three.

Here we together begin to explore new areas of reality, of meaning, and of truth, of which neither of us had even been aware before." 36 Thus, dialogue can open the way to individual spiritual transformation and a deepening of faith.

A powerful example of one project that is promoting this kind of understanding is "Pontanima," an interfaith choir in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The initiative of "Face to Face Interreligious Service," a voluntary organization promoting interreligious dialogue, the choir has brought together Muslim, Serbian

Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish members to "sing the songs of our neighbors and interact together," in the words of Ivo Markovich, the Franciscan priest who heads the project.

He continues, "Our goal is that we can sing in worship with Christian, Islamic and Jewish communities. During worship services, we sing only the songs of that religion-the songs that can be integrated into worship. Those of us from that particular religion will participate in worship, and others will be there in respect-as guests who are with their friends in the most important part of their lives." When the choir began in 1996, some members had

To safeguard an atmosphere of tolerance, respect, and courtesy during interreligious encounters in this "separate but equal" pluralistic world, Swidler has formulated a set of widely disseminated "commandments" for dialogue participants. According to Swidler, the "ten commandments" of interreligious dialogue are as follows: the primary purpose of such dialogue is to learn- to change and grow in one's understanding and to act accordingly; the dialogue

must be a two-sided project; participants must be completely honest and sincere; ideas must be compared to ideas, and practice to practice; participants must define themselves (rather than people of other groups defining them); participants must set aside assumptions regarding points of disagreement; dialogue must take place between equals; dialogue must be based on mutual trust; participants must be minimally self-critical of themselves and their own religious traditions; participants must strive for an interior experience of the other's religion. See "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 20: 1 (Winter 1983). These are worthy guidelines, but participants' practice of self-criticality is not necessarily the norm- as in perceptions of the treatment of women, for example.

THE BAJ-j\`f W ORLD

great difficulty singing religious songs that had been co-opted as military anthems used to turn ethnic groups against each other. Markovich notes, "Many people were killed, tortured and terrorized by these sacred songs that were misused as instruments of war. By singing these songs, together with people of various ethnic groups, we restore the songs to their intended purpose-to praise God." 37 In this way, participants have experienced the power of reconciliation, a potent interfaith experience that reaches beyond mere intellectual appreciation and challenges them to look beyond their own groups to gain a deeper appreciation for others' points of view and deeply felt commitments. From these many and varied examples, it is clear that a momentum towards interreligious understanding has been building throughout the final decade of the twentieth century. Significant progress has been made, but much remains to be done. On one hand, for example, the 1993 and 1999 Parliaments of the World's Religions concerned themselves with the search for common moral or ethical foundations-and managed to generate a widely accepted statement of such common ground. On the other hand, admittedly difficult theological terrain still remains to be explored. How can we investigate and approach common areas of understanding in connection with the Eternal Reality-whether the Trinity, or the Buddhist denial of divinity? What about different understandings of the meaning and means of salvation? How do we reconcile various conceptions of the afterlife and their implications for human behavior? While possible threads of theological unity among the major religions have been explored from time to time, such deep inquiries have not yet occurred in a systematic way among religious thinkers. To the extent that such substantive exploration occurs, overall interreligious collaboration will be enriched. It

can only be hoped that the recent focus on common universal principles has laid the foundation for a deeper exploration of the underlying theological tenets of the world's faiths. Building conceptual or philosophical bridges between the Abrahamic and

Interview: Ivo Markovich on the role of interreligious dialogue in Bosnia.
Press re lease of the Mennonite Central Committee (3 March 2000).

WORLD WATCH

Vedic faiths, for example, is one such challenging-but beneficial-undertaking. Another challenge faced by interfaith movement participants pertains to human rights. While it is heartening that faith groups are finding commonalities, it is rare for religious leaders to address the human rights issue of freedom of conscience in the matter of religious belief-including the freedom of an individual to change his or her belief. Frank discussion of this matter will mark a milestone in interreligious work. After all, if people of religious faith truly believe that the Creator is eternal and the center of all existence, then they must also believe that unfettered and sincere investigation will lead to the truth, which has many facets and shelters all of our diverse expressions of faith.

These are some of the many challenging areas that remain as we prepare to enter a new century. The next major occasion on the interfaith calendar is scheduled for August 2000, when the largest gathering of religious leaders ever held will occur immediately prior to the Millennium Summit at the United Nations.

The event will be doubly significant; first, because the United Nations has recognized, by its provision of a venue for the meeting, that the world's religions cannot be excluded from discussions and meaningful action pertaining to the well-being of the world's peoples; and second, because an unprecedented number of leaders and representatives of the world's faiths are gathering to pray together and to consult on matters relating to world peace. There appears to be recognition that, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, "a power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth." 38 At this auspicious moment, the world's religious leaders have the opportunity to raise a compelling collective call for peace. They have made significant progress in achieving greater interreligious understanding. Will it be enough for them to rise to the occasion?

'Abdu'l -Baha, Selections, p. 53 .

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PROFILE: MONGOLIAN
DEVELOPMENT
CENTER

In the summer of 1993, the Mongolian Ministry of Education granted permission for several Baha'is to create an organization devoted to providing education in social and economic development. Inspired by a holistic view of social progress, the organizers believed that the path to rural well-being begins with the individual, upon whose enthusiasm, expertise, and commitment the future of any development project ultimately rests. Not content with providing only material expertise, the organizers hoped to integrate material, intellectual, social, and spiritual education, with the aim of helping participants develop their latent capacities for service to the family, the community, and society. The project was dubbed the Mongolian Development Center (MDC).

Eight students enrolled in the Center's first courses of commercial English and basic economic theory. By November 1993 the MDC had assumed status as a subdepartment of the Mongolian Technological University, and less than one month later the Chamber of Commerce and Industry officially recognized the

A seminar on vegetable
production in
Erdenbulgan, sponsored
by the Mongolian
Development Center.

Certificate in Economic and Business Studies, awarded by the Center to students upon successful completion of both the commercial English course and the introductory economics course. Tuition fees and subsequent sponsorship by a Swiss corporation enabled the Center to maintain itself and expand into other areas of social and economic development.

Since its inception, the Center has gradually modified and expanded its range of activities. Its participation in the First International Symposium on the Development of Appropriate Technology resulted in public recognition of the Center's achievements in the area of agriculture, and it began an agricultural project in the district of Baganuur. MDC also became actively involved in the promotion of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, which enhanced and strengthened its relationships with the government and with NGO officials. In 1995, the Center collaborated with UNICEF to sponsor a conference for all Mongolian NGOs

focusing on the rights of children. On 11 June 1998, MDC was registered as an NGO by the Ministry of Justice, and in 1999 it achieved tax-free status.

By April 2000, the Mongolian Development Center's activities were focused on three main areas: child development, capacity

building and community development, and character development.

The Center's child development initiative involves various exhibitions, competitions, lectures, and teacher training-all related

to the rights of children. A community gardening project in

Erdenbulgan, Hovsgol Province, and the Integral Human Development project (which involves a demonstration garden plot at

M O N G O L I A N D E V H O P M E N T c E N T E R

Charity School in Darkhan Province as well as tree planting on the school grounds and Charity School itself) fall under the heading of

capacity building and community development. Finally, in

connection to character development (or moral education), the

MDC has translated a curriculum on character development previously developed by the Badi Foundation in Macau and teachers

have been trained in it, allowing for the incorporation of the curriculum into six kindergartens in four provinces during 2000.

One of the Mongolian Development Center's main initiatives has been the establishment of projects aimed at stimulating the production of vegetables. A very strong rural culture of herding animals exists throughout Mongolia, and greens are generally

absent from the traditional diet. As a result, health specialists see signs of vitamin deficiencies and growth stunting. A child nutrition survey conducted by UNICEF in 1992-1993 documented a

growing problem of malnutrition among children. In particular, deficiencies in vitamins A and D were identified as the main causes of several widespread health problems.

These circumstances make the changes taking place especially encouraging. The coordinator of the Poverty Alleviation Study

Center reports, for example, that between 1990 and 1996, the

Children in a pumpkin patch in an area of Mongolia where, until 1993, vegetables were not generally grown or consumed.

number of families in Ulaanbaatar growing vegetables increased from 850 to 21 ,000.

Contributing to this change, the MDC has initiated a number of agricultural development projects in different districts of the country. The first was a systematic training program in a small district called Gachuurt, begun in August 1993, that introduced appropriate agricultural technology to allow people to improve the nutritional value of their diets by growing fruits and vegetables.

A pilot gardening project in the Erdenbulgan region and a demonstration garden established on the grounds of MDC's Charity

School in Darkhan Province have also been successful in this regard.

The Erdenbulgan vegetable project was initiated in 1996 by a small group of Baha'is with the help of a small loan and the donation of seeds. It has provided an opportunity for local people to grow a greater variety of vegetables, thus improving their nutrition and supplementing their income through the sale of excess seedlings. The Erdenbulgan project's success is reflected in the words of one participant, sixteen-year-old Amartuvishin, who says, "I now like vegetables very much. Vegetables are very important for good health, because they contain many vitamins and other nutrients." Amraa, as he is known, is engaged in learning as much as he can about the process of preparing, growing, and cooking vegetables.

But even more important than its nutritional benefits, the project provides an avenue for participants to learn about- and put into practice-sound principles related to their own social and economic development. Families have joined together in groups to maintain their gardens, and their consultation and reflection on their actions have increased their capacity for collective action. As Davaadulam, a teacher in Erdenbulgan and a member of the local Baha'i community, says, "Many people such as the elderly, children and youth have been involved in this project. The project has helped people to learn how to consult together, to work in harmony and to be united with one goal."

M ONOOLIA|I D EVELOPMENT c ENTER

For the Bahri 'i
community of
Erdenbulgan, fresh
salads have become a
regular treat at
gatherings. '

While the projects are small (only four families in Erdenbulgan and sixteen families in Darkhan are involved in this ongoing process of learning based on study, action, and reflection on action), they are having a positive impact on their communities. The participants' improved decision-making skills, which contribute to the creation of unity of vision and action within the group, have attracted the attention of the wider community and of government organizations. To help sustain the project and to share what has been learned through it with other groups, the MDC conducts training programs for farm workers and seminars for the public.

