



The Baha'i Community Today	23
WRITINGS AND MESSAGES	
Baha'i Sacred Writings	33
From the Universal House of Justice	39
EVENTS 1993-94	
The Seventh International Baha'i Convention	51
Conference of Baha'i Counsellors	59
Mount Carmel Projects: Progress 1993-94	67
Year in Review	77
The Baha'i International Community: Activities 1993-94	131
Update: the Situation of the Baha'is in Iran	139
Murder of Three Baha'is in Ciskei	147
The Baha'i Faith in the Eyes of the World	151
ESSAYS AND STATEMENTS	
World Watch, by Ann Boyles	171
The Kitab-i-Aqdas: The Causality Principle in the World of Being, by William S. Hatcher	189
Towards the Goal of Full Partnership: One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Advancement of Women, by Ann Boyles	237
A Baha'i Perspective on Issues of Concern to the World's Aboriginal Peoples, based on a statement by the Baha'i Community of Canada	277
Statements by the Baha'i International Community:	
• World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development	295
• The Family in a World Community	305
• Submissions to the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights	311
INFORMATION AND RESOURCES	
Obituaries	319
Statistics	323
Directory	327
Selected New Publications	333
A Basic Baha'i Reading List	337
Glossary	341
INTRODUCTION	

The Baha'i World 1993-94 is the second in the new series of The Baha'i World volumes. The original series, created in 1925 by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, appeared periodically and served as a public record of the Baha'i world community's activities and achievements from 1925 to 1992. The new series, the first volume of which covered the period of the second Baha'i Holy Year, 1992-93, will appear annually, and while it will continue to provide a record of the

Baha'i community's current undertakings, it will also offer readers general information on the Baha'i Faith, its concerns, and its teachings.

The 1993-94 volume is divided into five major sections. In the first section, 'Introduction to the Baha'i Community,' a trio of statements and articles provides an overview of the Baha'i Faith. The first, "The Faith of Baha'u'llah," was written by Shoghi Effendi in 1947 to explain the independent status of the Faith to the Special Committee on Palestine. The second article, "The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi," is excerpted from J. Douglas

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Martin's and William S. Hatcher's excellent textbook *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, named by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as a 1986 book of the year in religion. The third brief article, "The Baha'i Community Today," outlines the current conditions, activities, and future prospects of the followers of Baha'u'llah around the world.

The second section, 'Writings and Messages,' includes a selection from the sacred writings of the Baha'i Faith on the themes of unity, interdependence, and peace, and an article highlighting the major messages of the Universal House of Justice during the year under review.

The third section of the volume, 'Events 1993-94,' offers an account of the Seventh International Baha'i Convention held in Haifa, Israel, in April 1993 and the International Counsellors' Conference held immediately following the Convention. The "Year in Review" comprises a survey of the multifarious undertakings of Baha'i communities from Vanuatu to Ireland, Argentina to Zaire, Siberia to Jamaica, while the article on the work of the Baha'i International Community highlights the efforts of the community to work through the United Nations to voice its ideals on the international stage. Other pieces feature an update on the situation of the Baha'is in Iran during 1993-94 and an account of the tragic deaths of three Baha'is in Ciskei last March. Progress on the monumental construction projects underway on Mount Carmel at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa is detailed, with photos of various elements of the developments. A general survey of the print media's reportage of Baha'is' activities around the world completes the roundup of current events.

'Essays and Statements,' the volume's fourth major section, opens with "World Watch," a commentary on current world events and the theories that shape commonly held contemporary worldviews. William S. Hatcher's article "The Kitab-i-Aqdas: the Causality Principle in the World of Being" takes a philosophical approach to understanding Baha'u'llah's Most Holy

Book, the first authorized translation of which was released in March 1993. Ann Boyles' essay "Towards the Goal of Full Partnership : One Hundred and Fifty Years of the Advancement

## INTRODUCTION

of Women" discusses the distinctive Baha'i perspective on the issue of the equality of women and men and surveys a variety of historical and current enterprises undertaken by the Baha'i community to promote the achievement of full equality. It provides timely background reading as the world prepares for the upcoming United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

A series of statements on topics central to events of 1993-94 completes this portion of the volume. First is an edited version of a statement on aboriginal peoples prepared by the Baha'i Community of Canada and presented to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in November 1993. Following are a series of statements prepared by the Baha'i International Community during 1993-94: the statement "World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development" was presented to the first session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in New York in June 1993; "The Family in a World Community" was first distributed at the World NGO Forum launching the International Year of the Family in Malta in November-December 1993; the final three statements, dealing with various human rights issues, were delivered at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993.

The final section, 'Information and Resources,' provides a number of useful reference items: brief sketches of prominent Baha'is who died during 1993-94; current statistics pertaining to the development of the Baha'i world community; a directory of Baha'i agencies around the globe; and an annotated list of selected new publications from Baha'i publishers. Finally, at the back of the book readers will find a list of introductory and basic reference books on the Baha'i Faith pointing to further sources for the interested reader. A glossary is also included to assist those who may be unfamiliar with certain Baha'i terms used throughout the volume.

The scope of the international Baha'i community's undertakings expands rapidly, year by year, and it is hoped that the Baha'i World series will prove to be an effective means for briefly documenting those undertakings and for acquainting the

## THE BAHAI WORLD

general public with the aims and concerns of Baha'is around the world, whose ultimate goal is nothing less than the realization of

Baha'u'llah's statement: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." An international yearbook such as The Baha'i World shows how five million inhabitants of the globe are working to make that vision a reality.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

This statement was originally prepared by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, for presentation to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine in 1947.

## THE FAITH OF BAHA'ULLAH

The Faith established by Baha'u'llah was born in Persia about the middle of the nineteenth century and has, as a result of the successive banishments of its Founder, culminating in His exile to the Turkish penal colony of Acre, and His subsequent death and burial in its vicinity, fixed its permanent spiritual center in the Holy Land, and is now in the process of laying the foundations of its world administrative center in the city of Haifa.

Alike in the claims unequivocally asserted by its Author and the general character of the growth of the Baha'i community in every continent of the globe, it can be regarded in no other light than a world religion, destined to evolve in the course of time into a world-embracing commonwealth, whose advent must signalize the Golden Age of mankind, the age in which the unity of the human race will have been unassailably established, its maturity attained, and its glorious destiny unfolded through the birth and efflorescence of a world-encompassing civilization.

### Restatement of Eternal Verities

Though sprung from Shi'ah Islam, and regarded, in the early stages of its development, by the followers of both the Muslim and Christian Faiths, as an obscure sect, an Asiatic cult or an offshoot of the Muhammadan religion, this Faith is now increasingly demonstrating its right to be recognized, not as one more religious system superimposed on the conflicting creeds which for so many generations have divided mankind and darkened its fortunes, but rather as a restatement of the eternal verities underlying all the religions of the past, as a unifying force instilling into the adherents of these religions a new spiritual vigor, infusing them with a new hope and love for mankind, firing them with a new vision of the fundamental unity of their religious doctrines, and unfolding to their eyes the glorious destiny that awaits the human race.

The fundamental principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah, the

followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society.

#### Fulfills Past Revelations

The aim of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet of this new and great age which humanity has entered upon- He whose advent fulfills the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments as well as those of the Qur'an regarding the coming of the Promised One in the end of time, on the Day of Judgment- is not to destroy but to fulfill the Revelations of the past, to reconcile rather than accentuate the divergencies of the conflicting creeds which disrupt presentday society. His purpose, far from belittling the station of the Prophets gone before Him or of whittling down their teachings, is to restate the basic truths which these teachings enshrine in a

#### THE FAITH OF BAHU'LLAH

manner that would conform to the needs, and be in consonance with the capacity, and be applicable to the problems, the ills and perplexities, of the age in which we live. His mission is to proclaim that the ages of the infancy and of the childhood of the human race are past, that the convulsions associated with the present stage of its adolescence are slowly and painfully preparing it to attain the stage of manhood, and are heralding the approach of that Age of Ages when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when the Kingdom promised by Jesus Christ will have been established, and the peace of the planet definitely and permanently ensured. Nor does Baha'u'lhih claim finality for His own Revelation, but rather stipulates that a fuller measure of the truth He has been commissioned by the Almighty to vouchsafe to humanity, at so critical a juncture in its fortunes, must needs be disclosed at future stages in the constant and limitless evolution of mankind.

#### Oneness of the Human Race

The Baha'i Faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. It proclaims the necessity and the inevitability of the unification of mankind, asserts that it is gradually approaching, and claims that nothing short of the transmuting spirit of God, working through His chosen Mouthpiece in this day, can ultimately succeed in bringing it about. It,

moreover, enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all manner of prejudice and superstition, declares the purpose of religion to be the promotion of amity and concord, proclaims its essential harmony with science, and recognizes it as the foremost agency for the pacification and the orderly progress of human society. It unequivocally maintains the principle of equal rights, opportunities and privileges for men and women, insists on compulsory education, eliminates extremes of poverty and wealth, abolishes the institution of priesthood, prohibits slavery, asceticism, mendicancy and monasticism, prescribes monogamy, discourages divorce, emphasizes the necessity of strict obedience to one's government, exalts any work performed in the spirit of service to the level of worship, urges either the creation or the selection of an auxiliary international language, and delineates the outlines of those institutions that must establish and perpetuate the general peace of mankind.

#### The Herald

The Baha'i Faith revolves around three central Figures, the first of whom was a youth, a native of Shiraz, named Mirza 'Ali-Mul)ammad, known as the Bab (Gate), who in May, 1844, at the age of twenty-five, advanced the claim of being the Herald Who, according to the sacred Scriptures of previous Dispensations, must needs announce and prepare the way for the advent of One greater than Himself, Whose mission would be, according to those same Scriptures, to inaugurate an era of righteousness and peace, an era that would be hailed as the consummation of all previous Dispensations, and initiate a new cycle in the religious history of mankind. Swift and severe persecution, launched by the organized forces of Church and State in His native land, precipitated successfully His arrest, His exile to the mountains of Adhirbayj an, His imprisonment in the fortresses of Mah- Ku and Chihriq, and His execution, in July, 1850, by a firing squad in the public square of Tabriz. No less than twenty thousand of his followers were put to death with such barbarous cruelty as to evoke the warm sympathy and the unqualified admiration of a number of Western writers, diplomats, travelers and scholars, some of whom were witnesses of these abominable outrages, and were moved to record them in their books and diaries.

#### Baha'u'llah

Mirza I:lusayn- 'Ali, surnamed Baha'u'llah (the Glory of God), a native of Mazindaran, Whose advent the Bab had foretold, was assailed by those same forces of ignorance and fanaticism, was imprisoned in Teheran, was banished, in 1852, from His native land to Baghdad, and thence to Constantinople and Adrianople,

and finally to the prison city of Acre, where He remained incarcerated for no less than twenty-four years, and in whose neighborhood He passed away in 1892. In the course of His banishment, and particularly in Adrianople and Acre, He formulated the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, expounded,

#### THE FAITH OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH

in over a hundred volumes, the principles of His Faith, proclaimed His Message to the kings and rulers of both the East and the West, both Christian and Muslim, addressed the Pope, the Caliph of Islam, the Chief Magistrates of the Republics of the American continent, the entire Christian sacerdotal order, the leaders of Shi'ah and Sunni Islam, and the high priests of the Zoroastrian religion. In these writings He proclaimed His Revelation, summoned those whom He addressed to heed His call and espouse His Faith, warned them of the consequences of their refusal, and denounced, in some cases, their arrogance and tyranny.

