Children

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Children
Persons in the stage of life from conception, when the soul comes into being, to
the age of fifteen, which marks the beginning of spiritual maturity or adulthood.

ARTICLE OUTLINE: THE NATURE OF CHILDREN
The Nature of Children Children, according to the
Bahá’í teachings, are
The Education of Children independent beings of great
intrinsic value. They
The Well-being and Protection of Children do not belong to their parents
but to the Creator,
Children and the Bahá’í Community their true parent.
Children are born in a state of
potentiality rather than of either goodness or sin.
ARTICLE RESOURCES:
"The hearts of all children are of the utmost
Notes purity," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
states. "They are mirrors
Other Sources and Related Reading upon which no dust has
fallen." 1

The child’s unsullied heart is not a blank slate, however. Possessing both a spiritual and a material nature, the one attuned to God and the other to the material world, the child is born with an individual temperament and with spiritual and intellectual capacities for developing virtues, abilities, and talents. Thus no child is inherently bad or inherently good. Children manifest the natural variation of capacity among human beings: "This difference does not imply good or evil," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, "but is simply a difference of degree."2

The development of the individual child is not simply a matter of fulfilling one’s individual potential.
Rather, it is seen in the context of the purpose of all human life: to know and

love God, to acquire
virtues, and to contribute to the advancement of civilization.

Children exhibit qualities that reflect a mixture of innate, inherited, and acquired traits. Each quality can lead to either negative or positive behaviors: "Every child is potentially the light of the world—and at the same time its darkness," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá observes.3 Depending on how children are trained and how they use their energies, their individual qualities can be used for good or for evil. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that "from the beginning of his life you can see in a nursing child the signs of greed, of anger and of temper." One might infer, as a result, that "good and evil are innate" and that "this is contrary to the pure goodness of nature and creation." Such is not the case, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá clarifies: "The answer to this is that greed, which is to ask for something more, is a praiseworthy quality provided that it is used suitably. So if a man is greedy to acquire science and knowledge, or to become compassionate, generous and just, it is most praiseworthy . . . but if he does not use these qualities in a right way, they are blameworthy."4

Baha'i children at a Naw- Rúz (New Year) gathering in The Gambia. 23 Jan. 2005. © Bahá’í International Community. Bahá’í Media Bank

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

The Bahá’í Faith stresses the importance of spiritual and moral education in shaping the character of children. Education is also the best means to secure their future happiness, because "human happiness is founded upon spiritual behavior" 5 and attaining "a lofty level" of virtues. 6 Bahá’u’lláh describes each person as "a mine rich in gems of inestimable value" whose inner "treasures" can be discovered and developed only through education. 7 Therefore, children should be valued for the treasures within them and encouraged to develop these qualities. The education of children is integral to the advancement of humanity.

The teachings of the Bahá’í Faith recognize various kinds of education, including training and development of the physical body; intellectual training; and the education of the human spirit. The importance of all these is stressed; and spiritual education—which includes prayer, learning sacred texts, and reciting them—is emphasized as being primary. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out: "Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a

deadly poison, a frightful danger." 8 The combination of spiritual education with other forms of education is ideal.

The Bahá’í teachings uphold the training of the human spirit as the primary purpose of religion and as the "reason the holy Manifestations of God appear in the human world." 9 The basis for spiritual education is the core of religious faith and the teachings brought to humankind by the Messengers of God, "but this in such a measure," Bahá’u’lláh cautions, "that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry."10

A pupil from a Sydney primary school reads a prayer at the service held in the Bahá’í House of Worship, in Sydney, Australia, on Universal Children's Day.

Because training determines how a child’s capacities will be manifested, those who fulfill the responsibility to educate children merit a high station. Children are deeply influenced by their environment, including the vigilance, love, and kindness shown by caregivers and the level of excellence to which the individual child is expected to rise.