Maitar Tsend, the director of the Mongolian Horticultural Society, an independent NGO which has also launched its own campaign to encourage small-scale vegetable gardening, has noticed how the

Erdenbulgan project has educated and empowered local people, who, during the Communist period, were prohibited from having gardens because they were considered private initiatives. "The whole Erdenbulgan population is much encouraged by the successful implementation of the project. And this is very important because it reflects a deep psychological change that is going on," he says.

Charity School, another MDC-sponsored project, is located six hours by train from Ulaanbaatar and has an enrollment of three hundred students, one hundred of whom are disabled, poor, or orphaned. The project began in 1996 and has received funding from the Australian Agency of International Development at the

Australian Embassy in Beijing. Moral education classes are offered as well as courses on nutrition and agriculture. As part of an effort to promote moral education, the school has opened a "Child Rights and Virtues Resource Room." A demonstration garden is situated on the school grounds, and a tree-planting project has been initiated in an effort to beautify the property. The local government has taken note of the progress being made by the sixteen families and the student group from the school that are involved in the various educational programs and gardening projects. Twenty students from Beijing have also toured the project, in a visit facilitated by the Australian Ambassador. Charity School has networked with a number of NGOs, including the Red Cross of Mongolia, Peace Winds Japan in Mongolia, World Vision, Oyuntulhkuur Fund, Youth Union, and the Mongolian Association of World Peace, to enlist support for orphaned children and the Child Rights and Virtues Resource Room. Charity School is also used as a site for training programs conducted by MDC; the first courses on gardening and the social enterprise program were offered there in April 1999.

MDC's achievements in social and economic development and its decentralized operations run by provincial project facilitators-recognized by both government officials and NGOs-are known to the public as a result of television and radio news broadcasts. By making education the centerpiece of their development plan, the organizers of the Mongolian Development Center hope that the people it serves will be able to sustain and direct their own process of change, and by building relationships with likeminded organizations, government, and the public, MDC hopes to stimulate dialogue about the nature of development, education, and social progress.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva,

20 March- 28 April 2000.

CURRENT
SITUATION
OF THE
BAHA'IS
IN IRAN

For twenty years, the Baha'i International Community has taken the floor to share with the Commission information about the plight of the peace-loving Baha'i community in Iran.

The situation of the Baha'i community is now at an important crossroad.

Although we are beginning to see signs of positive developments in the Islamic Republic, we are, as yet, unable to document any improvement in the actual situation of the Baha'is. They are still targets of overt atrocities, and they continue to suffer under the burden of more subtle forms of discrimination such as economic strangulation and denial of access to higher education.

Imprisonments and Death Sentences

As of 1 March 2000, twelve Baha'is are being held in prison because of their religious beliefs; five of those have been sentenced to death. It is clear that the charges brought against all twelve prisoners-including those awaiting execution- are based solely on their membership in the Baha'i community.

Although the Iranian Government has stated on numerous occasions that the situation in Iran has improved, we have recently been informed of three more death sentences imposed on Baha'is in the city of Mashhad.

On 3 February 2000, two prisoners, Mr. Sirus Dhabih-Muqaddam and Mr. Hedayat Kashifi-Najafabadi, were informed orally that their death sentences had been confirmed. At the same time Mr. Ata'u'llah Hamid Nasirizadieh was informed that his sentence of ten years' imprisonment had also been confirmed. All three sentences were upheld despite assurances to the contrary given by the Iranian Government to the Special Representative on Iran, Mr. Maurice D. Copithorne.

The third death sentence was imposed by the same court on Mr. Manuchehr Khulusi, who was arrested in Birjand some eight months ago and subsequently transferred to the prison in Mashhad. It is not known what charges were brought against Mr. Khulusi, but it is clear that he was arrested because of his Baha'i activities.

Requirements for the Restoration of the Baha'i Community

As you can see, the situation of the Baha'i community has not improved and "remains of serious concern," to use the terms of the Special Representative in his last interim report to the General Assembly in 1999.

In light of the facts we have shared in this brief statement all of which are amply documented in Mr. Copithorne's report to the current session of the Commission- we must once again call upon the Commission to intercede on behalf of this beleaguered community. Mr. Abdelfattah Amor's report (E/CN.4/ 1996/95 I Add.2), issued after his visit to Iran in 1996, describes with clarity the situation of the Baha'is and specifies a comprehensive set of measures that the Government should take to remedy that situation. Mr. Amor calls on the Government of Iran to grant the Baha'is the following:

- freedom to bury their dead
- freedom of movement
- no impediment to access to education or employment
- security of the person and physical integrity
- civil rights and, in particular, the freedom to manifest their belief
- the review and setting aside of the death sentences (we call also for the release of these prisoners)
- return of community properties and compensation for the destruction of places of worship
- equal treatment by the judiciary
- equal rights for all, regardless of their beliefs or the community to which they belong
- reestablishment of Baha'i institutions.

We would like to emphasize that reestablishment of Baha'i institutions is particularly critical, as they constitute the core around which Baha'i community life revolves . Because the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the arbitrary dissolution of these institutions, ordered by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1983, was equivalent to abolishing cardinals, bishops, and parish priests in Christian communities. These institutions not only guide the community and nurture the individual members, but they perform such canonical functions as marriages and burials.

In our view the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is able, if it wishes, to find ways within existing laws and regulations, to accord Baha'is the same freedoms enjoyed by all other Iranian citizens. For example, measures were recently taken by the Government of Iran which make it possible for married Baha'i couples to be registered as husband and wife. This step should also allow such couples to register children of their marriage.

Appeal to the Commission

We now appeal to the Commission to look into ways of assuring that all of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance and the Special Representative on Iran are systematically implemented. In this respect, it may be helpful to develop a timetable for monitoring purposes, in consultation with

the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are convinced that a speedy implementation of these recommendations is the key to the full emancipation of the Baha'i community in the land of its birth.

We would like to remind the Commission that the Baha'i community poses no threat to the Iranian authorities. The principles of the Baha'i Faith require that Baha'is, wherever they reside, be obedient to their government and avoid partisan political involvement, subversive activity and all forms of violence. Moreover, the Baha'i community in Iran is not and will not be aligned with any government, ideology, or opposition movement.

The Baha'is seek no special privileges. They desire only their rights under the International Bill of Human Rights, of which Iran is a signatory, including the right to life, the right to profess and practice their religion, the right to liberty and security of person, and the right to education and work.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the Fifty-sixth Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva, 20 March- 28 April 2000.

THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to education is, in the view of the Baha'i International Community, one of the most important rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. So important is the right to education that it is elaborated in both the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Indeed, the very mission of the founders of the great religions throughout history has been to educate humankind. Education is critical to the development of each individual's potential and to his or her enjoyment of the full range of human rights. At the same time, education must serve society as a whole by instilling in individuals an unwavering respect for the rights of others and a desire to uphold and defend those rights.

The Baha'i International Community is, therefore, pleased that in 1998 the Commission on Human Rights accepted the recommendation of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to appoint a Special Rapporteur whose mandate "will focus on the right to education."¹ We are also pleased that Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/33, para. 6 (a).

the Special Rapporteur's mandate addresses implementation "of

the principle of compulsory primary education free of charge for all" 2 and that it takes into account "the situation and needs of the girl child. " 3

While we agree that access to education is a matter that must be given serious attention by governments and non-governmental organizations alike, we feel that the content of education is of primary importance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the goal of education is not only "the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity" but also the promotion of "understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial, ethnic, or religious groups ... " 4 To accomplish these broad and lofty goals, education must address the whole person, that is, it should seek to develop the full range of human capacities-intellectual, social, physical, and spiritual.

In the minds of many, the aim of education is limited to empowering the person to achieve material well-being and prosperity, with little regard for his or her responsibility toward others and humanity as a whole. Such a materialistic approach to education will continue to exacerbate the disparity between the wealthy few and the impoverished many-perpetuating the injustices of social stratification and contributing to the increasing instability in the world. If, however, material education goes hand in hand with spiritual education and moral development, it will be the means for ensuring the well-being and prosperity of humanity as a whole. Instead of emphasizing competition, education would do well, at this point in history, to foster the attitudes and skills necessary for cooperation; for the very survival of humankind now depends on our ability to cooperate and on our collective commitment to justice and human rights for all. The ability to cooperate with others will also ensure that increasing numbers of people will benefit from the right to education.

Commission on Human Rights resolution, para. 6 (a) (ii) .

3 Commission on Human Rights resolution, para. 6 (a) (iii).

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The recent conflicts in Europe demonstrate the failure of material education alone to foster respect for human rights. The Baha'i Faith, as a matter of principle, accords priority to spiritual and moral education over the other aspects of education. "Good behavior and high moral character must come first," say the Baha'i writings, "for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and a virtuous character, otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger." 5 The function of

moral and spiritual education is to guide the use of human capacities for the good of all. We submit, therefore, that the goal of education should be not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the acquisition of spiritual qualities such as compassion, trustworthiness, service, justice, and respect for all.

At the heart of the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Learning: The Treasure Within*,⁶ is the notion put forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child that education should enable the individual to develop fully his or her potentialities.⁷ "Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value," Baha'u'llah urges, "Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom."⁸ These treasures must be consciously developed, drawn out and cultivated because although the capacity for good is innate, human beings can fall prey to equally innate corrupt inclinations. "Man is even as steel," states Baha'u'llah, "the essence of which is hidden: through admonition and explanation, good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be

Bahti 'i Education: A Compilation of Extracts from the Baha'i Writings (London: Baha' i Publishing Trust), 1987, p. 29, para . 74.

Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: *Learning: The Treasure Within* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996).

See the Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 29 (a).