#### 'Abdu 'l-Baha

His eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, known as 'Abdu'l-Baha (the Servant of Baha), appointed by Him as His lawful successor and the authorized interpreter of His teachings, Who since early childhood had been closely associated with His Father, and shared His exile and tribulations, remained a prisoner until 1908, when, as a result of the Young Turk Revolution, He was released from His confinement. Establishing His residence in Haifa, He embarked soon after on His three-year journey to Egypt, Europe and North America, in the course of which He expounded before vast audiences, the teachings of His Father and predicted the approach of that catastrophe that was soon to befall mankind. He returned to His home on the eve of the first World War, in the course of which He was exposed to constant danger, until the liberation of Palestine by the forces under the command of General Allenby, who extended the utmost consideration to Him and to the small band of His fellow-exiles in Acre and Haifa. In 1921 He passed away, and was buried in a vault in the mausoleum erected on Mount Carmel, at the express instruction of Baha'u'llah, for the remains of the Bab, which had previously been transferred from Tabriz to the Holy Land after having been preserved and concealed for no less than sixty years.

#### Administrative Order

The passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha marked the termination of the first and Heroic Age of the Baha'i Faith and signaled the opening of the Formative Age destined to witness the gradual emergence of its Administrative Order, whose establishment had been

foretold by the Bah, whose laws were revealed by Baha'u'llah, whose outlines were delineated by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament, and whose foundations are now being laid by the national and local councils which are elected by the professed adherents of the Faith, and which are paving the way for the constitution of the World Council, to be designated as the Universal House of Justice, which, in conjunction with me, as its appointed Head and the authorized interpreter of the Baha'i teachings, must coordinate and direct the affairs of the Baha'i community, and whose seat will be permanently established in the Holy Land, in close proximity to its world spiritual center, the resting-places of its Founders.

The Administrative Order of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, which is destined to evolve into the Baha'i World Commonwealth, and has already survived the assaults launched against its institutions by such formidable foes as the kings of the Qajar dynasty, the Caliphs of Islam, the ecclesiastical leaders of Egypt, and the Nazi regime in Germany, has already extended its ramifications to every continent of the globe, stretching from Iceland to the extremity of Chile, has been established in no less than eighty-eight countries of the world, has gathered within its pale representatives of no less than thirty-one races, numbers among its supporters Christians of various denominations, Muslims of both Sunni and Shi'ah sects, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Buddhists. It has published and disseminated, through its appointed agencies, Baha'i literature in forty-eight languages; has already consolidated its structure through the incorporation of five National Assemblies and seventy-seven local Assemblies, in lands as far apart as South America, India and the Antipodes- incorporations that legally empower its elected representatives to hold property as trustees of the Baha'i community. It disposes of international, national and local endowments, estimated at several million pounds, and spread over every continent of the globe, enjoys in several countries the privilege of official recognition by the civil authorities, enabling it to secure exemption from taxation for its endowments and to solemnize Baha'i marriage, and numbers among its stately

#### THE FAITH OF BAHÀ'U'LLÀH

edifices, two temples, the one erected in Russian Turkistan and the other on the shore of Lake Michigan at Wilmette, on the outskirts of Chicago. 1

This Administrative Order, unlike the systems evolved after the death of the Founders of the various religions, is divine in origin, rests securely on the laws, the precepts, the ordinances and institutions which the Founder of the Faith has Himself specifically laid down and unequivocally established, and functions

in strict accordance with the interpretations of the authorized Interpreters of its holy scriptures. Though fiercely assailed, ever since its inception, it has, by virtue of its character, unique in the annals of the world's religious history, succeeded in maintaining the unity of the diversified and far-flung body of its supporters, and enabled them to launch, unitedly and systematically, enterprises in both Hemispheres, designed to extend its limits and consolidate its administrative institutions.

The Faith which this order serves, safeguards and promotes, is, it should be noted in this connection, essentially supernatural, supranational, entirely non-political, non-partisan, and diametrically opposed to any policy or school of thought that seeks to exalt any particular race, class or nation. It is free from any form of ecclesiasticism, has neither priesthood nor rituals, and is supported exclusively by voluntary contributions made by its avowed adherents. Though loyal to their respective governments, though imbued with the love of their own country, and anxious to promote at all times, its best interests, the followers of the Baha'i Faith, nevertheless, viewing mankind as one entity, and profoundly attached to its vital interests, will not hesitate to subordinate every particular interest, be it personal, regional or national, to the over-riding interests of the generality of mankind, knowing full well that in a world of interdependent

1. By 1993, the Baha'i Faith was established in 188 independent countries and 45 dependent territories or overseas departments, with a total of 165 National or Regional Assemblies. Literature had been published in more than 800 languages and dialects. There are Baha'i Houses of Worship in Australia, Germany, India, Panama, Uganda, the United States and Western Samoa, and lands have been purchased for at least an additional 112 Temples.

peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole, and that no lasting result can be achieved by any of the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are neglected.

Nor should the fact be overlooked that the Faith has already asserted and demonstrated its independent religious character, has been emancipated from the fetters of orthodoxy in certain Islamic countries, has obtained in one of them an unsolicited testimony to its independent religious status, and succeeded in winning the allegiance of royalty to its cause ....

The following is an extract from William S. Hatcher and J Douglas Martin, *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (Harper and Row, 1985), 64-72.

THE  
MINISTRY

OFSHOGHI  
EFFENDI  
1921- 1957

The period between 1921 and 1963 in Baha'i history is most readily accessible through consideration of the major projects undertaken by Shoghi Effendi in the execution of his role as Guardian. Four areas of activity particularly stand out: the development of the Baha'i World Centre, the translation and interpretation of Baha'i teachings, the expansion of the administrative order, and the implementation of the divine plan of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Immediately after assuming his responsibilities, and continuing throughout his life, Shoghi Effendi devoted a great deal of time to the physical development of the Faith's international headquarters in the area surrounding the Bay of Haifa. During the lifetimes of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, several parcels of land had been gradually acquired by the community of exiles. Of these, the two most important were the site of the shrine where the body of Baha'u'llah was interred (in the vicinity of the mansion of Bahji just outside Acre), and the site of the shrine on the side of Mount Carmel above the city of Haifa which

contained the remains of the Bah. Through the generosity of individual Baha'is, bequests, and responses to special appeals by Shoghi Effendi, these properties were vastly increased during the Guardian's ministry. Magnificent gardens were laid out, the first of a number of monumental buildings were erected, and a master plan was created for the development of a spiritual center and administrative complex that would meet the needs of a rapidly growing international community and which would be able to expand with it, a complex designed to rank among the most beautiful in the world. A widely dispersed religious community was thus provided with a center of pilgrimage and guidance that would greatly contribute to creating a sense of common identity.

High on the list of priorities of any religious system must be the determination of the canon of its scripture and the application of these sacred writings to the circumstances of individual and community life. Empowered by 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will as the sole authoritative interpreter of the Baha'i writings, Shoghi Effendi interpreted world events in the light of the Baha'i scriptures and shared with the Baha'i community the results of these analyses in the form of lengthy letters to the Baha'i world.

At the same time, the nascent Baha'i communities around the world were deluging Haifa with questions on an enormous range of subjects in the Baha'i writings, and the Guardian's answers to these inquiries also formed a significant portion of the interpretation of the

revelation of Baha'u'llah. In the early 1940s Shoghi Effendi focused his analytical attention on the events of Baha'i history; and in 1944, in commemoration of the centenary of the declaration of the Bah, he produced a highly detailed study covering the entire century from the Bah's first announcement of his mission to Mulla I:Iusayn to the completion of the first "Seven Year Plan."

Shoghi Effendi's program to interpret the Baha'i writings was considerably aided by the fact that he was in a position to serve as the principal translator of the writings from Persian and Arabic into English. He had studied English from early childhood and as a young man was able to continue his studies at the American University of Beirut and subsequently at Oxford

#### THE MINISTRY OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

University, where he remained until the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's death in 1921. Since the major administrative bodies of the Baha'i Faith during the first critical decades of the Guardianship were located in English-speaking countries, Shoghi Effendi's ability to express and interpret Baha'i concepts in the English language provided an invaluable source of guidance to the new faith in the Western world.

His role as an interpreter was also of long-range importance to the development of the Baha'i community. It assured unity of doctrine during the early years of the faith's global expansion and thus greatly reduced the threat of schism.

Parallel with his translation activities and the development of the World Centre of the faith, Shoghi Effendi devoted much of his energies to bringing into existence the system of administrative institutions as they had been conceived by Baha'u'llah and established in embryonic form by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Each locality with nine or more adult believers was encouraged to elect a "Local Spiritual Assembly" to govern the affairs of the faith in that area. As soon as the number of local spiritual assemblies in any given country provided a sufficiently broad base, the Guardian urged the election of a national spiritual assembly, vested with full jurisdiction over the affairs of the faith in that particular country.

A steady stream of correspondence from Haifa provided these nascent institutions with guidance concerning the application of the Baha'i writings to the conduct of community life.

More general communications urged all believers to give their wholehearted support and obedience to the bodies they elected. Baha'i principles of consultation were identified and assemblies were urged to conscientiously train themselves in group decision-making.

In accordance with 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will, between the years

1951 and 1957, the Guardian appointed a number of distinguished believers as Hands of the Cause of God and charged them with special responsibilities for teaching the faith and protecting its institutions. The crowning unit of this global administrative structure was the institution of the Universal House of Justice, conceived and named by Baha'u'llah. Shoghi Effendi indicated that, as soon as the expansion of the Baha'i community permitted, a Universal House of Justice would be elected by the entire international Baha'i community, acting through their national spiritual assemblies.

Shoghi Effendi's reasons for devoting so much time and energy to the development of the Baha'i administrative order during the first years of his guardianship soon became apparent. The administrative institutions of the faith provided the necessary instruments for the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's "Divine Plan" to spread the message around the world. Before the widely scattered community could undertake so great a task, it was necessary to establish decision-making administrative bodies capable of mobilizing the necessary manpower and resources. Moreover, it was essential that adequate time be allowed for these institutions to learn the rudiments of Baha'i administration and consultation.

Accordingly, it was not until 1937, sixteen years after the death of 'Abdu'l-Baha, that Shoghi Effendi began systematically working on realizing the objectives laid out in the series of letters sent by 'Abdu'l-Baha to the Baha'is of North America. In April 1937 the first seven-year plan was launched with three major goals: (1) to establish at least one local spiritual assembly in every state of the United States and every province of Canada; (2) to make certain that at least one Baha'i teacher was residing in each Latin American republic; and (3) to complete the exterior design of the first Baha'i house of worship in North America- a building whose cornerstone had been laid by 'Abdu'l-Baha during his visit in 1912, and which, in many ways, symbolized the international Baha'i community itself. Despite the obstacles created by the outbreak of World War II, this plan was successfully completed on the centenary of the declaration of the Bah, in May 1944.