The Bahá’í teachings hold that in the physical world God entrusts children to the care or stewardship of their parents, who in turn require support by the extended family and community. Childrearing, whether through procreation or adoption, is a primary purpose of marriage. The practice of adoption is encouraged, although "the separation of a child from its natural parents is a tragedy that society must do its best to prevent or mitigate." 11

Both fathers and mothers have the duty to strive with great effort to educate their children, and mothers have a special station as the first educators of their children. The education and training of children are among the noblest of deeds and the best of all ways to worship God. The Bahá’í teachings urge parents to pray for their children even before they are born; to love and nurture them; and to educate them to fulfill their innate potential and to contribute to the advancement of civilization. The parent’s task is to discern a child’s special characteristics or strengths in order to bring them from potentiality to reality. Although "education cannot alter the inner essence," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, "it doth exert tremendous influence, and with this power it can bring forth from the individual whatever

perfections and capacities are deposited within him." 12

The Bahá’í writings specify that the education of children through formal schooling is compulsory and that it should be universally available. To support parents in their duty to educate their children, the community at large, including the administrative institutions of the Bahá’í Faith (See: Administration, Bahá’í), has various roles and responsibilities for establishing, financing, and protecting the education of children. The teaching profession is highly regarded, and in the Bahá’í law of inheritance, which is applied if a person dies intestate, the individual’s teachers are numbered among the heirs.

Childhood is by far the most sensitive period for the development of character and the attainment of a sense of human dignity. "It is extremely difficult to teach the individual and refine his character once puberty is passed," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá observes.13

From infancy, children should be taught "faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits."14 The love of God and the fear of God (in the sense of a profound awe and respect for God’s power and an unwillingness to disobey God’s laws), when taught tenderly and consistently, create an aversion to evil. Children are meant to develop such moral integrity that they would rather die than commit degrading acts. "The individual must be educated to such a high degree that he would rather have his throat cut than tell a lie," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, "and would think it easier to be slashed with a sword or pierced with a spear than to utter calumny or be carried away by wrath." 15

For the purpose of their moral and spiritual education, children are to be raised with an awareness of the oneness of God and of the laws of religion, with a realization of the oneness of humankind and of the importance of unity in diversity, with a sense that they have a meaningful place in the world, and with an understanding that they are meant to develop their own ways of serving humanity. The Bahá’í teachings particularly stress certain kinds of learning by children that affect character and influence development throughout an individual’s lifetime. Music, for example, "has wonderful sway and effect in

the hearts of children," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states. Through it their "latent talents . . . will find expression." He recommends that music be taught in the schools because of its power both to uplift the spirit and to brighten life with "enjoyment." 16 He also emphasizes the importance of children being taught kindness to all living creatures, beginning with animals: "Train your children from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals." 17

During childhood, the groundwork for both work skills and attitudes toward work must be laid. Bahá’u’lláh regards work, when undertaken wholeheartedly and in a spirit of service, as a high form of worship, and He enjoins all people to engage in a craft, trade, or profession. The child must prepare for a future profession by acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge. "Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá urges. "Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind."18 Through systematic education, children "must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims." 19

Child studying at a Bahá’í training institute, 1990s, Puka Puka, Bolivia. © Bahá’í International Community. Bahá’í Media Bank

Although the Bahá’í teachings strongly emphasize learning all branches of knowledge, children have varying capacities and interests. Young people should have the freedom to follow their own preferences in pursuing training for their work or profession, to whatever levels their choices require. "Let consideration be given to the child’s own preference and inclinations," ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asserts. "Let him be placed in the field for which he hath an inclination, a desire, and a talent." 20

The education of girls is strongly emphasized in the Bahá’í teachings, "for the greatness of this wondrous Age will be manifested as a result of progress in the world of women."21 For the purpose of advancing civilization, the education of girls is even more essential than that of boys, since mothers, as the first educators of children, have a direct impact on future generations. According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,

the education of girls should include "the various branches of knowledge," 22 following the same
curriculum as boys; character development; and health instruction that focuses on "whatever will
nurture the health of the body and its physical soundness, and how to guard their children from
disease." 23

The Bahá’í teachings also stress that girls must be highly educated in order to take an equal place with
men in all fields of human endeavor, including agriculture, commerce, government, and industry. To the
extent that women advance "toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote
and control in human government," they become a profound force for world peace.24 The education and
advancement of women will assure that the elements of society that are traditionally considered
masculine or feminine will become more evenly balanced.