Baha 'u ' llah , *Gleanings of the Writings of Bah a 'u ' !ah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp . 259- 60.

allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him."⁹

Because every child stands in need of education, particularly in moral values, it is essential that education be provided for girl children, who will be the mothers and first educators of succeeding generations. Educating mothers is the most efficient way of ensuring that the benefits of education are diffused into society as a whole. Providing women and girls equal access to education will also make possible their full participation in society, which Baha'is believe will be the catalyst for the creation of a just society and the establishment of lasting peace in the world. We, therefore, endorse the resolution's recommendation that the Special Rapporteur "promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education."¹⁰

In considering the content of education, it is important to remember that the prejudices separating the peoples of the world and, at times, erupting into conflicts and wars are not just the result of ignorance but are sometimes the product of a biased education. The development of and adherence to a universal set of educational principles, based, perhaps, on the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights, could provide a unifying framework within which to cultivate an understanding of the diversity of human experience. The strength of such a framework will derive from its basis in the principle of the oneness of humanity. Acceptance of that one principle will make possible the cultivation of unity among the diverse elements of the human family, recognizing common human aspirations in the varied cultures, habits, and temperaments that exist in every country and throughout the world. The oneness of humanity and the universality of human rights should be taught in every classroom in the world, along with skills in consultation and conflict resolution.

Education should be universal, compulsory, and free of charge. We acknowledge that such a goal can be accomplished only when the responsibility is shared. "Everyone, whether man

Baha'i Education, p. 3, para. 10.

°Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/33, para. 6 (a) (iii).

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

or woman, should," according to Baha'i scripture, "hand over... a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children." 11 We commend the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Katarina Tomasevski, for having included "Financial obstacles impeding access to primary school" as part of her preliminary report. 12 Even where governments provide educational services, some groups still encounter obstacles. The experience of the United Nations agencies and the Member States in the fields of literacy and public health has shown that certain segments of the population in various countries remain unable to benefit from such public services owing to political, cultural, ethnic, language, or geographical situations. We, therefore, submit that special provision be stipulated for the protection of the right of education for such deprived groups. We look forward to the Special Rapporteur's planned collection and analysis of "the existing quantitative and qualitative information on the pattern of the lack of access to education in order to map out obstacles to the realization of the right to education." 13

Finally, while we agree that priority should be given to universal compulsory education in childhood, we also believe that everyone benefits when education becomes a life-long process. UNESCO states that education should instill a thirst and a desire for knowledge, 14 and we would add that it should also foster a desire for excellence. Such aspirations acquired in childhood, coupled with life-long possibilities for furthering education, are the bases for an ever-advancing civilization. The Baha'i International Community will continue its efforts to support education

that develops individual capacity and instills respect for the

Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997),

p. 90.

E/CN.4/1999/149, para. 32-41.

E/CN.4/1999/149, para. 59.

Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century. One of the four pillars of education is "learning to know."

human rights and fundamental freedoms of every person. In this regard, it is pleased to pledge its full support and cooperation to the Commission's Special Rapporteur for the preservation and universal implementation of the right to education.

INFORMATION

RESOURCES

OBITUARIES

Qudsiyyih Amin-Amin Ala'i

On 27 September 1999 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Qudsiyyih left

Amin-Amin was born on 22 September 1909 in Tehran, Iran. Her Spiritual

father was the second Trustee of the Bahá'í Faith. Early in her youth she declared her belief in the Bahá'í Faith. Defying the traditions that kept women as an underclass in Iran, she was resolute in living according to the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, despite opposition and scorn from much of the public. She served as a member of the Bahá'í Committee for the Education and the Committee for the Advancement of Women in Iran. She

in 1963. Her husband died in 1968, and the following year she went back to Western Samoa. From there she went to Malta in 1972 and for the next few years traveled between Malta and Western Samoa until she finally settled in Canada. During

years she lived in Toronto, she visited native reserves on a regular

and throughout her life service to

they had six children. In 1945 she and her husband pioneered to Afghanistan. Baha'í Faith was her first

priority.

Peter Boddy

Josephina Camacho

On 2 January 2000 in Escondido , California, United States. Dr. Peter Boddy was born 15 February 1947 in Massachussets , United States. He completed his pre-med education and received bachelor's degrees in from

anthropology and psychology from the University of California at Davis before establishing a school on San Andres Island in the Caribbean.

After completing a nineteen-month tour of duty as a lab technician in Vietnam, he moved to Peru for the divorced.

dual purpose of Baha'i pioneering and attending medical school. After 's

grad uating and serving an internship in Peru, he earned a master 's degree in public health in California in 1985 . first

Dr. Boddy used his degree to develop community health education pro- gra ms to help estab li sh a health education and preventive medicine department in California. At the same time he worked in AIDS education in Ca lifornia , Arizona , Hawaii, and New Mexico. In late 1989 , he returned to Latin America and worked in th e public health field there, in Egypt and in Mozambique. In Bolivia he played a key role in founding the country's first gradu- also

ate program in public health. Dr. Boddy had set up a national health project for Nicaragua and, at the time of hi s passing, was in the process of doing the same for other regions. During his adu lt years, he served on Spiritual

the National Spiritual Assemblies of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru .

QBITUAL~IE S

On 9 September 1999 , 111 Miami , Florida, United States . Josephina

Camacho de la Nuez was born 23 March 1908 in San Antonio de los Banos, Havana, Cuba. In addition to earning a doctorate in education

the University of Havana, she worked as an educator for fifty years, and wrote the book Injlu encia de la Religion en la Filo sofia d e la

Educación. S he married Jesus Martinez and had three children with him, although the two later

After becoming a Baha' i in Cuba she served as a member of that country

National Spiritual Assembly. In 1970 her family moved to Puerto Rico and in 1972 sh e was elected to the

National Spiritual Assemb ly of Puerto Rico.

Ted Cardell

On 2 June 1999 in California, United States. Edmund John (Ted) Cardell was born 8 September 191 8 in St. Neots, England , and during his life worked as a farmer, a photographer, and a businessman. He became a

Baha' i in l 948 in Canada and three years later became the first Baha'i to pioneer to Kenya. In 1953 , he

became the first to pioneer to Namibia, an act for which he was named a Knight ofBaha ' u'llah. He married Alicia Ward in 1957; they settled in Kenya in 1959. He was elected to the first National

Assembly of the Baha' is of South West Africa in 1955 and also served

on the National Spiritual Assembly for children's activities , assisting for of East and Central Africa. The many years in the development of a Cardells returned to England in 1963 , Baha'i children's camp in Cuicocha when they were forced to leave Africa owing to the changing political situation. In 1974 Mr. Cardell was she also wrote Baha'is in Spanish and Quechua. Shoghi Ghadimi elected to the National Spiritual Assembly On 22 November 1999 in Brussels, Belgium. Mr. Ghadimi was born Kingdom, on which he served until 1 January 1910 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan , to a Baha'i family . in the United States. He married Molouk Khamsi in November, 1940, and they had two Isabel Pavon de Calderon children. His service to the Baha'i On 30 March 2000, in Ibarra, Faith included pioneering to Iraq, Imbabura, Ecuador. Isabel Pavon Tunisia, and Belgium , where he Mejia Leonila was born on 25 settled in 1958. He served on the October 1929 in the Imbabura Provincial Local Assembly of Liege, and forince of Ecuador. She declared her sixteen years was a member of the belief in the Baha' i Faith in 1961 and National Spiritual Assembly of served on many Baha' i institutions, Belgium . As a member of that including the National Spiritual institution in 1963 , he participated Assembly of Ecuador for thirteen in the election of the first Universal House of Justice. He traveled tenure as a Continental Counselor extensively to teach the Faith, including for the Americas, she served as a ing trips to Asia, Canada, the Antilles, member of the Auxiliary Board and Africa, and Europe. traveled extensively throughout the country teaching the Baha'i Faith, Rose Jones

especially to the indigenous people of Ecuador. She also undertook teaching trips throughout South America and Spain. In 1991 she was again elected to the National Assembly of Ecuador and served on that institution until her passing. She was she

involved in setting up the first Radio Baha'i in Otavalo, Ecuador. In 1974, he married Gonzalo Elias Cader6n Encalada and was widowed in 1980. Although the two had no children, she was very involved with

including Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa, Nigeria, India, the United States.

Lee Cheng Hiong (Mrs. George Lee)

On 24 August 1999, in Singapore. Tan Cheng Hiong was born 2 May 1904 in Singapore, to a wealthy and traditional Chinese family. She married George Lee, and the two had eight children. From 1952 to 1963, she served as president of the Singapore Council for Women, which was responsible for passing the Women's Charter in 1961 in Singapore. She became a Baha'i in 1958 and traveled to Malaysia many times to share the Baha'i teachings.

On 24 September 1999 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Mr. Moghahii-abi was born in Isfahan, Iran, on 15 November 1911 and was raised as a Baha'i. He served with distinction in the Iranian Women's Federation to inspect various women's activities in China army and attained the rank of general. After his retirement, he

On 14 February 2000 in London, England. Rose Le Grey, born on 23 January 1906, first heard of the Baha'i Faith around the age of ten and by her own account believed immediately. She was the first Baha'i to settle in Cardiff, Wales, where

also served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly. She married Mathew Oswald Jones in 1939. They had two children before he died in 1948.

She traveled internationally and visited many Baha'i communities,

Engineering in Addis Ababa. In 1970 he married Almaz Mitiku, and together they raised three children. He

served the Baha'i Faith throughout his life and was a member of the

Local Spiritual Assembly of Addis Ababa and the National Assembly of Ethiopia until he was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors for Africa in 1995, on which he served until his passing. In 1996 he was also appointed a Trustee of the 'Abdu'lloh. He was well-known for his willingness to host traveling Baha'is and opened his home for many Baha'i events.

member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia and his wife, Homayoun Firuzmand. He served in that country for two years. He served on the National Pioneering Committee. She was also a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Singapore, formed in 1972.