Following a two-year interval, a second seven-year plan was launched in 1946. The focus of this effort was Europe, which at the time had only two national spiritual assemblies: those of Great Britain and Germany. The plan also called for the creation

#### THE MINISTRY OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

of local spiritual assemblies throughout Latin America and a great multiplication of those in North America. The successful

conclusion of this plan likewise coincided with a major Baha'i centenary, the one-hundredth anniversary of the inception of Baha'u'llah's mission in the Siyah-Chal in 1853. One of the major goals of this seven-year plan was the establishment of an independent national spiritual assembly in Canada. This was achieved in 1948, and in 1949 was followed by its incorporation by a special Act of Parliament, an achievement which Shoghi Effendi pointed out was "unique in the annals of the Faith, whether of East or West."

The two most impressive single achievements of this second plan had a special connection with the North American Baha'i community. April 1953 marked the formal dedication of the house of worship at Wilmette, Illinois, which was to be the first of similar structures to be built on all five continents of the globe. The designer was a French-Canadian architect named Jean-Louis Bourgeois. His magnificent conception was hailed by the Italian architect Luigi Quaglino as "a new creation which will revolutionize architecture in the world. Without doubt," he added, "it will have a lasting page in history." One other major triumph of these years was also a building, a magnificent shrine to crown the stone edifice built by 'Abdu'l-Baha to serve as a mausoleum for the Bab. The architect of this shrine was another Canadian, William Sutherland Maxwell, with whom 'Abdu'l-Baha had stayed during his visit to Montreal. The exquisite design, in which a golden dome crowns a white marble arcade and rose-colored granite pillars, has provided the Baha'i World Centre on Mount Carmel with one of the most beautiful landmarks on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1953, without any lapse of time, Shoghi Effendi launched the Baha'i community on the most ambitious undertaking in its history- a global plan which he termed a "Ten Year World Crusade." This plan would conclude in 1963, the centenary of the declaration of Baha'u'llah in the Garden of Riqlvan. One hundred and thirty-two new countries and major territories were to be opened to the faith and the existing communities in 120 countries and territories were to be expanded. National spiritual assemblies were to be established in most countries in Europe and Latin America, and vast increases were called for in the numbers of assemblies, believers, and property endowments. This plan, like those before, was achieved on schedule (indeed was far exceeded); but under circumstances very different from any the Baha'i community might have anticipated.

In early November 1957, while on a visit to England to purchase furnishings for the Baha'i archives building on Mount Carmel, Shoghi Effendi contracted Asian flu. On November 4, he died of a heart attack, leaving the Baha'i world stunned and

temporarily distracted, its ten-year plan only half completed. The Guardianship was theoretically a continuous one. 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament authorized the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to appoint a successor from among the direct descendants of Baha'u'llah but indicated certain qualities such a successor must possess. Shoghi Effendi died without designating a successor, as apparently no other members of the family met the demanding spiritual requirements laid down in the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and in The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha. There would, therefore, be no second Guardian; the only other institution endowed with the authority to assume the leadership of the Baha'i community was the Universal House of Justice- a body which had yet to be elected.

Three interrelated factors provided an answer to the dilemma facing the Baha'i world: (1) from statements Shoghi Effendi had made, it was apparent that he considered that conditions would be ready for the election of the Universal House of Justice when the ten-year plan was successfully completed; (2) in the meantime, the Baha'i community would receive the basic guidance it required from the detailed plan already laid down by Shoghi Effendi; and (3) finally, in one of his last messages to the Baha'i world, he had named the Hands of the Cause as the "Chief Stewards" of the faith and called on them to collaborate closely with the national spiritual assemblies in assuring that the ten-year plan was carried out and that the unity of the faith was protected.

Heartened by this last message, the Hands of the Cause organized their work around a series of annual "Conclaves."

#### THE MINISTRY OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

These consultations produced a number of major statements, including the formal declaration that Shoghi Effendi had left no will and had appointed no heir to the Guardianship (Conclave of 1957), and the announcement that the Universal House of Justice would be elected by the membership of all the national spiritual assemblies of the Baha'is of the world in 1963 (Conclave of 1959).

By April 1961 twenty-one new national spiritual assemblies were established in Latin America; and, a year later, an additional eleven were elected in Europe. The remaining goals of the ten-year plan were likewise either accomplished or surpassed. In the spring of 1963, precisely one hundred years after Baha'u'llah first declared his mission to a handful of followers in the Garden of Ridvan, the members of the fifty-six elected national spiritual assemblies around the world carried out an election of the first Universal House of Justice. In a remarkable gesture of renunciation, the Hands of the Cause disqualified

themselves from serving as elected members of the supreme administrative institution of the Baha'i community. For Baha'is, the election of the first Universal House of Justice represented an event of transcendent importance. After more than a century of struggle, persecution, and recurrent internal crises, and through democratic electoral processes, the Baha'i community had succeeded in bringing into existence a permanent institution for the guidance of all the affairs of the faith. Moreover, its establishment had been conceived by Baha'u'llah himself and was patterned on principles laid down in his writings and in those of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The cosmopolitan membership of the first Universal House of Justice seemed particularly appropriate to the institution's nature and functions: the nine members from four continents represented three major religious backgrounds (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) as well as several ethnic origins.

Beyond its institutional importance, the establishment of the Universal House of Justice symbolized the element which Baha'is regard as the essence of their faith: unity. The emergence of the Universal House of Justice as the unchallenged authority in all the affairs of the community meant that

## THE BAHAI WORLD

the Baha'i Faith had remained united through the most critical period of a religion's history, the vulnerable first century during which schism almost traditionally takes root.

## THE BAHAI COMMUNITY TODAY

In the thirty-one years since the election of the Universal House of Justice, the growth of the Baha'i community has been dramatic. From a membership of an estimated 408,000 in 1963, the number of believers has now risen to some five million. During the same period the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies has grown from 56 to 165 and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies from 3,555 to approximately 18,000. Altogether, it is estimated that at least 2,112 different ethnic and tribal backgrounds are represented, and the literature of the Faith appears in over 800 different languages. Statistics published by the Encyclopedia Britannica and the World Christian Encyclopedia indicate that, with its diffusion to 205 countries, the Baha'i Faith is now the second most widespread of the world's religions, exceeded only by Christianity. <sup>1</sup> These figures, the product of a conservative statistical

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1992; World Christian Encyclopedia, 1982.

methodology, indicate that the Baha'i community likely ranks as the most diverse organized body of people on the planet today. That a relatively small religious community should have experienced such growth in both numbers and diversity at so early a stage in its history is an extraordinary accomplishment. The same may be said of the community's success in establishing its credentials in the eyes of civil authority. Far from rejecting the world and the institutions that govern it, the Baha'i community has deliberately pursued a close relationship with civil authority, as an integral part of its development. Through continuous efforts in a series of global development plans, Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies at both local and national levels have become legally incorporated in the great majority of the territories where the Faith has been established. Similarly, the Faith's marriage ceremony has secured formal recognition in a great many civil jurisdictions and, in various parts of the world, Baha'i holy days are beginning to gain a status similar to that accorded to other independent faiths in the calendars of businesses, schools, and government offices.

At the United Nations, the Baha'i International Community has steadily expanded the recognition accorded to it as an international non-governmental organization (NGO) enjoying consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It has been particularly active in the fields of human rights, the needs of women and children, environmental concerns, and the pursuit of sound sustainable development policies. Its international efforts in these areas are coordinated by various specialized agencies, the United Nations Office, the Office of Public Information, the Office of the Environment, and the Office for the Advancement of Women.

Far from acting merely as another international lobbying group focused principally in New York and Geneva, however, the Baha'i International Community represents an association of democratically elected national and local councils united in their beliefs and goals, and reflective of the entire diversity of humankind. The community's efforts in the United Nations system have gained not only a forum for the Baha'i Faith's universal ideals, but also an opportunity to contribute directly to laying the foundations of international order. Much attention is

#### THE BAHAI COMMUNITY TODAY

given by Baha'is to ensuring that, to the extent circumstances in various regions permit, society in general is made aware of the existence of the Faith and its teachings. Publishing trusts print and distribute a great variety of Baha'i literature, ranging from compilations of the writings of the Central Figures of the Faith, to scholarly commentaries, popular books, newsletters, and

magazines. Other media are also extensively utilized: films, videos, television programs, spot announcements, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles and advertisements, pamphlets, posters and manuals, correspondence courses, exhibitions, lecture series, and winter and summer schools. The objective of all this activity has been to ensure that, in time, every human being on earth will come in contact with the message of Baha'u'llah.

A Baha'i institution that has figured prominently in this program of public education is the House of Worship. Today there are Baha'i Houses of Worship on every continent, and a great many additional sites have been purchased around the world for future construction of these edifices, which are intended to play a central role in Baha'i community life. Around each, in time, will be constructed other institutions, such as schools or colleges, hostels, homes for the aged, and administrative centers.

At the present time the Houses of Worship are not used principally for Baha'i community services. Rather, they are open as places for persons of all religious backgrounds (or those professing no particular faith) to meet in the worship of the one God. Services are non-denominational and consist of readings and prayers from the scriptures of the world's faiths, with no sermons or other attempts to cast these teachings in a mold of specifically Baha'i interpretation. The only requisite architectural feature of a House of Worship is that it have nine sides, symbolic of completeness and comprehensiveness, as nine is the highest single number.

The expansion of the Faith proceeds, as was the pattern established under the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, through a series of international teaching plans. Increasingly, however, as the national and local institutions of the Faith have matured and become consolidated, the plans have been set in terms of general objectives decided on by the Universal House of Justice, with the details being established by the National Spiritual Ass em-

## THE BAHAI WORLD

blies themselves, in consultation with the Continental Boards of Counsellors. A Six Year Teaching Plan, the fourth Plan undertaken since the election of the Universal House of Justice in

1963, was successfully concluded at Ri<;lvan 1992. Following the Holy Year (1992-93), the Baha'i community embarked on a Three Year Plan. An analysis of the achievements of the Six Year Plan indicates that growth has been particularly rapid in India, Russia, and several former Eastern Bloc countries, as well as such far-flung countries as Bangladesh, Brazil, Chad, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Macau, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Zaire.

By far the most dramatic feature of the recent expansion has

been the extraordinary response to the Faith by the peoples of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, following the collapse of the barriers that had long prevented free intercourse with the populations of these lands. National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies were established in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the entire former USSR in 1991. In 1992, National or Regional Assemblies were established in Albania; Azerbaijan; the Baltic States; Central Asia; Hungary; Poland; Russia, Georgia, and Armenia; and the Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The rapid expansion in the numbers of Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout Central Asia led to the announcement by the Universal House of Justice that at the end of 1994 five new National Assemblies would be established in the region formerly under the jurisdiction of the one Regional Assembly. Preparations were made for the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Central Asia to be renamed the National Spiritual Assembly of Turkmenistan and for four new National Spiritual Assemblies to be established in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Universal House of Justice also indicated that a new Regional Spiritual Assembly would be formed in Slovenia and Croatia and new National Spiritual Assemblies in Cambodia and Mongolia.