THE WELL-BEING AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

The Bahá’í teachings recognize that the well-being of children and their development into responsible
adulthood depends on interacting rights and responsibilities that originate within the family and extend
to society in general. "The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of
the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none
of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations
to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other
members of the household have their certain prerogatives. . . . The injury of one shall be considered
the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all."25

Thus children have the right to be treated with respect and gentleness within the family, as do all the members of the family, and by others responsible for their care. Children must not be subjected to discipline in the form of verbal or physical abuse, "for the child’s character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse." 26 Those who raise and teach children should not rely on harsh measures; according to Shoghi Effendi, "Love and kindness have far greater influence than punishment upon the improvement of human character." 27

A Nepalese Bahá’í children's class in October 2002. Bahá’í

administrative institutions are called to be
Photographer: Ryan Lash. © Bahá’í International
Community. Bahá’í Media Bank "uncompromising and vigilant in their commitment to the
protection of the children entrusted to their care"—a duty that specifically includes protecting children from sexual abuse. 28 In addition to being punished according to
any civil laws, parents who commit incest or knowingly fail to protect their children from sexual abuse
are subject to sanctions under Bahá’í law.

Children must also be protected from forced or premature marriage. Bahá’í children under the age of
fifteen—the age of spiritual maturity—may not be married or betrothed, even with their consent. Once
they have reached either the age of fifteen or the age at which it is legal to marry under civil law,
Bahá’ís are free to choose whom they wish to marry, subject to the additional requirement of Bahá’í
law that they then obtain the consent of all living natural parents. 29

Children, for their part, have reciprocal responsibilities. Parents must educate their children, and
children must apply themselves to their studies: "It is incumbent upon the children to exert themselves
to the utmost in acquiring the art of reading and writing" and in acquiring "such branches of knowledge
as are useful and necessary, as well as learning an art or skill."30 Parents are bound to guide their
children with love, setting a good example and disciplining them fairly and firmly but without resort to
violence; and children, in turn, are enjoined to obey, serve, and attempt to please their parents. Such
behavior lays the foundation for adults to exercise filial responsibilities later in life: assisting their aged
or ill parents, praying for them in this world and the next, and engaging in charitable acts on their
behalf.

CHILDREN AND THE BAHÁ’Í COMMUNITY

"When a Bahá’í couple has a child it is a matter of joy to the whole local community as well as to the
couple," a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing council of
the Bahá’í Faith, states. 31 Bahá’í children under fifteen, although they "do not automatically inherit the
Faith of their parents," 32 are integral members of the Bahá’í community. Their parents may register
them on Bahá’í membership rolls, following administrative procedures left

to the discretion of each national Bahá'í governing council (See: Administration, Bahá'í.Institutions of Bahá'í Administration.National Spiritual Assemblies). A child with one Bahá'í parent may be registered as a Bahá'í unless the parent who is not a Bahá'í objects. Children whose parents are not Bahá'ís may become members of the Bahá'í community if they wish, provided that their parents agree. All children, regardless of their registration status, are welcome at the various Bahá'í community events. At the age of fifteen, Bahá'í children are free to reaffirm that they are Bahá'ís or, without stigma, to leave the Bahá'í Faith; neither their parents nor their community may compel them to be Bahá'ís.