Islamic revolution in 1979, his home

Abaine Merhatsion was attacked and his belongings confiscated. Realizing that his life

On 9 February 2000 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mr. Merhatsion was born on 12 September 1939 in Arbegona, Sidamo, Ethiopia, and became a Baha'i in 1959. He occupied various

positions, both in the private and the public sector, as a civil engineer, in including a post at the Ministry of Urban Development and as Head of the Department of Civil

in England. In 1991, soon after he became a British citizen, he moved to Tajikistan, to fulfill his dream of pioneering. He served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of

QBITUARIES

Dushanbe, the capital city, and on the Regional Teaching and Administrative Committee. In 1994, he was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of Tajikistan. Even at his advanced age, he was still able to travel all over the country, teaching the Baha'i Faith. On the afternoon of 25 September 1999, Baha'is in Tajikistan received word that Mr. Moghlati had been murdered some time during the night. He had been shot in the back, and there was evidence of torture on many parts of his body. His hands had been tied

they lived until 1966, when they moved to Canada. After the passing of his wife in 1978, Mr. Monajem pioneered to Nigeria and Jamaica and often traveled to the United States. He moved to Swaziland in 1987 and spent most of his time writing, editing, and teaching. He wrote

Stories in the Life of Muhammad, several articles, and was popular

youth everywhere he lived, often offering a weekly study class in his home to young Baha'is.

Mildred Mottahedeh

On 17 February 2000, in New York City, United States. Mildred Root was stuffed in his mouth. No money or belongings in his home had been taken. She became a Bahá'í in August 1908. She was murdered in 1929 and that same year married that his murder was not the work of Rafi Y. Mottahedeh, with whom she had two children. With her husband, previously been mentioned in a she founded Mottahedeh and Co., popular Iranian newspaper, which a prestigious firm specializing in identified him as a Bahá'í and the reproduction of porcelain and claimed that the Bahá'ís were trying to convert them to the "cult." individuals and institutions, including

Jamshid Monajem	several US presidents and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She succeeded her husband as president of the company after his death in 1978 and remained involved even after the company was sold, until retired in 1998. Mrs. Mottahedeh representing the Bahá'í Faith at the signing of the United Nations Charter, and became the first official Bahá'í representative when the Bahá'í International Community was recognized as an NGO in 1948. She founded the Speakers Research and international levels. At the time she maintained a rigorous schedule as a businesswoman, a
On 14 June 1999 in Mbabane, Swaziland. Jamshid Monajem was born 29 April 1912 in Tehran, Iran, to a Bahá'í family. He married Zarindokht Modabber, with whom she had four children. Mr. Monajem had pioneered briefly to Iraq and then to Ethiopia from 1954 to 1964, during which time he was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of North Africa and a member of the Auxiliary Board. The family then returned to Iran where Committee for the United Nations and served the UN in various other capacities for twenty years. In 1958,	

she founded Mottahedeh Development Services, Inc., a foundation dedicated to advancing social and economic conditions in developing countries. In addition, she and her husband founded and maintained and a number of primary and secondary schools in Uganda and village improvement programs in India that trained people in agriculture, health, and the development of handicrafts. In 1961, she was elected to the International Baha'i Council, an administrative body that four assisted in preparation for the establishment of the Universal House of Justice. Throughout her life she received various awards, including the Order of Commander of Prince Henry the Navigator, presented by the Portuguese government in 1987, the International Tablet Award in 1990, the United Nations Woman of Honor award in 1993, and in 1994 the Mildred R. Mottahedeh Humanitarian Award was established in her honor by the International Faith, Furnishings and Design Educational Foundation. After her passing, the Universal House of Justice wrote, "With her departure from this earthly life the Baha'i world community has lost an outstanding figure of the opening epochs of the Formative Age of the Baha'i Dispensation. Her more than half a century of tireless but endeavor in its service involved her human teaching and administrative activities

contributor to the arts, and a of humanitarian works. To these manifold tasks, she brought the combined resources of a selfless spirit, a compassionate heart, a creative mind, a practical sense, a lionine will tempered by integrity, candor and wit." Meherangiz Munsiff On 21 June 1999 in London, England. Meherangiz Irani was born 23 November 1923 in Bombay, India, to Baha'i parents. At the age of fourteen, she traveled with Martha during the latter's travels out northern India and Bombay. In this, she followed the example of her mother, who, at the instruction of 'Abdu'l-Baha, had accompanied Lucretia Getsinger during her Indian travels. In 1945, she married Eruch Munsiff, and they had one daughter. Mrs. Munsiff worked in broadcasting, often with the BBC. After a meeting with Shoghi Effendi that inspired her to travel to teach the Baha'i Faith, she visited more than 150 countries, both teaching and assisting in the development of Baha'i communities. She pioneered for many years to Madagascar and was named as a Knight of Baha'u'llah for opening French Cameroon to the Baha'i Faith. She was known as a lecturer and activist not only among Baha'is, but also among the international Bahá'í community. She was

received

ties at the local, national, continental by royalty in Thai land and England,

OBITUARIE S

was granted special honors by the Red Cross and the Maryland State Legislature, and was a member of the United Kingdom Executive Committee for Human Rights.

Leo Niederreiter

On 17 September 1999 in Tyrol, Austria. Leo Niederreiter was born 22 September 1920 in Austria. In 1944 he married Waltraud Beeg. From 1948 to 1953 he worked as a doctor at the general hospital in Vienna. In 1953, Dr. Niederreiter and his wife set sail from Italy in homemade boat for the Seychelles with the intention of studying tropical diseases. When his boat broke down off the coast of what is now Eritrea, Dr. Niederreiter was invited by Haile Sellasie, Emperor of Ethiopia, to practice medicine in that country. He and his wife eventually settled in Asmara. In 1956, the couple met two Baha'is who introduced them to their Faith. Soon after declaring his belief, Dr. Niederreiter was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Asmara. He was a member of that institution and the National Spiritual Assembly of Northeast Africa and Ethiopia until 1978, when bandits savagely wounded him and his wife in a nighttime raid. Feeling compelled to return to Europe, the Niederreiters moved to Austria after which Dr. Niederreiter was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. He served on this body until he was appointed a member of the Continental Board of Coun-

on 22 January 1922, into a Baha' i

sellors for Europe, from 1980 to 1990.

Peggy Ross

On 24 January 2000, in Toronto, Canada. Margaret (Peggy) Mac-

Gregor was born 9 January 1909,

in Dundee, Scotland. She graduated from Morgan Academy in Dundee and soon moved to Canada. She married John Ross and the two had three children. Mrs. Ross became a Baha'i in 1948, along with her husband. She was widowed in 1973. She served on several Local Spiritual Assemblies in Canada and in 1953 was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, of which she was a member for fourteen years. During her time on the National Assembly, she represented that body at various national Baha' i conventions, including Singapore, Finland, and the United States. She was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member in 1957 and served in that capacity until 1986. Her greatest love was the teaching work among the native peoples of Canada and Greenland. For several years in the 1970s, she and her husband served as the custodians for the Fort Qu'Appelle Baha'i Institute in Katchewan. She also traveled to Australia, Europe, and Southeast Asia and attended the dedications of the Houses of Worship in the United States, Samoa, and India.

Abbas Rushdy

On 10 June 1999, in Reading, England. Abbas Abdel - Rahman Rushdy was born in Cairo, Egypt,

Regional Spiritual Assembly of

Arfamily. Mr. Rushdy was a certified accountant and worked as a public accountant and worked as a civil servant for various government offices throughout his life. His service on Baha'i institutions began in his early twenties, when he was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Alexandria and later to the National Spiritual Assembly in Egypt. In 1950 he married Mariam Hussein-Ruby, and together they had four children. He and his family moved to Kuwait in 1958, and during their time there he served on that National Assembly as well. Between 1966 and 1969, in the United Kingdom, he served on the Local Assembly of Reading. The family being struck with poliomyelitis returned first to Kuwait and from there very young, she began her career as a dressmaker at age twelve. She declared her belief in the Baha'i governing body. He also traveled to Chile as a delegate to the Second South American Baha'i Congress. She served on the National

Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia, and then later on the Spiritual Assembly of nearly thirty years. In addition work on these institutions, Mr. also carried out public duties for the Baha'is. He at the Iranian embassy in for twelve years, under five ent ambassadors, before he was because he was identified as an active Baha'i in his and his wife had four children.

House of Justice wrote, " HIS DED I-
 Sp iri tual Assemb ly of South Ame lica
 CATED LABORS IN EGY PT, KUWA IT
 a nd the Regional Assem bl y of
 AN D OMAN WERE CHARACTERIZED
 Brazil, Peru, Co lomb ia, Ecuador, and
 BY COURAGE, WI SDOM AND PERSE-
 Venezue la. In 196 1, she was elected
 VERANCE ."

to the new ly-establi shed National
 Shapoor Saeed
 ap-

Assembly of Peru, un ti l she was

On 23 July 1999, in Buenos A ires, pointed to the A ux ili ary Board
 in

Argentina . Roohollah Shapoor Saeed 1964, an institution she
 continued to

was born into a Baha'i family in serve until 1999. She trave l ed
 Tehran, Iran , on 2 1 June 1923. In extensively throughout Peru to
 teach

195 1 he marri ed Parvin Namdar. He t h e Baha ' i Fait h , was the
 first

left Iran in 195 3 to pion eer to Baha ' i in the towns of A req
 uipa and

Argentina, as part of the Ten Year C hie l ayo, and worked to
 establish

Crusade. He remained in Argentina and consolidate Baha'i comm
 unities

fo r the rest of hi s li fe, serving on the throughout the country. Her heart

OBITUARIES

condition did not lessen her Baha'i lished more than one hundred
 tutoactivities, in spite of many hospi- rial schools in Uttar Pradesh,
 directed

tal stays. In its message after her Baha ' i training institute
 programs,

passing, the Universal House of Jus- wrote on the subject of
 agricultural

tice said , " Present and future development, and initiated and
 orgenerations of Peruvian believers ni zed many Baha'i activities
 in the

will warm ly remember her kindness, region . He marri ed Shanta Singh
 in

her love, and her nurturing spirit. " 1958, and th ey had five children.

Harvansh Singh Adib Taherzadeh

On November 6 1999 in Malhausi , On 26 January 2000 in Haifa,
 Israel.