A development which has given enormous impetus to the expansion and consolidation of the Faith in the past decade has been the intensification of its persecution in the country of its birth. Throughout the last century the Baha'is of Iran were the

#### THE BAHAI COMMUNITY TODAY

object of bitter attacks by elements among the Muslim majority incited and led by Islamic clerics. Under the Pahlavi Shahs (1925-1979), this long-standing prejudice against the Faith on the part of segments of the Muslim population was harnessed to political ends, with the Baha'i minority serving to distract public attention from various unpopular policies of the regime. With the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, efforts at the total suppression of the minority Faith became systematized. By 1993 more than two hundred Baha'is had been executed or assassinated, hundreds more had been imprisoned, and tens of thousands had been deprived of jobs, pensions, businesses, and educational opportunities. All national Baha'i administrative structures had been banned by the government, and holy places, shrines, and cemeteries had been confiscated, vandalized, and destroyed.

Aroused by this deliberate attempt to destroy their parent community, Baha'is around the world launched an intensive campaign of protest. Many thousands of newspaper articles appeared, and the situation was made the subject of countless

television and radio stories. Several national governments and legislatures condemned the actions of the Iranian government or expressed concern about the fate of the Iranian Baha'is. Most important, in a series of resolutions that gave specific attention to the Baha'i situation, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and finally the General Assembly itself began to press the Iranian regime to observe the international human rights covenants to which it was committed. In response to this international outcry, the most violent aspects of the persecution gradually abated by the early 1990s. However, the Baha'is of Iran remain without any fundamental guarantee of their rights to practice their religion freely, and the efforts of their co-religionists around the world to maintain pressure for the emancipation continues. 2

2. See "Update: The Situation of the Baha'is in Iran," pp. 139-145 of this volume, as well as pp. 132-134, concerning the activities of the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations with regard to the human rights situation in Iran.

As has so often been the case throughout religious history, the persecution had effects almost precisely contrary to those intended. The worldwide attention given to efforts to alleviate the suffering of the victims entailed a massive education of government officials, academics, the media, and the general public in many lands about the nature of the Baha'i Faith and its aims and teachings. The very nature of the issues involved has tended to throw into clear relief the peaceful and progressive character of the Baha'i community. It is hardly surprising that so dramatic an increase in public awareness coincided with a great increase in the membership of the Faith. Moreover, the experience of arising together to defend their fellow believers against an unprovoked assault had a powerful consolidating effect on the Faith's highly diverse membership around the world, deepening members' understanding of the implications of their beliefs and providing Baha'i institutions with an unparalleled experience in coordinating their efforts.

Throughout these same years the education of the community advanced greatly through a series of messages drafted by the Universal House of Justice and published in many languages. Particularly important was *The Promise of World Peace*, a twenty-one page document issued in the fall of 1985, which analyzed the reasons that world peace has for so long been considered unattainable and declared that these barriers could at last be overcome. The effect of this message, published in over a million copies and distributed to leaders of thought, government bodies, and the media, was to provide the members of the Baha'i Faith with the conceptual framework for a program of collaborative action with

a wide range of like-minded organizations.

The keynote, the message declares, is the coming of age of humankind:

A candid acknowledgment that prejudice, war and exploitation have been the expression of immature stages in a vast historical process and that the human race is today experiencing the unavoidable tumult which marks its collective coming of age is not a reason for despair but a prerequisite to undertaking the stupendous enterprise of building a peaceful world. That such an enterprise is

#### THE BAHAI COMMUNITY TODAY

possible, that the necessary constructive forces do exist, that unifying social structures can be erected, is the theme we urge you to examine. 3

As the Faith's teachings became even more widely known, the Universal House of Justice decided that the time had come for the public presentation of the Baha'i message to focus much more directly on its Author. Accordingly, on 3 April 1991, it forwarded to National Assemblies a statement prepared by the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information, entitled Baha 'u 'llah. Published, like the statement on peace, in many languages and large print runs, the document was also made the centerpiece of an intensive campaign of public information. Its objective was to set Baha'u'llah's mission in the context of the global crisis that had, by the closing decade of the century, become a commonplace of public discussion:

As the new millennium approaches, the crucial need of the human race is to find a unifying vision of the nature of man and society ... For, without a common conviction about the course and direction of human history, it is inconceivable that foundations can be laid for a global society to which the mass of humankind can commit themselves.

Such a vision unfolds in the writings of Baha'u'lhih, the nineteenth-century prophetic figure whose growing influence is the most remarkable development of contemporary religious history ... The phenomenon is one that has no reference points in the contemporary world, but is associated rather with climactic changes of direction in the collective past of the human race. For Baha'u'llah claimed to be no less than the Messenger of God to the age of human maturity ....4

As the Baha'i community commemorated the centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing in 1992, His message was seen to have taken visible shape in a community that represents a microcosm

3. The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1985), 3-4.

4. Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, Baha 'u 'llah (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), 1-2.

of the human race itself and is established in every corner of the globe. The network of administrative institutions conceived by the Founder is now in place throughout the planet. His teachings, translated into many languages, now provide the central spiritual guidance in the lives of its heterogeneous membership. In the decades immediately ahead, the existence of such a community will offer increasingly encouraging evidence that humanity, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work as a single people in a global homeland.

- á - - -

!

BAHA'i  
SACRED  
WRITINGS

Writings of Baha 'u 'llah

The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them. Whatsoever instilleth assurance into the hearts of men, whatsoever exalteth their station or promoteth their contentment, is acceptable in the sight of God. How lofty is the station which man, if he but choose to fulfill his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached! Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace. I beseech God that He may graciously enable every one of you to adorn himself, in this blessed Day, with the ornament of pure and holy deeds. He, verily, doeth whatsoever He willeth.

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes .

. . . The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This

unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and bum away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished ....

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words .

. . .The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world

#### BAHA'i SACRED WRITINGS

cannot contain its inner significance .... Appreciate ye the value of this utterance; it is a noble fruit that the Tree of the Pen of Glory hath yielded. Happy is the man that giveth ear unto it and observeth its precepts. Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples .

. . .O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny. If the rulers and kings of the earth, the symbols of the power of God, exalted be His glory, arise and resolve to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity, the reign of justice will assuredly be established amongst the children of men, and the effulgence of its light will envelop the whole earth.

This is -the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences,

and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests. Happy are those whom the all-glorious Pen was moved to remember, and blessed are those men whose names, by virtue of Our inscrutable decree, We have preferred to conceal.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that all men may be graciously assisted to fulfil that which is acceptable in Our sight.

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu '1-Bahti

For thousands of years the human race has been at war. It is enough. Now let mankind, for a time at least, consort in amity and peace. Enmity and hatred have ruled. Let the world, for a period, exercise love. For thousands of years the nations have denied each other, considering each other as infidel and inferior. It is sufficient. We must now realize that we are the servants of one God, that we turn to one beneficent Father, live under one divine law, seek one reality and have one desire. Thus may we live in the utmost friendship and love, and in return the favours and bounties of God shall surround us; the world of humanity will be reformed; mankind, enjoy a new life; eternal light will illumine, and heavenly moralities become manifest.

As preordained by the Fountain-head of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human body in this world, which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly ....

. . .Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness ....

#### BAHA'I SACRED WRITINGS

... when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of cooperation, mutual assistance and reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities. In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. The more this interrelationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success .

. . . In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were wellnigh impossible.

Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. And for everyone it is now easy to travel to any land, to associate and exchange views with its peoples, and to become familiar, through publications, with the conditions, the religious beliefs and the thoughts of all men. In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of á this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century- the century of light- hath been

endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will bum in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations- a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

FROM THE  
UNIVERSAL  
HOUSE OF  
JUSTICE

The Universal House of Justice was ordained by Baha'u'l-hih, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His book of laws, as the supreme legislative institution of His Faith. The duties with which it has been charged are outlined in the following statement from its constitution:

To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He [Baha'u'l-hih] instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, -and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings. 1

1. The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1972), 3-4.

From the writings of Baha'u'l-hih, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi; and from the communications of the Universal House of Justice, Baha'is gain not only their vision of a world where

justice and unity prevail, but they are also provided with guidance as to how to build that world. While the Universal House of Justice communicates primarily with the Baha'i world community, a wider public is acquainted with its statement on peace, written in 1985 on the eve of the United Nations International Year of Peace and addressed to the peoples of the world.

Dissemination of this document formed the core of a global campaign undertaken by the Baha'i community throughout the Year of Peace and beyond.

Letters and messages, whether addressed to individual believers, to Baha'i communities, or to the generality of humankind, provide the major means by which the Universal House of Justice communicates its vision and its directives to the world. While letters to individuals often respond to personal issues and queries on broader subjects, the circular letters of the Universal House of Justice, addressed to all or selected National Spiritual Assemblies or collectively to the Baha'is of the world, cover especially important topics and may give guidance, analyze the situation of the world and of the community, or announce significant events. This section of *The Baha'i World* features excerpts from a selection of major letters of the Universal House of Justice written between April 1993 and April 1994.

Riqvtin Message 150 B.E.

Each year during Riqvtin, the twelve-day period between 21 April and 2 May commemorating Baha'u'llah's public declaration of His mission in the Riqvtin Garden near Baghdad in 1863, the Universal House of Justice addresses a major letter to the Baha'is of the world. The letter often serves as a review of significant events of the past year, setting them in the context of the Baha'i Faith's development around the globe as well as the general world condition. Often the letter also outlines the challenges and opportunities lying before the community in the year ahead. In its "Riqvtin message" of 150 B.E., or April 1993

#### THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

C.E., the Universal House of Justice begins by reviewing the events of the second Baha'i Holy Year, from Riqvtin 1992 to Riqvtin 1993, noting particularly the activities connected with both the commemoration of the centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing in the Holy Land in May and the World Congress, attended by over 27,000 Baha'is from around the world, in New York City in November 1992. "These," it remarks, "were of a rare category of experience" which not only increased the recognition of the Baha'i Faith by various agencies around the world but also led the community "to a deeper understanding of

[its] relation to Baha'u'llah than hitherto obtained." Elaborating this theme, the House of Justice continues:

The greater appreciation in ourselves of the universality of the community, of its embodiment of the first and over-arching principle of His Faith, has left a new and compelling impression upon our hearts; the effects of that awareness were strikingly demonstrated at the commemoration in the Holy Land last May and more broadly at the World Congress last November~ as if to confirm our assurance in these desperately troubled times that the world of humanity is moving inexorably towards its as-yet elusive destiny of unity and peace.