Children are encouraged to attend holy day observances and monthly community gatherings, called Nineteen Day Feasts (See: Administration, Bahá'í.Institutions of Bahá'í Administration.The Nineteen Day Feast), where they may participate in a general program or attend specially arranged activities. Bahá'ís should seek to have their children excused from school on Bahá'í holy days and should plan appropriate activities for them on those days. Bahá'í children may participate in a variety of community events and activities, including administrative service on local or national committees, and may donate money to the Bahá'í Faith, a privilege that is limited to Bahá'ís.

Children have played a noteworthy role in the Bahá'í Faith since its earliest days in the Middle East, with Bahá'í children experiencing persecution along with the adults and sometimes sacrificing their lives. Perhaps the best-known child martyr of the early period was Rúhu'lláh Varqá, the twelve-year-old son of the poet Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad Varqá; father and son were executed together in Tehran in May 1896 (See: Tehran.The Bahá'í Period to 1921).

Students in the primary department of the Tarbíyat school for girls, Tehran, Iran. National Bahá'í Archives, United States

Even before the end of the nineteenth century, Bahá'í communities responded to the need to educate children by founding schools for boys and also, in a pioneering effort, for girls. Around 1880, for example, a married couple, 'Alavíyyih Khánum and Mullá 'Alí Ján, in the village of Máhfurúzak in Mazandaran Province in northern Iran, created an elementary school for boys and

another for girls.
Between 1897 and 1907 Bahá’í schools for boys and girls were fully functioning in Ashgabat in Russia’s Transcaspian Territory (See: Mashriqu’l-Adhkár.Houses of Worship around the World.Chicago), with kindergartens being established a decade later. The Tarbíyat schools for boys and for girls in Tehran, recognized by the government in 1903 and 1911 respectively, set high academic standards for pupils of all backgrounds (See Tehran.The Bahá’í Period to 1921) and were supported by Western Bahá’ís, who organized to provide scholarships and send teachers. Bahá’í schools providing a modern education to large numbers of Iranian children, non-Bahá’í as well as Bahá’í, flourished in over twenty locations—including such cities as Kashan, Hamadan, Qazvin, and Yazd—until 1934, when they were shut by government order because they declined to remain open on Bahá’í holy days, which the Board of Education did not recognize as official holidays.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, individual Bahá’ís also acted out of deep concern for the needs of children. Among others, Victoria Bedikian of the United States and Sarah Louisa, Lady Blomfield, of England led efforts to assist orphaned and destitute children.

From the 1930s onward, expansion plans began systematically spreading the Bahá’í Faith throughout the world, propelled by the movement from place to place of Bahá’ís, including families with children. Generations of pioneers—as Bahá’ís who relocate from their home country or region for the purpose of spreading their religion are called—left larger Bahá’í communities, particularly in Iran and North America, to spread the Bahá’í Faith widely but thinly around the globe. Thus children have played their part in an activity that Bahá’ís regard as one of the most meritorious forms of service.

In recent decades, the small and scattered Bahá’í communities that the pioneers established have grown in size, enabling them increasingly to diversify their activities. In the process these communities are attempting both to integrate their own children into all aspects of community life, which sometimes involves overcoming cultural barriers to equal participation by children and youth, and to promote the spiritual and physical well-being of all children.

Since the 1970s the Universal House of Justice, in its worldwide Bahá’í development plans, has emphasized the fundamental responsibility of local and national Bahá’í communities to attend to the religious training of children, with a special focus on curriculum development, regular classes open to children of any religious background, teacher training, and enrichment of

Students and their teacher at the Ocean of Light International School, Tonga, 2003. © Bahá’í International Community. Bahá’í Media Bank

literature for children and youth. Despite this focus, as the twentieth century neared an end, progress in establishing Bahá’í children’s classes remained limited. "A small number of countries had many years of experience with systematic, sequential weekly children’s classes," according to an assessment published in 2002. "In most parts of the world, however, children’s classes were few, and a majority of those that did exist were held only sporadically. Many classes had no materials, much less a series of comprehensive, systematic lesson plans. Children of different ages were usually grouped together in one class, further limiting the effectiveness of the teaching." 33