Uttar Pradesh, India. Harvansh Singh Ad ib Taherzadeh was born 29 April

was born 1 October 1938 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Popularly known as Rajah Saheb of Malhausi, he Yazd, became a Baha' i in 1962 and welcomed hundreds of others to even the Baha' i community throughout his life. As a rajah, he was the first member of the Indian nobility to accept the Un i- Baha' i Faith and subsequently took its message to several others of his ntry, social rank in India and Nepal. Mr. Singh was a professional manager of schools, poultry f all ills, and other agricultural and educational projects. He served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha' is of India for retirement seven years, was an Auxiliary Board member for eighteen years, and a of member of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Malhausi. Mr. Singh was the also a member of several committees for teaching, Baha' i schools, training programs, and agricultural development projects, and was an active supporter of many Baha' i projects throughout India. He was the host of from Amatu' l-Baha Rt'. lhiyyih Khanum during her visit to Malhausi in 1967, Board where she inaugurated the first Baha' i center in rural India. Mr. Singh established

House of Justice in 1988. Mr. Ta herzadeh wrote several Baha' i erworks: Trustees of the Merciful, The Covenant of Baha' u' llah , and a four-

1921 in Yazd, Iran, to Tahir and Legha' iyyih Malmiri and was raised as a Baha' i. During his youth in he was subjected to persecution and ridicule because of his religion, to the point of being pelted with stones. Mr. Taherzadeh studied electrical engineering at the university of Tehran and pursued postgraduate studies in Coventry, England , before pioneering to Ireland, where in 1950 he was hired by an electrical firm , Messrs Hughes and Coy le, Ltd. He eventually became chief engineer and stayed with the company until his in 1984. Mr. Taherzadeh served on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha' is of the British Isles 1960 to 1971 and was elected to National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland upon its formation in 1972. That same year he married fellow Assembly member Lesley Gibson, with whom he had two children, in addition to his two children a previous marriage. He served as a member of the Continental of Counsellors of Europe from 1976 until his election to the United Kingdom the Ten Year Plan , the Walters family left their home in Albuquerque, New Mexico , to pioneer to French Morocco, an act which earned

vo lume stud y of the hi story of the them the title Knights of Saha 'u' Ilab.

writings of Baha'u' ll a h entitl ed The T hey arri ved in Tangiers after four-

Revelation of Bahri 'u 'llah. He had teen days of travel and soon moved just comp leted a seventh book at the to Casab la nca to he lp fo rm that time of his passing. T he Un iversa l country's first Local Sp iritlia l Assem-

House of Justice wrote of its sorrow bly. Mr. Walters suppo lled bi s fami ly

at the passing of a "dearly loved co- by work ing as a carpenter for the worker," recalling "with admiration American government. The tense hi s devoted and unremitting services political situation m ade speak ing to the Cau se of God for over half a abo ut religion ve ry difficult, but, centu ry. His exe mpl ary enthusiasm tluáougb bi s know ledge of and respect

for the teaching work and his capacity for the Prophet M ubammad and the to insp ire the believers endeared him Qur'an, Mr. Walters was ab le to esto a ll that knew him . . . be evinced tab li sh lastin g fr iend ships with his

comp lete consecration, un shakeab le Muslim cowo rkers. T he first native fa ith , and un yieldin g resolve. " Casab lancan declared bis fait h in Richard Harding Walters Baba' u ' ll ah two years late r. Jn 196 1

12 May 1999 in Arkansas, United the fam il y pioneered to Portugal. States. Richard Wa lte rs was born 7 Afte r his passing, the Un iversa l Septe mbe r 1913 in Meriden, Co n- Ho use of Ju st ic e e ul ogized hi s necticut, United States. He married "WHOLEHEARTED DEVOT ION, SACRI-

Evelyn Bohl , and together they raised FIC IAL, HISTORI C SERVICE" to the

two c hildren. In Marc h 1954, dur- Baha'i Fa ith .

STATISTICS

General Statistics

Worldwide Baha'i population	more than 5 million
Countries/dependent territories where the Baha'i Faith is established	190 countries/ 45 territories
Continental Counsellors	81
Auxiliary Board members serving throughout the world	990
National/Regional Spiritual Assemblies	181
Local Spiritual Assemblies	12,591
Localities where Baha'is reside	129,949

Indigenous tribes, races, and ethnic groups represented in the Baha'i community	2, 112
Languages into which Baha'u'llah's writings have been translated	802
Publishing Trusts	32

Geographic Distribution of Local Spiritual Assemblies by Continent

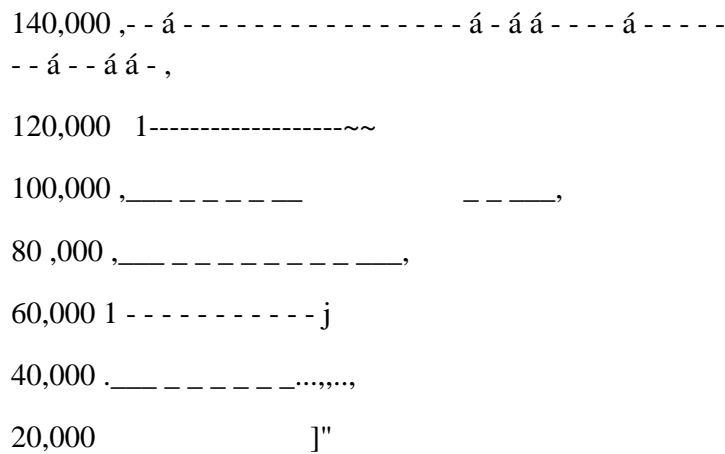
Africa 3,716

Australasia 877

Europe 946

Americas 3,330

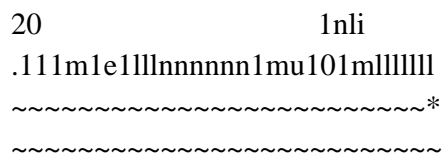
Growth in the Number of Localities Where Baha'is Reside



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STATISTICS

Growth in the Number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies



Social and Economic Development

Baha 'i development activities are initiated either by Baha 'i administrative institutions or by individuals or groups. Toget/1e1~ these acti vities contribute to a global process o.l learning about a Baha'i approach to social and economic development. Th ey presently fa// into three general categories.

Activities of Fixed Duration

Most Baha ' i social and economic deve lopment efforts are fairl y simple activities of fix ed duration in which Baha ' is in vill ages 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 1999-2000 there were more than 1,500 endeavors of this kind, including tree-planting and clean-up 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 331 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 45 such organizations.

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Selected NEW

PUBLICATIONS

Assisting the Traumatized Soul: Healing the Wounded Talisman

Phyllis K. Peterson. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1999. 222 pp.

Drawing on personal experience as a victim of abuse, the author shares advice on using the Baha'i writings to overcome the trauma of sexual abuse, both for victims and people who wish to assist them.

Birds of the Heart

Galya Gunderson. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 112 pp.

Suggestions on how to enhance appreciation, recollection, use, and application of the Baha'i writings. It provides a selection of verses centered on the fundamental principles of the Faith, including oneness of humankind, selflessness, service, the need for personal transformation, and justice.

A Concise Encyclopedia of the Baha'i Faith

Ed. Peter Smith. Oxford: Oneworld, 2000. 408 pp.

Contains entries on all aspects of the Faith, covering its history, central figures, scripture, doctrine, practices, social teachings, and organization.

Creating a New Mind

Paul Lamplé. Riviera Beach: Palabra Publications, 1999. 148 pp.

An examination of the responsibilities and roles of each of the three human components of the Baha'i Faith: individuals, institutions, and communities. Looks at the capacities and capabilities, as well as new ways of thinking, that are needed for building a new civilization.

Impacting Social Problems: Writing and Evaluating International Development Projects

Robert K. Walker. Brasilia: Baha'i Office of the Environment and Development, 2000. 154 pp.

Examines ways to write and evaluate socioeconomic development projects, particularly in developing countries, where projects must produce concrete results in order to benefit those in need. It offers both a critical analysis of current practices and perceptions and guidance for those responsible for development projects.

Kitab-i-Aqdas

Baha'u'llah. Hellerup: Dansk Baha'i Forlag, 1999. 272 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic circa 1873, this is the volume's first authorized Danish translation.

Der Kitab-i-Aqdas

Baha'u'llah. Hofbeim: Baha'i-Verlag, 2000. 357 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic circa 1873, this is the volume's first authorized German translation.

El Kitab-i-Aqdas

Baha'u'llah. Barcelona: Editorial Baha'i, 1999. 346 pp.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic circa 1873, this is the volume's first authorized Spanish translation.

Making the Crooked Straight: A Contribution to Baha'i

Apologetics

Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh, and Ulrich Gollmer. Trans. Geraldine Schuckelt Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 862 pp.

Written as a response to a widely disseminated monograph on the Baha'i Faith by Francesco Ficchia which characterizes the Faith as an authoritarian cult. It refutes Mr. Ficchia's claims and has been instrumental in changing the perception of the Faith in German-speaking Europe.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

My African Heart

Bonnie Fitzpatrick-Moore. Foreword by Kiser Barnes. Johannesburg: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1999. 188 pp.

The story of an African-American Baha'i who pioneered to Africa in the 1970s and eventually settled in South Africa. It recalls the troubles and victories of living there during apartheid and offers insights into the role that Africa can play in world development.

The Saddlebag

Bahiyiyih Nakhjavani. London: Bloomsbury, 2000. 258 pp.

Set on the road from Mecca to Medina in the nineteenth century, this novel takes as its starting point an episode from *The Dawn-Breakers* and tells the tale of nine travelers, each of whom encounters a saddlebag and is affected by its mysterious contents.

Shoghi Effendi in Oxford, and Earlier

Riaz Khadem. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 173 pp.

An examination of Shoghi Effendi's institutional education, from early youth through his days at Oxford. It draws on his own letters as well as the recollections of his fellow students, illuminating a little-known period of Shoghi Effendi's life.

Spinning the Clay into Stars: Bernard Leach and the Baha'i Faith

Ed. Robert Weinberg. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 134 pp.

A collection of writings by internationally known British potter Bernard Leach. This volume, published twenty years after his passing, deals with Leach's art, life, philosophy, and his desire to play a part in uniting East and West.