Praising "the innumerable, imaginative efforts undertaken by the friends around the world, from remote villages to great cities, in observance of these important anniversaries," the House of Justice goes on to note "the unprecedented publicity accorded the purpose and activities of the Holy Year through the mass media in large and small countries, the notice given by legislative bodies and public officials to the centennial, the gestures of recognition and appreciation of the Faith by governmental agencies, [and] the involvement of representatives of the Baha'i International Co~unity in major global events." 2 Another event of great significance to the Baha'is, also noted in the letter, was the release in March 1993 of the frst

2. See The Baha 'i World 1992-93 for a complete account of the events in which the Baha'i world community took part during the Holy Year.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

authorized English edition of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, known also as the Most Holy Book, Baha'u'llah's book of laws. This release, the Universal House of Justice states, carries implications not only for the Baha'i community but for humanity as a whole, with the gradual enforcement of the laws contained in it. Addressing the increasingly "confused and paradoxical" current world situation in which "simultaneous signs of order and chaos, promise and frustration" become daily more apparent, the Universal House of Justice instituted a Three Year Plan for the growth and consolidation of the Baha'i community, beginning at Riqvan 1993. Though "its brevity is compelled by the swiftly changing tides of the times," the House of Justice notes in its Riqvan letter that the Plan's "primary purpose is indispensable to the future of the Cause and of humankind." Necessary for the success of this Plan is, first of all, a "massive expansion of the Baha'i community." The Universal House of Justice notes the mutuality of the expansion and

administration of the Faith. Influx of great numbers of believers will, it states, provide scope for the institutions of the Faith "to be able to develop and adequately demonstrate their inherent capacity to minister to the crying needs of humanity in its hour of deepening despair."

The three-fold theme of the Three Year Plan centers around "enhancing the vitality of the faith of individual believers, greatly developing the human resources of the Cause, and fostering the proper functioning of local and national Baha'i institutions." The Riqvan message deals with each of these aspects in some detail. With regard to the first objective, the Universal House of Justice points out the necessity for individual believers to become spiritually transformed and to cultivate a sense of spirituality, obeying the laws and principles of Baha'u'llah which constitute a "wholesome medicine" for humanity in this age. With regard to the development of the human resources of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice does not speak of training and the acquisition of knowledge as ends in themselves but as means to apply spiritual principles to administer the affairs of humanity. Finally, in writing about the proper functioning of institutions, the House of Justice outlines

#### THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

the principles applicable: that the members should thoroughly familiarize themselves with their duties; adhere strictly to principle; remove estrangement and sectarian tendencies from their modes of functioning; win the affection of those they serve; involve individual members of their communities in the work as much as possible; and aim constantly at improving their performance. The end result, it states, will be a rekindling of hope in disillusioned members of society.

In the final portion of its Riqvan message, the Universal House of Justice outlines its own activities, to be undertaken simultaneously to the Baha'i world community's pursuit of the objectives outlined above: it will coordinate the "widely diverse activities" of the Baha'i community on a global scale, direct the burgeoning external affairs work, and pursue the completion of the Mount Carmel construction projects according to the established timetable. 3 The letter concludes with a statement of the need for increased material resources to complete the work that has begun on Mount Carmel, and with an appeal to individual believers throughout the world to arise and redouble their efforts to serve their Faith. The House of Justice clearly points out the crucial nature of their response:

The goals of the Three Year Plan will not be easily won, but they must be magnificently achieved, whatever the sacrifice.

There should therefore be no hesitation or delay on the part of individuals or Spiritual Assemblies in attending to them, lest the problems of mankind pile up unchecked, or the rise of internal crises slows us down.

Pointing to the historical pattern of alternating victory and crisis within the Baha'i community, the Universal House of Justice ends its message by saying, "As we savour the triumphs of the Holy Year, let us not forget the reality of this recurrent experience. Let us also remember that our blessings are equal to our challenges, as repeatedly shown by our glorious history.."

3. For further discussion of the significance of the Mount Carmel Projects, see *The Baha'i World 1992-93*, pp. 169-176.

#### Messages Regarding the Institutions of the Faith

Other major messages from the Universal House of Justice written during the period from Riqvan 1993 to Riqvan 1994 can be grouped according to a number of different topics. First, there were a number of letters concerning the senior institutions of the Faith. On 30 April 1993, an electronic message was sent to all National Spiritual Assemblies announcing the results of the election of the Universal House of Justice at the Seventh International Convention:

ANNOUNCE NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS ~RSAL  
HOUSE OF JUSTICE 'ALi NAKHJAVANI, GLENFORD  
MITCHELL, ADIB TAHERZADEH, IAN SEMPLE, PETER  
KHAN, HUSHMAND FATHEAZAM, HOOPER DUNBAR,  
FARZAM ARBAB, DOUGLAS MARTIN.

On 13 May 1993, a message announced the appointment of the International Teaching Centre for its next five-year term and also thanked the retiring members for their services on the institution:

WITH JOYFUL HEARTS WE ANNOUNCE APPOINTMENT  
COUNSELLOR MEMBERS INTERNATIONAL TEACHING  
CENTRE FOR FIVE-YEAR TERM BEGINNING 23 MAY 1993:  
MR. KISER BARNES, MR. HARTMUT GROSSMANN, MRS.  
LAURETTA KING, MRS. JOAN LINCOLN, MR. SHAPOOR  
MONADJEM, MR. DONALD ROGERS, MR. FRED  
SCHECHTER, MRS. KIMIKO SCHWERIN, MRS. JOY STEVEN-  
SON. PROFOUNDLY GRATEFUL MR. MAS'UN KHAMSI AND  
MR. PETER VUYIYA FOR ILLUSTRIOUS RECORD YEARS  
DEVOTED LABOURS IN DEVELOPMENT WORLDWIDE  
OPERATION THIS VITAL INSTITUTION.

On 24 June 1993 a letter to the Baha'is of the world documented the significance of the consultations held at the

Counsellors' Conference following the International Convention and outlined the functions of the International Teaching Centre, an institution which the Universal House of Justice characterized as having "abundantly demonstrated its capacity and

#### THE "UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

eagerness to assume the wide range of responsibilities conferred upon it."<sup>4</sup>

#### Messages Concerning the Mount Carmel Projects

As work continued on the construction projects currently under way on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, including construction of two administrative buildings at the Baha'i World Centre- the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the International Teaching Centre- and the building of the nineteen terraces to enhance the beauty and dignity of the Shrine of the Bah, the Universal House of Justice wrote to the Baha'i communities around the world announcing the issuing of tenders for the projects and the signing of contracts. A further letter outlining the significance of the building projects was sent on 4 January 1994, referring to them -as "a manifest expression of the emergence from obscurity of the Faith of Baha'u'llah and of the determining role it is ordained to play in the affairs of humankind. When the buildings are completed, they will stand as the visible seat of mighty institutions whose purpose is no other than the spiritualization of humanity and the preservation of justice and unity throughout the world. " <sup>5</sup>

#### The Situation of the Bah a'is in Iran

The period 1993-94 witnessed further persecutions of the Iranian Baha'i community, and the Universal House of Justice wrote a number of letters to Baha'i National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to inform them of the situation and to urge them to bring it to the attention of their governments. On 17 May 1993, a letter was sent to selected National Spiritual Assemblies concerning denial of legal reparations to the family of a Baha'i killed in an automobile accident on the grounds that the victim was a Baha'i, followed on 20 May by a letter

4. For a detailed discussion of the institution of the International Teaching Centre and the deliberations held during this conference, see pp. 59-66.

5. See pp. 67-75 for further details concerning the work on the Mount Carmel Projects in 1993-94.

regarding the confiscation of Baha'i properties in various cities in Iran. By July 1993, the Iranian government had undertaken full-scale destruction of the Baha'i cemetery in Tehran, desecrating Baha'i graves, disinterring some two thousand bodies and transporting them to an unknown location. This

action prompted a letter from the Universal House of Justice on 4 July and a further letter on 21 July, informing National Spiritual Assemblies that work on the destruction of the cemetery had been stepped up to three shifts per day in an effort to complete the work before objections could be raised through diplomatic channels. The response of Baha'i communities around the world was evident in the extensive coverage of the desecration carried by print media in widely diverse locations, from the Cook Islands News in the South Pacific to the New York Times. 6

#### Expansion of the Baha'i Faith

The Universal House of Justice addressed two letters to the Baha'is of the world specifically regarding the expansion of the Faith. The first, written on 9 November 1993, spoke in detail about the receptive climate for massive expansion of the Baha'i Faith in various areas and the means by which the Baha'i world community can pursue such expansion. The second letter, of 26 November, announced the imminent formation, at Riçivan 1994, of seven new National and Regional Assemblies in different locations around the world.

#### Other Messages

Other messages dealt with a variety of different topics: the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to the Baha'i World Centre,<sup>7</sup> the murder of three Baha'is in Ciskei, South Africa, 8 and a call for Baha'is around the world to arise and settle in different geographical areas to promote the expan-

6. For further information on the situation of the Baha'is in Iran during 1993-94, please see pp. 139-145; for details concerning the media coverage of the destruction of the Tehran Baha'i cemetery, see pp. 153-156.

7. See "Year in Review," p. 78.

8. See pp. 147-150 for this story.

#### THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

sion and consolidation of the Baha'i community worldwide.

The letters of the Universal House of Justice written between Riçivan 1993 and Riçivan 1994 cover a breadth of topics which it is not possible to contain in this brief summary. They show how the supreme elected institution ordained by Baha'u'llah in His writings functions, protecting the Baha'i community from . persecution and division, applying the Baha'i teachings for the current situation, guiding the Baha'i community in its course of development, and sharing news of both crisis and victory in the Baha'i world.

The Shrine of Baha'u'llah  
near Acre, Israel

## EVENTS

1993-94

View of the dome of the Shrine of the Bah from the  
Seat of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel.

## THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL BAHA'I CONVENTION

Every five years, a three-stage process culminates in the election by the Baha'is of the world of the supreme governing council of their community, the Universal House of Justice. From 29 April to 2 May 1993, during the period known as the Rivvan Festival, the members of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world gathered at the Seventh International Convention in Haifa, Israel, to participate in such an election.

The process begins at the grass roots of the world community, where adult members in hamlets, villages, towns, and cities gather in unit conventions to elect their delegates to National Conventions; at each National Convention the delegates elect the nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly, the supreme Baha'i council for their country. The members of all National Spiritual Assemblies constitute the electoral college for the Universal House of Justice and are invited to fulfill their responsibilities at an International Convention, which has been held at the Baha'i World Centre in the Holy Land since the first

## THE BAHAI WORLD

such gathering in 1963. In this manner the three parts of the electoral process are completed.

As in all other instances at local and national levels in the Baha'i community, the election proceeds by secret ballot in a prayerful atmosphere. The Baha'i teachings forbid any form of nomination or campaigning. In accordance with the dictates of his or her conscience, each elector writes on a ballot nine names from among those of the entire male adult Baha'i population. The nine men receiving the highest number of votes are declared members of the Universal House of Justice for a term of five years. The Universal House of Justice is the only institution in the Baha'i Faith where the membership is restricted to men; in all other elections, voters may elect both men and women. 1  
At Rivvan 1993, there were 165 National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies whose members were eligible to vote at the International Convention. A total of 733 of these members attended the event, representing 146 countries, while a further 690 sent their ballots by mail. Thus 1,423 out of a possible

1,485 ballots were cast.

Delegates to the Seventh International Baha'i Convention, held 29 April-2 May 1993, gathered on the steps of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel.