In November 1999 the Universal House of Justice, focusing on the link between child education and the worldwide growth and development of the Bahá’í community, called the Bahá’ís to "new levels of intensity" in integrating child education into "the process of community development." 34 A few months later, observing that the efforts made in previous decades had "fallen short of the need," the Universal House of Justice challenged the Bahá’ís to adopt an appropriate "attitude" toward children and a heightened level of "general interest" in the welfare of the community’s "most precious treasure": "They are a trust no community can neglect with impunity. An all-embracing love of children, the manner of treating them, the quality of the attention shown them, the spirit of adult behaviour toward them—these are all among the vital aspects of the requisite attitude. . . . An atmosphere needs to be maintained in which children feel that they belong to the community and share its purpose." The Universal House of Justice placed these concerns within the context of world conditions affecting children: "In the current state of society, children face a cruel fate. Millions and millions in country after

country are dislocated socially. . . . Our worldwide community cannot escape the consequences of these conditions. This realization should spur us all to urgent and sustained effort in the interests of children and the future." 35

An immediate upsurge in Bahá'í child education activities occurred as increasing numbers of countries established an administrative structure responsible for educating children; adopted existing curricular materials or began developing new ones; produced new literature or made literature more available to teachers; and, in particular, strove to recruit and train teachers for children's classes. A particularly noteworthy development has been the incorporation of teacher training as an essential component within the system of Bahá'í training institutes, the Faith's primary engine of human resource development at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and the designation of children's classes as a core activity for Bahá'í communities. As a result, many countries increased the number of regular children's classes as well as other activities, including children's conferences in places as diverse as Cambodia and Canada; summer camps in Colombia and the Cook Islands; and special programs during national Bahá'í "summer schools" in such places as Malawi and Belgium. 36

On the global level the Bahá'í International Community, a recognized nongovernmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations, representing the Bahá'ís of the world, strongly supports United Nations conventions and programs that have the goal of protecting and educating children. It has held consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) since 1976; participates in child-related activities at the United Nations, such as the General Assembly Special Session on Children held on 8–10 May 2002; and has chaired UNICEF's Global Forum, an executive committee of NGOs from around the world.

Members of a Bahá'í Education in State Schools (BESS) class in Perth, Western Australia, displaying their work at a school assembly. 2005. © Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'í Media Bank

Bahá'í organizations at the local and national level participate in a wide range of development activities around the world that benefit children. In Western Ghana, for example, the Olinga Foundation for Human Development operates a literacy project in the local language that has reached thousands of children and adolescents in rural schools. In Australia a program

of Bahá’í Education in
State Schools, which began in the 1980s as an effort by Bahá’í parents in
New South Wales to provide
classes for their children during periods set aside for religious education,
has expanded to more than
three hundred state-run schools throughout the country, with some six thousand
students ranging in
age from five to fifteen years. The classes include students from a wide
variety of religious backgrounds
and teach them to develop virtues, to respect the diversity of religious
traditions, to foster attitudes and
practices that promote peace, and to think independently.

The involvement of the Mongolian Development Center in supporting the
implementation of the United
Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has led to the creation of a
program that empowers
kindergarten teachers to foster the development of moral capabilities in their
students. Further, the
Cambodian Organization for Research, Development and Education has established
a network of village
tutorial classes and centers of learning, most notably in Battambang Province,
that provide education
for children and adolescents by developing human resources in the local
community.

In addition to the activities of such agencies, individual Bahá’ís and
local and national Bahá’í institutions
have established several hundred schools serving thousands of students from
preprimary through to
secondary level. These range in size and complexity, from a group of fifty
tutorial schools established by
Fundación Jayuir in Colombia that serve the indigenous Wayuu people living on
the Venezuelan border
to the Townshend International School in the Czech Republic, an accredited
coeducational boarding
school in Hluboká that consciously seeks to foster an appreciation for human
diversity among students
from widely differing backgrounds.