Under the Divine Lote Tree: Essays and Reflections

J. A. McLean. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 188 pp.

A collection of eighty-five short essays reflecting on the life of the human spirit. It offers a synthesis between academic and creative thinking on topics such as love, time, humor, death, science, and spiritual growth.

Without Syllable or Sound: The Baha'i Faith and the World's

Sacred Scriptures

Michael Sours. Los Angeles: Kalimat, 2000. 208 pp.

Explores the sacred scriptures of the world's religions from a Baha'i

perspective.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha

'Abdu'l-Baha. New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2000. 1364 pp.

An exhaustive collection of the English translations of 'Abdu'l-Baha's writings and talks.

Years of Silence: Baha'is in the USSR, 1938-1946

Asadu'llah 'Alizad. Trans. Baharieh Rouhani Ma'ani. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 195 pp.

Asadu'llah 'Alizad's memoirs of religious persecution of Baha'is in Russia and his exile to Siberia during World War II.

A Basic BAHAI

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'i Faith. It is by no

means exhaustive. For a more complete record of Baha'i literature, see

Bibliography of English-language Works on the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, 1844-1985, compiled by William P Collins (Oxford George Ronald, 1990).

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BAHAU'LLAH

The Kitab-i-Aqdas

The Most Holy Book, Baha'u'llah's challenge 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 (Book of Certitude)

The Book of Certitude was written prior to Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission as an explanation of progressive revelation and a proof of the station of the

Bab.

The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah

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 Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas

A compilation of Tablets revealed between 1873 and 1892 which enunciate important principles of Baha'u'llah'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 Baha 'u'llah

A selection of Bah a ' u ' ll ah 's sacred writin gs translated and compi led by the Guardian of the Baha ' i Faith to convey th e spirit of Baha ' u' llah 's life and teachings.

WRITINGS OF THE BAB

Selections from the Writings of the Bab

The first co mpil ati on of the Bab's w ritings to be tra nslated into Engl ish.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

Paris Talks : Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912

Addresses g iven by' Abdu ' l-Baha to a w ide va riety of audiences in Paris in 19 11 - 1912, explainin g the bas ic principl es of the Baha'i Fa ith.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rul ers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and ri se of civili zation and elu cidating th e spiritua l character of true civili za tion.

Selections from the Writings of' Abdu 'l-Baha

A compilation of selected letters from ' A bdu ' l-Baha 's ex tens ive co lTespondence on a wide va riety of topics, including the purpose of life , the nature of love, and the deve lopment of character.

Some Answered Questions

A tran slation of ' Abdu'l-Baha 's answers to a seri es of questio ns posed to Him during interviews w ith Laura C lifford Barney between 1904 and 1906. The topics covered include the influence of the Prophets on th e evo lution of humanity, the Baha'i perspective o n Chri stian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

B AI-IA'f R EADI NG LIST

SELECTED WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

God Passes By

A detailed history of the first one hundred years of the Baha'i Fa ith.

The Promised Day Is Come

A commentary on Baha ' u' llah's letters to th e kings and rulers of th e

world.

The World Order of Baha'u'llah: 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 Bahais 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. paperback. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980.

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 Matin. Rev. ed. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998.

Textbook providing an overview of Baha'i history, teachings, administrative structure, 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'i 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'llah, 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 Baha'i community, and, on the other hand, of eminent and devoted Baha'is appointed for the specific purposes of propagation and protection of the Faith under the guidance of the Head of that Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

Amatu'l-Baha RuJ.iyyih Khanum: (1910- 2000) Mary Sutherland Maxwell , an eminent North American Baha'i who became the wife of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Baha ' i Faith, in 1937, after which she became known as Rul_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. After Shoghi Effendi's passing in 1957 she travelled extensively to teach the Baha'i Faith, consolidate Baha' i communities, and serve as a representative of the Universal House of Justice at major events.

Arc : An arc cut into Mount Canoe! 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-Mul_iammad, 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 non-governmental 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.

GLOSSARY

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.

Bah:i'u'llah: Title assumed by Mirza }Iusayn- '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. Ba ha '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 th e 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 tenns 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 members of a National Spiritual Assembly, or electing members of the Universal House of Justice.

Hands of the Cause of God: Individuals appointed first by Baha' u' ll ah, 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 was no further possibility for appointing 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 Counsel !ors 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;luququ'llah: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the *Kitabi-Aqdas*, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn" (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;luququ ' 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 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 specified new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953- 1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached the remaining unopened territories on the list 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.

Local Spiritual Assembly: The local administrative body in the Baha'i Faith, ordained in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. The nine members are directly

GLOSSARY

elected by secret ballot each year at Rivian 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 and the wife of Baha'u'llah, His son who died in prison in Acre, and 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 Rivian 1999, there were 181 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" describes 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.

Ric;ivan: Arabic for "Paradise." Twelve-day festival (from 21 April through 2 May) commemorating Baha'u'llah's declaration of His

THE BAHAI WORLD

mission to His companions in 1863 in the Garden of Ri<;ivan in Baghdad.

Shoghi Effendi Rabbani: (1897-1957) The Guardian of the Baha' i Faith after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921 , designated in His Will and Testament as His successor in interpreting the Baha'i writings and as Head of the Faith.

Shrine of Baha'u'llah: The resting place of Baha '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 Carmel in Haifa, Israel , a sacred site to Baha' is, and a place of pilgrimage.

Tablet: Divinely revealed scripture. In Baha'i sc ripture, the tennis used to denote writings revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Ten Year Crusade: (1953- 1963) Ten Year Plan for teaching the Baha'i

Faith initiated by Shoghi Effendi , which culminated with the election of the Universal House of Justice, during the centenary of the Declaration of Baha' u' llah. The objectives of the Crusade were the development of the institutions at the World Centre, the consolidation of the communities of the participating National Spiritual Assemblies, and the opening of the main unopened territories. See also Knight of Bahil 'u 'llah.

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 all 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 Carmel in 1983.

Adapted from A Basic Bah*i* Dictionary, Wendi Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989) .

INDEX

- A 91 , 97,98,99, 101 , 102, 322
- 'Abdu'l-Baha 9, 11 , 43, 48, 125, Associated Press 159, 193
167, 168- 70, 180, 187,218, Association for Baha' i Studies 78
250, 254-55 , 276, 333 directory of 317- 19
- passing of 170 Association medicale baha' ie 322
- statements on inter-eligious Atlanta Journal-Constitution 193
- activity 276- 77, 283 Atopare, Silas 85
- writings of 23- 26, 254, 330 Australia 81- 83 , 86, 87, 112, 119,
186, 289, 317,3 19
- advancement of women 7, 48-49, Austria 88,91 , 112, 173, 174
- 50,51,53 , 60, 72, 77, 78, 79, Austria 88,91 , 112, 173, 174
- 81, 82, 83 , 88, 90, 114-16, 315 Auxiliary Boards 334
- African Action on AIDS 115
- B
- Aftenposten (Norway) 193
- Bab, the 8- 9, 11 , 214- 16,238- 39,
Agence France Presse 193
- Agritech '9942, 119, 120
- Shrine of 11 , 35 , 119, 178, 338
- Ahderom , Techeste 75
- Terraces of the Shrine of 28, 41 -
Al-Marayati , Laila 69
- 42, 36- 38
- Ala'i, Qudsiyyih Amin-Amin 303
- writings of 243, 330
- Alaska 59, 62
- Babi religion 9, 238- 39
- Albani a 88, 121 , 193
- Baha' i Association for the Arts 322

Albright, Madeleine 71, 161
Baha' i community 13- 14, 15 , 30,
' Ali-Muhammad, Siyyid
47-48
See Bab, the
Baha ' i centers 52, 55 , 56, 57, 66,
Alli ance for Religions and Conserva-
76, 77, 99
tion 279
conferences 49, 53, 58, 59, 60, 61,
A luze, Jean Paul 84
62, 63,64, 66, 67, 70, 76, 78,
Amarsingh , Mansingh 68- 69
80, 83,84,87,88,92, 97, 99,
Amartuvishin 288
102, 103
Amatu' l-Baha RuDiyih Khanum
development of 52, 56, 59, 67, 71
See Hands of the Cause of God
lega l registration 77, 81, 102
America Intercontinental Conference
public recogn ition of 7
Baha' i Computer and Commun ica-
Andaman and Nicobar Islands 71
tions Association (BCCA) 322
Angola 48-49
Baha' i Era 334
Annan, Kofi 75
Baha' i Esperanto League 322
ann iversari es, Baha'i
Baha'i Faith
celebration in Singapore 79
admin istrativeorderof 11 - 13,27,
celebration in Sri Lanka 80
43 , 333
celebration in Uruguay 70
aims of 15 , 18
Antigua/Barbuda 63, 65
early legal history of 239-48
Area Growth Programs 29
history of 8- 11, 13, 235- 39
Argentina 60, 61 , 317, 319
holy days 336
Armenia 71
laws and moral teachings 14
arts 7, 49, 58, 70, 80, 83 , 85 , 87,89,
public recognition 50, 51 , 53 , 54,