1. See also pp. 232-234 regarding gender equality and membership of the Universal House of Justice.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

In addition to the election, consultation on matters of vital interest to the global development of the Baha'i Faith was held among the delegates during the convention sessions, which took place at the Haifa Auditorium. The occasion also allowed for highly stimulating and informative interactions between delegates and high ranking officers of the Faith who were in attendance, including the three remaining Hands of the Cause of

Hands of the Cause of God 'Alf-Mu!Jammad Varqa, left, Amatu 'l-Bahti Ru!Jiyyih Kh.tinum, center, and 'Ali-Akbar Furntan, right, at the Seventh International Convention.

God, namely, Amatu'l-Baha Rlli.riyyih K.hanum, 'Ali-Akbar FurU.tan, and 'Ali-Mul).ammad Varqa; Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre; and Continental Counsellors. Following the International Convention, these Baha'i dignitaries met in a conference for several days to discuss their activities in relation to the Three Year Plan launched at the Convention. 2 The majority of the delegates arrived in Haifa five days prior to the Convention, in order to participate in the series of visits to Baha'i shrines and holy places, arranged to help them prepare themselves spiritually for their participation in the electoral process. Delegates were given time to pray and meditate in the

2. See pp. 59-66 for further details on the International Counsellors' Conference.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

T1 11~ Kn.4H rAQD-

Delegates from Niger and other African countries, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Western Samoa, and Central Asia at the International Convention.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Shrines of Baha'u'lhih, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha. They were able to visit the prison cell where Baha'u'llah was incarcerated in Acre, the houses in that same city where He was later placed under house arrest, and the mansion outside the city where He spent the final years of His life and where He died. To give the delegates a further connection with the history of their Faith,

they toured the International Archives Building and viewed artifacts from the times of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi. They also had the opportunity to tour the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the body they would be electing.

Opportunities for specialized consultation also presented themselves during the five days immediately preceding the Convention. A total of 130 pre-scheduled meetings were set up by various National Spiritual Assemblies who wished to consult with other national bodies from around the world, and 55 further meetings were scheduled by National Assemblies during the Convention. These consultations, which focused on issues of concern to the different countries or regions, grouped together institutions from a particular continent or focused on topics of mutual interest that cut widely across the boundaries of the planet, depending on the needs and wishes of the National Spiritual Assemblies involved.

The Office of Baha'u'llah also held meetings in the days prior to the Convention. The law of Baha'u'llah was made universally binding on Baha'is around the world in 1992, and this was the first opportunity many of the newly-appointed deputies and representatives from various regions had to meet one another and consult on matters of interest and concern to this institution of the Faith.

On Thursday, 29 April, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum opened the Convention, the first item of whose agenda was the election itself. In keeping with the spiritual nature of Baha'i elections, voting at the Convention was conducted in a reverent atmosphere. Prayers were read in four languages, following which each delegate prayerfully considered, in the privacy of his or her own conscience, the names of those who should be elected to serve as members of the Universal House of Justice

for the next five years. Ballots were cast alphabetically by country, with people from different races, tribes, ethnic backgrounds, and language groups coming forward to deposit their votes. Many were dressed in the characteristic garb of their home countries. The election was a powerful expression of unity in diversity, a hallmark of the Baha'i world community.

Members of the twenty-one new or re-formed National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies established since the previous International Convention in 1988 were present. As well, three delegates from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Myanmar (formerly Burma) were granted permission by their government to attend for the first time since the establishment of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. The absence of the Baha'is of Iran, whose National Spiritual Assembly was

dissolved in 1983 by order of the Islamic Revolutionary Government, was noted with keen regret, as a token of their love- a beautiful arrangement of red roses- was displayed on the Convention stage.

Special messages to the Convention included one from His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, the Head of State of Western Samoa, who is himself a Baha'i.

On the evening of the first day, the delegates viewed a video presentation on the activities of the second Baha'i Holy Year, which had just ended, and received information on the progress of the Mount Carmel Projects from a presentation by the two architects involved in the design and execution of these projects, Mr. Hossein Amanat and Mr. Fariborz Sahba. The projects encompass the current construction of terraces above and below the Shrine of the Bab and edifices to accommodate the administration of the Faith at its World Centre in Haifa. 4

3. These were the National Spiritual Assemblies of Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, the Baltic States, Central Asia, the Congo Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Czechoslovakia, the East Leeward Islands, Greenland, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Hungary, Macau, Namibia, Niger, Poland, Romania, the West Leeward Islands, as well as the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Russia, Georgia, and Armenia and the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova.

4. For further information on the progress of the Mount Carmel Projects, see pp. 67-75.

- - - - -

#### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Newly elected members of the Universal House of Justice on the stage of the Haifa Auditorium, accompanied by former members Dr. David Ruhe and Mr. Hugh Chance (second and third from the right).

Results of the balloting were announced the day after votes were cast. The following individuals were elected to serve for a five-year term and were called to the stage amid waves of applause: Mr. 'Ali Nakhjavani, Mr. Glenford Mitchell, Mr. Adib Taherzadeh, Mr. Ian Semple, Dr. Peter Khan, Mr. Hushmand Fatheazam, Mr. Hooper Dunbar, Dr. Farzam Arbab, and Mr. Douglas Martin. The two outgoing members of the Universal House of Justice, Dr. David Ruhe and Mr. Hugh Chance, joined the newly-elected body on the stage and were recognized by all present for their longstanding, dedicated service.

While the Convention's main item of business was the election of the Universal House of Justice, the major portion of the event was spent in consultation, both formal and informal.

Within the Convention schedule itself, time was allotted for plenary consultations on the 150 B.E. message from the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world, 5 and consultation also centered on the three areas of focus within the current Three Year Plan: enhancing the vitality of the faith of the individual believers; developing the human resources of the

5. The 150th year of the Baha'i Era commenced on 21 March 1993. March 21, the vernal equinox, marks the beginning of the Baha'i year.

Cause; and the consolidation of local and national institutions of the Cause. 6 The chairing of all five plenary consultative sessions by female Continental Counsellors served as a safeguard against electioneering and showed once again the interrelated character of the institutions of the Faith.

Because the International Convention took place during the Ri~van period, two Baha'i holy days, the Ninth and Twelfth Days of Ri~van, occurred during the Convention, the former at the beginning and the latter at the end. Joined by the staff members serving at the Baha'i World Centre, making a total number of approximately 1,400, the delegates observed the Ninth Day of Ri~van in the gardens near the Shrine of the Bah in Haifa; the Twelfth Day of Ri~van was commemorated at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, near Acre. Prayers in six languages, followed by the recital of the special prayers revealed for those who visit the burial places of the Faith's Founders, and circumambulation of the Shrines marked the simple but powerful observances. Delegates departed from Haifa before sunset on 3 May, following the holy day celebration that marked the close of the Convention.

6. The expansion and consolidation of the Baha'i community has historically . been effected through a series of global plans of varying lengths. The current Three Year Plan began at Ri<;lvan 1993 and will end at Ri<;lvan 1996.

This article reports on the International Counsellors' Conference held 3-8 May 1993 in the Holy Land and on the appointment of the International Teaching Centre for a new term of office on 23 May 1993.

Conference of

BAHA'i  
CouNSELLORS

How can the Baha'i community around the world contribute more directly to the application of Baha'i principles in the various fields of human endeavor? What is the role of Baha'i institutions in helping to increase the vitality of an individual's

faith? How can the Baha'i community foster the development of its human resources? How can Baha'i communities best share the teachings of their Faith with the masses of humanity who are spiritually hungry? These were some of the vital questions addressed at a conference called by the International Teaching Centre, the consultative body based at the Baha'i World Centre that coordinates the activities of the five Continental Boards of Counsellors with an aggregate of seventy-two members serving throughout the world.

Established in 1973 at the Baha'i World Centre by the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre is currently composed of the three remaining members of the institution known as the Hands of the Cause of God and nine Counsellors who are appointed for a term of five years.

Together, the members of the International Teaching Centre and Continental Boards of Counsellors and their auxiliaries constitute a distinctive arm of the Baha'i Administrative Order. Their membership comprises, according to the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, "eminent and devoted believers appointed for the specific purpose of protecting and propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah under the guidance of the Head of that Faith."

Complementing the elected arm of the Baha'i administrative system, these high-ranking officers have no legislative or judicial powers. Their functions are twofold: to stimulate the propagation of the Faith throughout the world by educating, advising, and encouraging individuals, groups, and the nationally and locally elected Baha'i institutions; and to ensure the protection and consolidation of the Baha'i community by fostering adherence of its members to the unifying principles of the Faith. Among the particular functions of the International Teaching Centre are to devise and recommend teaching plans to the Universal House of Justice.

#### International Counsellors' Conference

The Counsellors' five-day conference, held in Haifa from 3-8 May 1993, immediately following the Seventh International Baha'i Convention- the occasion every five years for the election of the Universal House of Justice- was a forum for consultation among members of the International Teaching Centre and some sixty-five Continental Counsellors who remained in Haifa for the event.

In a letter written on 17 November 1992, the International Teaching Centre expressed its perception that one of the major responsibilities of the appointed institutions of the Faith is to assist Baha'i communities "to advance beyond those early stages of unity that are established through agreement on beliefs

all ideals, further than concern for the well-being and happiness of their own members, to a level of unity where love and high ideals are naturally translated into harmonious collective action." Conferences such as the one held in May 1993 assist in

## COUNSELLORS

the achievement of this common vision necessary for the promotion of higher levels of unity.

The International Teaching Centre has hosted a Counsellors' Conference following each International Convention since 1978, renewing the Counsellors' sense of vision pertaining to their work and fostering an evolution in their manner of functioning. Increasingly, the Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliary Boards are seen as essential catalysts for the work of the community. Consultations at the May 1993 conference offered participants the opportunity to exchange information on what had been successful in their efforts so far, to look at what could still be done, envisioning the needs of the community as far into the future as the end of the century, and to anticipate the institutions' responses to those needs.

Held at the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the Counsellors' Conference was honored by the presence of the Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha RUI; Jiyyih Khanum, 'Ali-Akbar Fun!tan, and 'Ali-Mul)ammad Varqa. Members of the Universal House of Justice also attended the sessions, contributing to the consultation and helping give it focus .

1. --\_l\_l ..... ~.,.....---á--rá•

Members of the International Teaching Centre and Continental Boards of Counsellors from around the world, accompanied by members of the Universal House of Justice, at the international Counsellors ' Conference held at the Bahti 'i World Centre 3-8 May 1993.

The three Hands of the Cause addressed the conference on different themes. Amatu'l-Baha Rulfiyyih Khanum spoke about the urgency of the time in which we live and the accelerating upheavals in the world. In the midst of this, she said, the Baha'is need to focus their energies, and to bring the message of the Baha'i Faith to the large numbers of people everywhere who are spiritually hungry. Dr. Varqa addressed the conference on the subject of I:Iuququ'llah, its significance, and its universal application throughout the Baha'i community at this stage in the development of the Faith. Mr. Furutan shared his insights on several vital issues in his keynote talk.