Bahá’ís have been particularly active in developing programs that focus on
moral education based on
the principle of the oneness of humankind. "Children who learn to accept
themselves and others will be
able to envision a world in which diversity need not be a source of conflict,"
the Bahá’í International
Community has stated. "Respect for human rights creates the possibility for
peace and provides a

realistic foundation for an all-embracing, cooperative social order based on justice." 37 Translating this vision into social action, the Institute for Moral and Spiritual Education in Russia has drawn on stories, poems, and fairy tales from Russian literature and folklore to create moral education materials for children and is providing teacher training in the use of these books in the classroom. In New York, professional artists, teachers, and volunteers have assisted the Children's Theater Company—using weekly classes and rehearsals in drama, dance, and musical theater—to address character education, multiethnic cultural interaction, good citizenship, conflict resolution, and literacy among children of diverse backgrounds aged four to eighteen.

The Bahá'í attitude toward children thus stems from profound respect for the noble nature of the child and the richness of the child's inner reality. In the Bahá'í view, an upbringing that recognizes the human rights of children within the context of the oneness of humankind, that treats them with love and tenderness, and that conveys high expectations in cultivating virtues—when combined with commitment to achieving excellence in the sciences and arts—will train children to be "both learned and good." Such an upbringing will produce "light upon light." 38

Students in a class at Townshend International School, Czech Republic, 1996. © Bahá'í International Community. Bahá'í Media Bank

Authors: Nancy A. Davis and the Editors

Notes:

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2. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, comp. and trans. Laura Clifford Barney, 1st pocket-size ed. (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984, 2008 printing) 57: 212.
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138.
4. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions 57: 215.
5. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 100.2: 134.
6. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation 5.15: 530.
7. Bahá’u’lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, trans.
Shoghi Effendi, 1st pocket-size ed.
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8. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in The Compilation of Compilations, comp. Universal House
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10. Bahá’u’lláh, Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed after the
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11. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, in
Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í
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12. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 104.2: 139.
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16. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation 8.1: 71–72.
17. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 138.4: 167.
18. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 102.3: 136.
19. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 110.1: 142–43.
20. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, 627: 282.
21. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, 618: 276.
22. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, 631: 284.
23. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 94.3: 131.
24. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation 5.14: 530.
25. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation 6.15: 232–33.
26. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections 95.2: 132.
27. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, in Compilation of
Compilations, vol. 1, 667: 300–01.
28. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 24 Jan.
1993, in National Spiritual
Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, Guidelines for Spiritual
Assemblies on Domestic Violence: A
Supplement to Developing Distinctive Bahá’í Communities (Evanston, IL, USA:
Office of Assembly
Development, 2003) 23.
29. "Bahá’u’lláh has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is
required for a Bahá’í marriage. This
applies whether the parents are Bahá’ís or non-Bahá’ís, divorced for

years or not. This great law He has
laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude
and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the
eternal journey towards their Creator." (Shoghi Effendi, in The Compilation of Compilations, comp. Universal
House of Justice, vol. 2 [Maryborough, VIC: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991] 2326: 449.) "Regarding the
matter of adopted children, the consent of all natural parents must be obtained wherever this is legally
possible but no effort should be made to trace the natural parents if this contravenes the provision of the
adoption certificate or the laws of the country." (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the
National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 24 Oct. 1965, in Lights of Guidance 1250: 373.)
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of the Formative Age (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996) 280.20: 488.
32. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, in Lights of Guidance 512: 153.
33. The Four Year Plan and the Twelve Month Plan, 1996–2001: Summary of Achievements, prepared
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34. Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, 26 Nov. 1999, quoted in The Four Year Plan and
the Twelve Month Plan 103.
35. Universal House of Justice, letter to the Bahá'ís of the world, Apr. 2000 (Ridván 157 B.E.).
36. The Four Year Plan and the Twelve Month Plan 108.
37. Bahá'í International Community, Rights of the Child (Geneva, 8 Mar. 1993), http://www.bic-
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Other Sources and Related Reading:
For references in the Bahá'í authoritative texts, see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions 57: 212–16;
66: 240; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections 94–125: 123–44; Bahá'í Education, in Compilation of Compilations, vol.