56,57, 60, 63 , 68, 69, 71 , 74, 238- 39, 240- 64, 297,335
 77, 83 , 84, 85 , 89, 90, 91 , 92, legal framework of 239-49,
 93, 97 259- 64
 spiritual teachings 13- 15 Shrine of 175, 192, 338
 Baha ' i Health Agency 322 statements on inteJTeligious
 Baha'i Institute for Higher Education activity 276
 (BIHE) 157, 159- 160 writings of 21 - 23 , 28, 127, 131,
 See also Tran, situation of the 202- 03, 217, 240, 243 ,
 Baha'i community in 329- 30
 Baha'i International Community 8, Bangladesh 72
 15 , 17, 41, 105, 111, 114, 127, Barak, Ehud 193
 291 , 295 , 299, 307,334 Barbados 60, 65
 Geneva Office I 12, 114, 322, 334 Barnes, Kiser 31
 Office for the Advancement of Beijing Platfonn for Action 119
 Women 15, 112, 114- 16, 322, Belarus 88- 89, 94, 96, 102
 334 Belgium 88, 89, 90, 173, 319
 Office of the Environment 15, Belize 61
 112, 322 Ben-Sasson, Menahem 125
 Office of Public Information 15, Benin 49
 111 , 119, 127,322 Berman, Harold J. 232- 34
 Paris Office 119- 120, 121, 322 Bermuda 61
 United Nations Office 15 111 , Bhutan 72
 112, 114, 322 Bistandstorget 96
 Baha ' i Justice Society 322 Blair, Tony 102
 Baha ' i Medical Association of Boddy, Peter 304
 Canada 322 Boff, Leonardo 139
 Baha'i Office of the Envirorunent for Bolivia 7, 60, 61, 64, 67, 97
 Taiwan 322 Bosnia-Herzegovina 120, 133, 279,
 Baha ' i Publishing Trusts 281
 directory of 319- 21 Botswana 49, 122
 Baha'i schools Brazil 61, 62, 127- 28, 134, 152,
 193,
 permanent 57, 86 319
 seasonal 49, 55 , 74, 83 , 84, 90, 94, Brown, Donald and Christine 63
 98, 99, 100 Bulgaria 89, 120, 121
 Baha ' i Studies, Chair for 123- 26 Burkina 49, 58
 Baha'i World, The 172, 179
 Baha'i World Centre 10- 11, 28, 125, c
 184,335 Calgary Herald 193
 Baha ' i World Web site 120 Call to Our Guiding Institutions, A
 Baha ' i worldview 198- 202 105- 06, 117, 268, 278
 Baha'i writings Camacho, Josephina 304
 authority of 202- 06 Cambodia 72- 73, 80
 Cameroon 49, 50, 112, 317, 319
 Bahamas 60
 Baha' u'llah 9- 10, 12, 13 , 17, 18, 35, Canada 7, 62, 65,88, 90, 97, 100,
 47, 107, 132, 192, 209, 214- 16, 102, 120, 159, 169, 172, 175,

INDEX

- 180, 181, 193, 318
 Canary Islands 90
 Canterbury, archbishop of 102, 116, 188, 279
 Cape Times (Cape Town) 110
 Cape Verde 50
 Cardell, Ted 304
 Centre for the Study of the Texts 38-39, 125
 Chad 50
 Chan, Cecilia 73
 Chile 61, 63, 64, 67, 73, 112, 317
 China 119, 226
 Chirac, Jacques 193
 Chua, Vicente 78
 Clarkson, Adrienne 193
 Clinton, William 69, 159, 193
 Collins, Amelia
 See Hands of the Cause of God
 Collymore, Henry 68
 Colombia 63, 112, 119, 317
 Congo, Democratic Republic of 51
 Congo Republic 50
 consultation 335
 Continental Counsellors 335
 Conventions, Baha'i 335
 Communist International 185
 Environment
 Cook Islands 83
 Correa, Sang 52
 Costa Rica 61, 63, 64, 112
 Cote d'Ivoire 49, 51, 112, 319
 Covenant of Baha'u'llah 204-06
 'Abdu'l-Baha 204
 Shoghi Effendi 204-05
 Universal House of Justice 205
 Croatia 88, 99, 102, 121
 Cusanus, Nicolaus 265
 Cyprus 90
 Czech Republic 88, 90, 119
 D
 Dalai Lama 108
 Danesh, Hossein 100
 Dawn-Breakers, The 172
 de Calderon, Isabel Pavon 305
 de Sanchez, Isabel 170
 Deane, William 82
 Denmark 112
 development 58, 66, 73, 75, 77, 81, 82, 83, 86, 97, 116-17, 285-90
 statistics 315-16
 Dhabih-Muqaddam, Sirus 158, 292
 directory of Baha'i agencies 317-24
 Diversity Dance Theatre of Europe (DDT) 97
 Djibouti 51
 Dominican Republic 63
 E
 East Leeward Islands 63
 Eastern Caroline Islands 83
 Eck, Diana 269, 270
 Ecuador 64, 67, 119, 317
 education, moral 66, 71, 73, 82, 97
 El Salvador 64
 Ellis, Wilma 71
 Encyclopedia Britannica 8
 environment
 See Baha'i International
 ni ty, Office of the
 Eritrea 51
 Estonia 43, 90, 94
 Estrella, Carlos Manuel 63
 Ethiopia 52, 112, 187
 European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF) 103, 323
 European Baha'i Youth Council 95, 102, 121, 323
 European Family Life Task Force 97
 European Union (EU) 120
 F
 Farkas, Florian 93
 Ferdosian, Habibullah 159
 Ficca, Dirk 109
 Fiji Islands 320

Danesh , Roshan 223
 Davaadulam 288
 Four Year Plan 28, 29, 46, 70, 90
 Fowler LeBlanc, Diane 62
 Fozdar, Shirin 79
 France 91 , 97, 120, 159, 176, 193
 Freehill, Mary 93
 French Guiana 64- 65
 Fresnedi, Jaime R. 78
 Fukada, Takeo 273
 passing of I 93
 G
 "Pilgrimage, The" (film by) 192
 Gabon 52
 recognition of 193
 Gambia, the 52
 "This is Faith" (poem by) 176
 Georgia 73
 travels of 186- 90
 Germany 58, 65 , 91 , 97, 120, 172,
 tribute to 165- 95
 173 , 174,318, 320
 Collins, Amelia 181
 Ghadimi , Shoghi 305- 06
 Root, Martha 43 , 308
 Ghana 7, 52, 100, 318
 Varga, 'Ali-Mu~ammad 92, 99
 Globe and Mail (Toronto) 193
 "Happy Hippo Show, The" 95 , 121
 glossary of Baha'i terms 333- 38
 Harald V, King (of Norway) 95
 God Passes By 11 , 178
 Hatcher, William S. 91
 Gonez, Arpad 92
 Hawaiian Islands 83 , 115, 318
 Gorkhapatra (Nepal) 77
 Health for Humanity 323
 Greece 92, 97
 Hebrew University of Jerusalem , the
 Greenland 62
 120, 123- 26
 Grenada 65
 See also Baha'i Studies, Chair for
 Grossman, Hartmut 44, 45--46
 Hedayat, Maria Augusta 94
 Guadeloupe 65
 Finland 62, 90
 Five Year Plan 29
 30, 165- 95 , 333-34
 early life 167- 71
 "Green Light Expedition, The"
 of 192
 marriage of 174- 76
 memorials gatherings for 74
 message of the Universal House
 of Justice regarding 194- 95

Henderson, Robert 70
 Guardian of the Baha'i Faith
 Herzog, Aura 41
 See Shoghi Effendi
 Hick, John 269, 275- 76
 Guardianship 12
 Hohener, Hans 101
 Guinea 7, 53
 Holy Days 336
 Gurirab, Theo-Ben 115
 Holy Year (1953) 180
 Gushiken, Luiz 129
 Honduras 66
 Gutierrez, Jose 63
 Hong Kong 73 , 320
 Guyana 65- 66
 Hong Kong Baha' i Professional
 H Forum 323
 Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, Hossain, Syud 171
 The 95, 121 Houses of Worship 15
 Haiti 64 in Uganda 59
 J:Iaji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i 240, in the United States 180- 81
 241,242, 244,246 in Western Samoa 87
 Hakiman, Sina 159 human rights 64, 75 , 79, 112- 14
 Hands of the Cause of God 12, Human Rights Education Newsletter
 182- 86, 192, 193, 335 113
 Amatu ' l-Baha Rul)iyiyih Khanum

J NDEX

Hungary 92, 93 , 119, 121 Jerusalem Post 193
 I:Iuququ'llah 92, 99, 249, 336 John Paul II, Pope 73 , 118
 I:Iusayn-'Ali , Mirza Jones, Rose 305
 See Baha'u ' llah Jordan 117, 120
 Jovet, Carmen 68
 I
 Iceland 93 K
 Imperial , Reynaldo 78 Kashefi-Najafabadi , Hedayat 158,
 India 72, 73- 74, 119, 191, 318, 320 292
 indigenous peop les 7, 55, 61 , 66, 68, Kazakhstan 74- 75 , 98, 119
 79, 82 Kazemzadeh, Firuz 69
 Indonesia 279 Kenney, Jim 106
 Intercontinental Baha'i Conference Kenya 53, 112, 119, 121 , 317,320
 180- 81 , 184 Khajeh, Farzad 159
 interfaith activities 62, 67, 69, 72, Khan, Peter J. 126, 197
 73 , 74, 85, 9 1, 94, 95 , 100, 102 Kim, Dae-Jung 75
 International Baha ' i Archives 11 , Kim-Farley, Robert 82- 83
 38- 39, 185 Kiribati 83

Linco In, A lbet141 , 11 8, 124, 125 90
 Linco In, Joan 58 Montessori schoo l 169
 Lithuania 43 , 45-46, 90, 94, 119 Montreal Gazette 193
 Locke, Kevi n 55, 108 Monument Gardens 337
 Lockhart, Joe 159 Mottahedeh Deve lopment Services
 Los Angeles Times 193 323
 Luxembourg 91 , 94, I 02 , 120 Mottahedeh, Mil dred 307- 08
 Mo un t Carmel 337
M
 Baha ' i projects on 33-42
 Macau 7, 100
 Mozambique 55
 Macedonia 120
 Munsiff, Meherangiz 308
 Madagascar 54
 Myanmar 77 , 11 9
 Magidor, Menachem 123
 Ma laysia 76- 77 , 80, 3 18, 320 N
 Ma li 49 Nakbjavani, Violette 167
 Malietoa Tanurnati li II, Head of State Nam ibia 55, 115
 (ofSamoa) 188, 193 Naraq i , Sirt'.1s 85
 Mandela, Nelson I 09 Narayanan, Kocheri l R. 74
 Manifestations of God 8- 10, 13 Na~ iri ' d-Din Shah 334
 Mariana Islands 83 Nasiri zadi h, Ata'u' ll ah Ham id
 159,
 Markovich, Ivo 281 292
 Marks , Amy 108, I 09 , 11 0 National Post 193
 Mail inique 65 Navo n, ltzhak 125
 Mash riq u ' 1-Ad hka r 249 Nelson , Dorothy 69
 materi alism , dogmatic 200 Nepa l 72, 77- 78
 Mauritius 7, 54 Netherlands 94, 95 , 120, 12 1, 320
 Maxwell , Mary New Ca ledon ia and the Loyalty
 See Amatu' l-Baha Rt'.1hiyyih Islands 84
 Khan um under Hands of the New Era Development Institute
 Ca use of God (NEDI) 96
 Maxwe ll , May 167- 74 174, 177- 78, New York Times 193
 180 New Zea land 84- 85, 87, 3 18
 Maxwell , William Sutherl and 167, Nicaragua 67
 178, 180 Niederreiter, Leo 309
 Memem , Fernando Perez 63 Niger 49 , 58, 320
 Merhatsion, Aba ineh 306 Nigeria 3 19, 320
 Mexico 66 Nineteen Day Feast 337
 Michael , King (of Roman ia) 193