Consultation centered on a number of specific topics. A member of the Universal House of Justice spoke to the participants on the vitality of the faith of the individual, noting the importance of empowering people through the Word of God in

literacy classes, working in villages with children, and incorporating spiritual aspects into education. The Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information made a presentation on promoting public awareness of the Kitab-i-Aqdas and showing the relevance of this Most Holy Book, Baha'u'llah's book of laws, to issues of current concern to the world. 1 The Baha'i Faith encompasses individuals, local communities, and institutions. One of the conference sessions focused on the need to strengthen all of these elements and especially foster the maturation of the institutions of the Baha'i Faith in preparation for world peace, which the Baha'i writings anticipate will be effected through international agreement in the not-too-distant future. To encourage the process of such maturation, communities need to learn to think of their activities in terms of patterns of growth contributing to this goal rather than as isolated events carried out for their own sake. Such thinking will contribute to a sense of continuity, give members a vision of the future direction of the community, and will support the systematic nature of the evolution. Once people have

1. For a discussion of the Kitab-i-Aqdas and its place in Baha'i literature, see The Baha'i World 1992-93, pp. 105-118. See also William S. Hatcher's essay on pp. 189-236 of this volume.

## COUNSELLORS

Vision, they collaborate more efficiently, create a nurturing environment, and communities become transformed as human resources develop systematically to meet envisioned needs. At the root of all this social evolution and transformation is the recognition of the sacred as the central motivating purpose of all activities Baha'is undertake. For that reason, the conference also studied qualities of spiritual leadership, leading to an understanding framed in terms set forth by 'Abdu'l-Baha: first, service to God, and then to the community. The role of the Counsellors around the world in this area is to encourage the focus on the sacred nature of Baha'i institutions to foster respect for their authority and also to develop approaches to administration that empower the community by promoting a spirit of enterprise among its members and encouraging individual initiative. Counsellors, members of their Auxiliary Boards and their assistants can help create a nurturing environment and foster diversity in action. All of this involves learning to work with the grassroots of the community in a different way from that generally followed in society. Grappling with the question of how the Baha'i community can make its message known in order to have a significant

impact on human society as a whole, the conference addressed the issue of teaching the masses of humanity about the Baha'i Faith. Participants also discussed the need to collaborate with non-political organizations that compose "civil society"- people who are not Baha'is but who are attracted to Baha'i ideals, who share similar values, and who also see the necessity for the establishment of a new order in the world. Small group consultations were arranged by countries and by groupings of people in similar situations. Focusing on the power of the Holy Spirit, on sacredness, and on reverence, the Counsellors engaged in a very dynamic consultation on different methods of inviting people into the Faith, according to their needs and conditions. To promote the involvement of the Baha'i community in human affairs and to direct the energies of its members in applying Baha'i principles to various fields of human endeavor, the International Teaching Centre identified six areas of focus: moral education, the visual and performing arts, science and

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

religion, sustainable development, public and private administration, and culture and cultural development. Recognizing that there are many people in these fields actively seeking to transform society, Baha'is can develop collaborative efforts with them.

Discussion concerning the development of human resources centered around the need for the training of children and youth. The opening up of children's classes to the public, the need for appropriate curricula, and the requirement to invest resources in this area were cited as crucial.

The Counsellors also consulted on the topic of equality of the sexes, agreeing that there needs to be a more concentrated effort made to further this objective. Not only do women need special attention and encouragement, they noted, but the men need to be educated regarding their role in the encouragement of women. Finally, the topic of institutes and other processes of training was dealt with, focusing on the development of permanent institutes to foster the involvement of youth, train children's class teachers, encourage and train women, reach people of capacity, and train assistants to members of the Auxiliary Board to be better community development workers. In all of these endeavors, the Counsellors stressed that the focus should be on "process"--on the development of human resources in a broad sense rather than a narrow one and on the development of an education program for the entire community.

Aside from the consultative sessions of the conference, a number of ancillary events occurred, including a visit by all of the Counsellors to the Shrine of the Bah for prayers for their

work, a banquet hosted by Amatu'l-Baha Rul).yyih Khanum at . the Master's House, lunch at the Mansion of Mazra'ih at the invitation of the Universal House of Justice, prayers at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, and lunch in the garden at the International Teaching Centre. Each Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre also hosted a meal for a small number of the visiting Counsellors and some members of the Universal House of Justice to enhance the existing atmosphere of goodwill and collaboration. Participants departed at the end

## COUNSELLORS

Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre, appointed in May 1993, outside the Mansion of Bahji.

with a renewed commitment to their work in the Baha'i community and a keener vision of the directions in which to encourage development.

### Appointment of International Teaching Centre for New Term of Office

Shortly after the conclusion of this signal conference, on 13 May 1993, the Universal House of Justice announced the appointment of the Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre for the five-year term beginning 23 May 1993. The nine members appointed were Mr. Kiser Barnes from Nigeria, Mr. Hartmut Grossmann from Finland, Mrs. Laretta King from Alaska, Mrs. Joan Lincoln from Cote d'Ivoire, Mr. Shapoor Monadjem from Brazil, Mr. Donald Rogers from Canada, Mr. Fred Schechter from the United States, Mrs. Kimiko Schwerin from Japan, and Mrs. Joy Stevenson from Australia. In the same message, the Universal House of Justice also expressed its appreciation for the years of service given to the International Teaching Centre by Mr. Mas'ud

Khamsi, who has returned to Peru, and Mr. Peter Vuyiya, who has returned to Kenya.

The first act of the newly-appointed institution was the joining of its members with the Hands of the Cause of God 'Ali-Akbar Furutan and 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa and the members of the Universal House of Justice for prayers at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, near Acre, on 5 June. Immediately afterwards, all held a first meeting in the historically significant room used by Shoghi Effendi in the Mansion of Bahji, where Baha'u'llah spent the final years of His life. Joint consultation continued during the afternoon in the Council Chamber of the Universal House of Justice, back in Haifa.

The purpose of the meeting was to explore the tasks facing the International Teaching Centre during its next five years.

Consultation focused on the laudable activities carried out thus far and guidance previously given by the institution concerning the initiation and sustaining of processes of growth in the Baha'i community. Issues concerning questions about the Faith raised by interested members of the public and attacks launched by opponents, the role of the Teaching Centre in encouraging systematic study of the Faith, the production and dissemination of Baha'i literature, and the flow of pioneers and travelling teachers were also discussed.

In a letter about the event, written 24 June 1994, the Universal House of Justice described it as "highly significant" and expressed the hope that the continuing developments in the work of this institution "will impart a yet greater impetus to the activities of the individual believers and their institutions throughout the world and accelerate the work already so eagerly á launched for the achievement of the Three Year Plan." During these "climacteric years" before the world, as it faces the close of the twentieth century, the heightened levels of functioning of the International Teaching Centre, with its emphasis on the collaboration between institutions at all levels and its encouragement of individual initiative, will play a significant role in the development of the Baha'i community throughout the world.

## MOUNT

## CARMEL

### PROJECTS:

Progress 1993-1994

During 1993-94, progress continued apace on the great construction projects under way on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel. These comprise the construction of three buildings of the Baha'i Faith's world administrative center and eighteen terraces leading to the Shrine of the Bab: nine from the foot of Mount Carmel and nine from its ridge.

### áSignificance and Distinctiveness of the Projects

The seeds of these projects were planted over a century ago, when Baha'u'llah revealed the Tablet of Carmel, the charter for the World Centre of His Faith, and instructed 'Abdu'l-Baha to build on the slope of Mount Carmel a befitting sepulchre for the mortal remains of the Bab, the martyred Herald of His Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself constructed the Shrine. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, embellished this sacred edifice in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Baha's wishes and constructed the first nine terraces in rudimentary form, linking the Shrine with the German Templer Colony at the foot of the mountain. Following

the passing of Baha'u'l-hih's daughter Bahiyyih Khanum in 1932, Shoghi Effendi established the beautiful Monument

Gardens nearby as the site for her resting place and as the focal point of the future administrative center of her Father's Faith. The first building to be erected on the far-flung arc centering on the Monument Gardens was the International Baha'i Archives, built under the supervision of Shoghi Effendi and completed in 1957. This building houses sacred artifacts associated with the history of the Faith and is visited by Baha'i pilgrims from all parts of the world. The next phase of development occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, when the Baha'is undertook the construction of a permanent Seat for the Universal House of Justice. This was completed in 1983. Now the Baha'i community is engaged in the erection of three additional buildings on the Arc, and the re-development and completion of eighteen monumental terraces: nine above and nine below the Shrine of the Bab. This Shrine is, for Baha'is, one of the most sacred spots on earth, second only to the Shrine of Baha'u'llah situated a few miles away, north of the city of Acre. Both Shrines are visited by thousands of pilgrims each year.

The three buildings now under construction are an extension to the International Archives, the Centre for the Study of the Texts, and the International Teaching Centre's permanent Seat. At a future date the International Baha'i Library will be added to complete the administrative center.

These edifices, however, represent much more than an administrative center. In a letter to the Baha'is of the world written on 4 January 1994, the Universal House of Justice points out that the raising up of these buildings and the construction of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab are "central to the work of the Faith in eradicating the cause of the appalling suffering now afflicting humanity." <sup>1</sup>

The Mount Carmel Baha'i Projects are distinctive in several ways. First, in dimensions and resources required, they are several times greater than any project previously ventured upon

1. For a more detailed discussion of the history and significance of these projects, see *The Baha'i World 1992-93*, pp. 169-176.

## MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

by the Baha'i world community. Second, the buildings of the Arc have been designed in a style that not only harmonizes with the classical Greek design chosen by the Guardian for the International Baha'i Archives Building, but also respects the quality of the mountain-slope setting and the relationship of the administrative center to the sacred character of the Shrine of the Bab, which occupies a dominant position on Mount Carmel. Instead of rising upwards as massive structures, they are set in the

mountainside as colonnaded pavilions surrounded by gardens, and with many of their storeys descending below ground. Third, the terraces are designed to embrace the Shrine of the Bab like the ornamental setting of a precious jewel. Intricately carved gates, balustrades, fountain pools, and a colorful combination of flowers, plants, and trees will provide further enhancement.

Progress in 1993-94

The impetus that the Holy Year lent to the Arc and the Terraces Projects gathered momentum during the period from 1993-1994. With the issuance of tender documents to building contractors for the construction of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives extension in June 1993, the stage was set

Members of the Universal House of Justice at the site of the Centre for the Study of the Texts in January 1994.

for the inauguration of another significant phase of construction. On 19 December 1993, an agreement for the general contract for the construction of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

the Archives extension was signed with one of the leading contractors of Israel. By then, approximately 125,000 cubic meters of rock had been excavated from the site. To support the excavated cavity, a 30-meters high retaining wall had also been completed. With a surface area of 2,000 square meters reinforced by 340 steel anchors, the wall is one of the largest of its type in Israel.

Next, as work on the foundation of the Centre for the Study of the Texts began, a sophisticated survey system was established to determine the exact coordinates of the architectural design on site. It was during this period, too, that a state-of-the-art air filtration system was installed in the existing Archives Building. This will be essential to the protection of the sacred texts, relics, and other historic documents of the Faith from the dust pollution resulting from construction activities at the adjacent site. The new filtration system now provides the International Archives Building with a clean and protected environment, and pilgrims' visits have continued without interruption.

At the other end of the Arc, at the site of the International Teaching Centre, excavations reaching a depth of 22 meters yielded another 50,000 cubic meters of rock, which were used to balance the levels of the upper terraces. Here again, a retaining

View of the anchored retaining wall at the site of the International Teaching Centre, August 1993.