1, 552–717: 245–318; National Education Task Force, Foundations for a Spiritual Education: Research of the Bahá'í Writings (Wilmette, IL, USA: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 1995); National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, Developing Distinctive Bahá'í Communities: Guidelines for Spiritual Assemblies with June 2007 Updates, 3rd ed. (Evanston, IL, USA: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 2007); >em, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Wilmette, IL, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2008) 39-81: 31-63.

Other sources used in preparing this article include The Four Year Plan and the Twelve Month Plan; John S. Hatcher, "Child and Family in Bahá'í Religion," Religious Dimensions of Child and Family Life: Reflections on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ed. Harold Coward and Philip Cook (Victoria, BC, Can.: U of Victoria, 1996) 141–60.

The Bahá'í International Community has issued a number of statements regarding issues related to children; see http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/ (accessed 15 Jan. 2009). Articles on activities and events related to children published by the Bahá'í World New Service may be found at http://news.bahai.org/ (accessed 15 Jan. 2009); and articles published by One Country: The Online Newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community are available at http://www.onecountry.org/ (accessed 15 Jan. 2009).

Books by Bahá'í authors that deal with raising and educating children include Australian National Bahá'í Community Development Committee and Australian National Marriage and Family Development Committee, A Bahá'í Parenting Programme (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia: Mona Vale, NSW, Australia, 1990); A[‘Alí-Akbar] Furútan, Mothers, Fathers, and Children: Practical Advice to Parents (Oxford: George Ronald, 1990); Peggy Goding, Raising Children as Peacemakers (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1989); Bahíyyih Nakhjavání, When We Grow Up (Oxford: George Ronald, 1979); Linda Kavelin Popov, Dan Popov, and John Kavelin, The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves (New York: Plume, 1997); H. T. D. Rost, The Brilliant Stars: The Bahá'í Faith and the Education of Children (Oxford: George Ronald, 1992); Margaret Ruhe, Guidelines for Parents, 3rd ed.

(New Delhi: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1989); Harlan Carl Scheffler, The Quest: Helping Our Children Finding Meaning and Purpose (Oxford, George Ronald, 2006).

For various Bahá’í perspectives on issues related to children, see David Diehl and Elizabeth Ansel Kirsch, "Children and Racism: The Complexities of Culture and Cognition," World Order ns 33.1 (2001): 37–48; Sandra S. Fotos, "Strategies for Spiritualization," The Journal of Bahá’í Studies 9 (1999): 1–25; Winston E. Langley, "Children, Moral Development, and Global Transformation," World Order ns 28.3 (1997): 13–23; Marzieh Radpour and Michael L. Penn, "The Role of Religion in Eradicating Child Sexual Abuse," World Order ns 28.4 (1997): 7–19; William Collins, "Bahá’í Family Life: Beyond the Traditional," Search for Values: Ethics in Bahá’í Thought, ed. John Danesh and Seena Fazel, Studies in the Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 15 (Los Angeles: Kalimát, 2004) 21–43; Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, "Women, Education, and Development," Reason & Revelation: New Directions in Bahá’í Thought, ed. Seena Fazel and John Danesh, Studies in the Bábí and Bahá’í Religions 13 (Los Angeles: Kalimát, 2002) 231–43; Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, "Women’s Education: How Does It Matter?" Bahá’í Studies Review 11 (2003) 1–9.

Books and periodicals for children and junior youth form a growing segment of Bahá’í publications worldwide. The award-winning magazine Brilliant Star, published bimonthly by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, is read by English-speaking subscribers aged eight to twelve in more than forty countries.

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