I NDEX

Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cam bo- Prescription For living 179
 dia 72 Priceless Pearl, The 174, 179

Northern Ireland 103
 Norway 62, 95, 97, 320
 278
 Norwegian Agency for Development
 Cooperation (NORAD) 97
 Norwegian Bahá'í Committee for
 Social and Economic Development-
 Q
 Quem esta escrevendo ofuturo? 25
 ment 96
 textos para o Seculo XXI 127-
 "Nuit de l'Espoir" 91
 R
 Obituaries 303-12
 race unity 47, 55, 70, 93
 O'Brien, Terrence 84
 Rafał, Polin 44
 Olinga, George 58
 Raman, Yaradaraja Y. 107
 One Country 112, 121, 285
 Ramirez, Zenaida 31, 80
 Open University
 Rawhani, Shohreh 108
 See Bahá'í Institute for Higher
 reading list of basic Bahá'í books
 Education
 329-331
 Ottawa Citizen 193
 Rickivan 337
 p
 Pakistan 72, 78, 321
 Panama 61, 67
 , 321
 Papua New Guinea 85
 Paraguay 67
 Parliaments of the World's Religions Ross, Peggy 309
 117, 267-68, 272, 278, 282
 Royaumont Process 120
 Declaration of 272-73
 Ruggova, Ibrahim 97
 "Payam-e Doost" 70
 Rushdy, Abbas 309-10
 peace 17
 Russian Federation 62, 90, 95, 3
 19,
 Lesser Peace 336
 321
 Peace Week 88, 90
 Rwanda 55, 56, 59
 Peralta, Paul 63
 Peres, Shimon 120
 s
 Sabah 79, 80
 Pringle, Ruth 66
 Promise of World Peace, The 17,
 Prosperity of Humankind, The 18
 Puerto Rico 68, 318

Pereyra, G ladi al iza 63
 Sabri , Hassan 55
 Perez, Giora 38, 39
 Saeed, Shapoor 3 10
 Peru 6 1, 67 , 11 9
 Sah ba, Fari borz 38,4 1
 Ph il ip, Prince 188, 193
 Sa lgado, Sebastiao 128
 Phil ippines 78- 79, 80, 11 9, 3 18, 32 1
 Samii , Ka myab 89
 Pho losi, K hoel i 54
 Samoa 85
 Pihl ainen, Ma ij a 44, 45
 Sanchez, Mercedes 310- 11
 pioneer 337
 Sao Tome and Princ ipe 55 , 56- 57
 Po land 90, 96, 32 1
 Sarawak 79, 80
 Portugal 7, 97 , 32 1
 Savi, Julio 94

Schaefer, Udo 277
 scholars, Baha'i
 qualities of 210- 2 13
 scholarship
 Baha'i approach to 210-13
 scholarsh ip, Baha ' i 197- 222
 acqui sition of knowledge 206- 14
 and academic studies 208- 09
 categories of 2 14- 2 1
 appli cation of Baha'i teachings
 to contemporary issues
 218-19
 study of historical origins of
 Faith 2 14- 16
 study of religious concepts
 217- 18
 study of the Baha'i community
 219- 21
 textual analysis 2 16- 17
 future prospects 221
 range of 213- 2 1
 Selassie, Hai le 187
 Senega l 56
 Serbia 97
 Seventh World Assemb ly of the
 World Conference on Religion

Slovakia 98- 99
 Slovenia 99, 12 1
 Smith, Charles Z . 69
 Smith, Chris 102
 Smith , Helen 46
 Smith-Te ll ez, Leilani 50
 social and econom ic development
 See development
 Sole, Jan 90
 Solomon Islands 85
 Sorabjee, Zena 73
 SouthAfrica 105 , 114, 117, 119,
 268,321
 Spain 99, 11 9,3 19,32 1
 Spi ritual Assemb ly, Local 336
 Spirihia l Assemb ly, National 12, 337
 formation of 28, 43-46
 Spiritual Assemb ly, Regional 337
 Sri Lanka 7, 72 , 80, 100
 St. Vincent and the Grenad ines 68
 statistics of the Baha'i wo rl d commu-
 nity 313- 16
 development statistics 3 15- 16
 studies, Baha ' i 197
 Sii.dwestrundfimk 91, 120
 Suriname 68

and Peace 117
 Seychelles 56
 Seychelles Nation 56
 Sharon, Moshe 41, 100, 124, 125,
 126
 See also Baha 'i Studies, Chair for
 Shaykhism 237- 238

T

Shoghi Effendi 10- 12, 16, 125,
 Tablet 338
 170- 80, 191, 250, 259, 338
 Tablets of the Divine Plan 10, 169
 passing of 12, 182
 Taherzadeh, Adib 31, 311 - 12
 statements on interreligious
 Taiwan 80, 321
 activity 277
 Tanzania 57
 writings of 16, 208, 221, 331
 teaching the Baha 'i Faith 18, 48, 50,
 Sicily 98
 51, 52, 54, 55, 58, 64, 65, 66,
 Sierra Leone 56- 57, 189, 279
 68, 70, 79, 85, 86, 88, 89, 93,
 Simiyu, Y. G. 53
 97, 98, 103
 Singapore 79- 80, 319
 Temple of Understanding 267
 Singh, Harvansh 311
 Ten Year Crusade 182- 83, 184, 186,

I N D E X

338	International Year for Peace 15,
Thailand 80, 112, 119	17, 278
Togo 7, 49, 58, JOO	Millennium Forum, Summit, and
Tonga 86	Assembly 118
Toronto Star 193	United Nations Children's Fund
Towards a Global Ethic 109	(UNICEF) 112, 119, 128,
286,	
training institutes 28, 47, 54, 60, 65,	287
67, 71, 73, 77, 80, 89	United Nations Development Fund
Tran, Rosalie, 77	for Women (UNIFEM) 112,
Trinidad and Tobago 65, 68, 112,	116, 118
319	United Nations Economic and
truth, independent investigation of	Social Council (ECOSOC)
112,	
201	114, 119

Tsend, Maitar 289
 Turkey 30, 101 - 02
 Organi-
 Turkish-Greek Women 's Peace zation (UNESCO) 9 1, 115 ,
 128,
 Initiative (WINPEACE) 101 273 , 299
 Turning Point for All Nations 18 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
 Twelve Month Plan 29
 11 9
 u United Nations Information
 Center
 Uganda 58, 59, 122, 32 1
 (UN IC) 79
 Ukraine 88, 96, 102, 113, 120
 Universal Declaration of Human
 United Kingdom 87, 95 , 102, 103 ,
 Rights 295 , 296, 298
 162, 318, 32 1
 World Conference against Racism
 United Nations 15 , 64, 75, 11 2, 11 8,
 160- 6 1, 291 , 295, 297,299
 World Summit for Social Develop-
 Commission on Human Rights
 ment 18, 11 9
 113, 158, 160, 161
 United Religions Initiative, the 274
 Commission on the Status of
 United States 7, 8, 62, 69-70, 7 1, 90,
 Women 115
 95, 100, 113 , 120, 122, 159,
 Committee on the Elimination of
 161 , 162, 321
 Racial Discrimination 11 4, 11 9
 Universal House of Justice 8, 12, 27,
 Convention on the Rights of the
 35 , 192- 95, 250, 254-59, 338
 Child 286
 first election of 186
 Convention on the Elimination of
 legislative authority of 250- 53
 all Forms of Discrimination
 messages of, 194
 Against Women (CEDAW) 11 6,
 Uruguay 70, 113
 11 9
 Uzbekistan 8 1, 119
 Decade for Human Rights Education 112

fiftieth anniversary of 18 Valuing Spirituality in Development
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 117
93 Vancouver Sun 193
Vanuatu 86-87

Vardanyan, Goar 71 World Economic Forum 273
Varqa, 'Ali-Muhammad World Faiths Development Dialogue
See Hands of the Cause of God (WFDD) 116-17, 279-80
Venezuela 67, 70, 319 World Health Organization (WHO)
Vice, Sylvia 45 83, 112
Vietnam 81 World Parliament of Religions 106,
Voice of America 161, 193 108, 266
van Czekus, Rolf 66 See also Parliament of the World's
Religions

w

World Summit for Social Development
Walters, Richard Harding 312
ment I 19
Warren, Lally 108
Washington Post 193 x
Weizman, Ezer 193 Xiuhua News Agency 73
West Leeward Islands 71 y
Western Caroline Islands 87
Yem, Jean-Jacques 49
Western Samoa 85, 188
Young, Ricardo 149
Who is Writing the Future? 18, 53,
Yuseffian, Sohrab 97
54, 56, 63, 71, 74, 76, 88,
youth 49, 50, 61, 64, 65, 67, 70, 80,
127-28
84, 85, 87, 88, 89, 92, 98, 102
Wolfensohn, James 279
World Bank 116-17, 279 z
World Community Foundation 323 Zambia 59
World Conference on Religion and Zimbabwe 59
Peace 267, 279 ZIPOPO
World Congress of Faiths 267 See "Happy Hippo Show, The"
Zuber, Robert 121