#### MOUNT CARMEL PROTECTS

wall of 12-meter-long micropiles and horizontal reinforced concrete beams, supported by one hundred pre-stressed anchors, was completed to stabilize the mountainside. Another major development has been the commencement of excavations in January 1994 for a pedestrian and service tunnel to link the buildings on the Arc. Since the tunnel passes under the stairs leading to the main entrance of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, crews excavated from both ends- the site of the International Teaching Centre and that of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives extension- to minimize disturbance and expedite the process.

Work on the Terraces Project kept pace with the activities on the Arc. Once earthwork on the five terraces immediately below the Shrine of the Bab was completed, they were graded and structured, and their shape began to emerge. Simultaneously,

Aerial photograph, taken in September 1993, showing work on upper terraces of the Shrine of the Bah, and excavation work on the Seat of the International Teaching Centre, left, and the Centre for the Study of the Texts, right, with the Seat of the Universal House of Justice at the apex of the Arc. drainage and plumbing work began. By January 1994, this was finished, and the topsoil and grass cover on the inner zone of these terraces were in place. On the outer edges of the terraces, trees were planted and wild flowers were sown to develop the informal forest areas. Mechanical rooms seven meters below the surface were constructed on the west side to house water

The newly prepared gardens on the eastward extension of the main terrace of the Shrine of the Bab, March 1994.

An aerial view of some of the terraces below the Shrine of the Bab with finished concrete pools, March 1994.

#### MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

pumps for irrigation and fountains as well as controls for underwater and terrace lighting. The installation of a large transformer in the mechanical room on terrace six required the use of one of the biggest cranes in Israel.

The design of the upper terraces differs from the ones below, in that a straight line of stairs alternates with curved stairs on two sides, because of the steepness of the mountain. On the thirteenth, fifteenth, and seventeenth terraces, the stairs converge on balconies which will serve as resting spots and vantage points for pilgrims and visitors to view the terraces below. Work carried out in this area between Ri~van 1993 and Ri~van 1994 centered around the building of underground retaining walls and the concreting of the stairs.

Relations with Authorities and Dignitaries

Significant as the progress on the construction of the Arc and the Terraces has been, no less significant to the development of these projects has been the approval that the Baha'i town planning scheme has received from the Israeli authorities. In February 1994, the District Committee for Planning and Construction, Haifa Region, the senior body responsible for town planning, approved a revised scheme proposed by the Mount Carmel Baha'i Projects Office. This approval came in the wake of sustained and delicate negotiations, spanning six years, with all levels of authority within the Government of the State of Israel.

Years before, during the 1940s and 1950s, Shoghi Effendi had recorded his dissatisfaction and objection to the old town planning scheme of Haifa Municipality which was passed at the time and which remained in effect until the town planning scheme submitted by the Baha'is was approved. If all provisions of the earlier plan had been enforced, they would effectively have prevented construction on the Arc and Terraces. The modified scheme incorporates the Baha'i plans for construction, resolves the problems of road extensions and traffic, avoids intrusions into the Baha'i properties, and addresses the code of behavior for the general public while visiting these sites.

Approval of this document brings with it acceptance of the spiritual significance of the Baha'i endowments and reaffirms the recognition of special status conceded to all Baha'i holy places- the continuation of a process initiated by the Guardian himself.

Throughout the planning stages and more recently throughout the early phases of construction, the Baha'i projects have evoked growing interest among dignitaries in Israel, and several high-level official delegations have visited the sites, including the Israeli Minister of Tourism and the Mayor of Haifa.

Previously, the then President of Israel and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister had viewed the models of the Mount Carmel Projects during visits to the Baha'i World Centre.

The Terraces Project has also caught the imagination of the people of Haifa, and they anticipate that the "Baha'i hanging gardens," as the media enthusiastically describe them, "will be the most beautiful gardens in the world."

#### Support from Around the World

While the projects currently under way on Mount Carmel are preeminently spiritual in character, their completion depends on the voluntary and sacrificial contributions of Baha'is throughout the world. In its 4 January 1994 letter to the Baha'is of the world, the Universal House of Justice clearly outlines both the significance of the undertaking and what is required for the task

to be seen through to its conclusion:

The establishment of the World Administrative Centre of the Faith on Mount Carmel at this juncture in the fortunes of mankind is essential to hasten the Order of Baha'u'llah. The believers are called upon to sustain this vast collective enterprise upon which the community of the Most Great Name is now embarked, through a sacrificial outpouring of material resources and through their dedication to the work of the Cause at this time of unprecedented need and opportunity.

Every step in the construction of the edifices of the Arc propels the world closer to the time when, in the words of the Universal House of Justice, "they will stand as the visible seat of

### MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

mighty institutions whose purpose is no other than the spiritualization of humanity and the preservation of justice and unity throughout the world," while the "beauty and magnificence" of the gardens and terraces are seen as 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."

A view of the lower and upper terraces of the Shrine of the Bab, taken May 1993.

### THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The period under review, 21 April 1993 to 20 April 1994, marked the first year of an international Three Year Plan for the further development of the Baha'i community. Efforts to attain the Plan's goals of enhancing the vitality of the faith of individual believers, developing the human resources of the Cause, and consolidating Baha'i institutions inspired activities far beyond the number that can be comprehensively reported in these pages. What follows, therefore, is a survey of highlights arranged to provide a sense of some of the main areas of Baha'i activity during this year. Beginning with a brief report on significant events at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel, this survey covers the following: Baha'i institutions, the advancement of women, indigenous peoples, environmental protection, social and economic development (with a special focus on education and health care), other areas of involvement, sharing the message of Baha'u'llah, expressing faith through the arts, Baha'i youth, Baha'i scholarship, and Baha'i Houses of Worship.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### Dignitaries Visit Baha'i World Centre

On 12 June 1993, the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea (who later became Prime Minister), Sir Julius Chan, accompanied by Lady Chan, visited the Baha'i World Centre during the course of his official visit to Israel. In response to Sir Julius' request, the Universal House of Justice met with the

Deputy Prime  
Minister of  
Papua New  
Guinea, Sir  
Julius Chan,  
right, visiting  
the Baha'i  
World Centre,  
12 June 1993.

Deputy Prime Minister for consultation on the future role of Papua New Guinea as an emerging nation and the destiny of the Pacific region. Discussion focused on the potential for Pacific nations to set an example of unity and mutual cooperation. The visit was the third of its kind by a Pacific leader: the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands met with the House of Justice in 1986, and the President of the Marshall Islands was received in 1990.

On 24 March 1994, the Dalai Lama visited the Baha'i World Centre, becoming the most senior head of another religion to enter the Shrine of the Bab. The distinguished guest reverently meditated in the Shrine and then placed the traditional white silk scarf on the threshold. The presentation of such a scarf represents an act of deep respect on the part of the Dalai Lama. Among other prominent personalities the Baha'i World Centre welcomed were Zambia's Minister of Local Government

### YEAR IN REVIEW

and Housing, Dr. Roger Chongwe, in April 1993; Hungary's Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. James Latorcai, in November 1993; and Federal Deputy of Brazil, Mr. Luis Gushiken, in February 1994. Ambassadors from Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, France, India, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Sweden, and the European Economic Community were also

received.

Baha'i Institutions

Baha'u'l-hih's revelation brought

to the world not only spiritual      The Dalai Lama, who visited

the Bahci 'i World Centre

principles to guide individual life

24 March 1994

and social principles to create

harmonious communities, but also an administrative order comprehensive and

flexible enough to make possible the practical

realization of spiritual ideals. 1

This past year coincided with the Seventh International

Baha'i Convention held 29 April to 2 May 1993 in Haifa.

Members of the Universal House of Justice, the international

governing body of the worldwide Baha'i community, were

elected to a five-year term, ballots being cast by delegates representing 165

National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies.

Members of 12 new National or Regional Assemblies voted for

the first time. 2

The Convention was also attended by high-ranking officers

holding appointed positions in the Faith: the Hands of the Cause

of God, the Counsellor members of the International Teaching

Centre, and Counsellors from all five Continental Boards, who

1. For a definition of the administrative order and other Baha'i terms, see  
Glossary.

2. See full article on the Convention, pp. 51-58.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

stayed in Haifa one additional week for consultations of their

own. 3

The three Hands of the Cause of God, all of them of advanced

years, continued to serve the Cause untiringly during the year.

Amatu'l-Baha Rul.lyyih K.hanum undertook an arduous and

extensive journey to thirteen countries and independent

territories and seventeen major cities of the former Soviet

Union. Beginning with her attendance in May á 1993 at the

National Convention of Azerbaijan and the National Convention

of Uzbekistan, she travelled for four months, covering territory

from Yakutsk in Siberia to the Baltic States in the west, most of

the Central Asian Republics, and the central part of Russia. She

met with numerous high government officials, including the

Speaker of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, the Vice President and

Minister of Justice of Kyrgyzstan,á and the Speaker of the

Parliament of Turkmenistan. Amatu'l-Baha was invited to

address the Supreme Soviets of the Sakha Republic and the

Buryat Republic.

Hand of the  
Cause of God  
Amatu 'l-Bahil. B~~Grli  
Ru~iyyih  
Kh.anum, left,  
accompanied  
by the Minister  
of Religion of  
Kyrgyzstan  
during her  
visit to that  
Republic in  
June 1993.

In October 1993, Amatu'l-Baha travelled to England and was officially received at Buckingham Palace by His Royal Highness the Prince Philip and at the House of Lords by Lord St. John of Bletso. A luncheon was also given in her honor at the private dining room of the Law Society in London with thirty distinguished members of the Bar.

3. See full article on the Counsellors' Conference, pp. 59-66.

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Akbar Furlitan, who resides in the Holy Land, continued to nurture the faith and enrich the experience of Baha'i pilgrims, approximately two thousand of whom visit the Baha'i World Centre each year. Hand of the

Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Akbar Furotan, counselling one of the many Baha'is with whom he comes in contact each year.

Cause of God 'Ali-Mul).ammad Varqa, who has been Trustee of I:Iuququ'llah for the past thirty-eight years, visited the Baha'i World Centre and remained there for several months to supervise and direct the work of the Office of I:Iuququ'llah.

He also attended the seventeenth annual conference of the Association for Baha'i Studies in Montreal, Canada, in June 1993.

On the national and local levels, a number of milestones were passed in the expansion of the elected arm

Cause of God  
'Ali-Mu~ammad Varqa,  
Trustee of I:Iuququ 'llah

of the Baha'i administrative order. The National Spiritual Assembly of Sierra Leone reported in April 1993 that it had

been legally incorporated. In September, advice was received from the National Spiritual Assembly of Hungary that the government had officially recognized the Baha'i Faith as a religion, thus paving the way for establishment there of Baha'i institutions. In December, the National Spiritual Assembly of Bulgaria was formally registered by the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. In Mongolia, the "Association of Baha'is" was officially registered as a "public organization" in June 1993, effecting formal registration at the highest level provided under Mongol Law. As a result, the Mongolian Baha'i community gained the right to own property and to issue invitations to foreign visitors, and the way was opened for election of Mongolia's first National Spiritual Assembly in the spring of 1994. The election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Cambodia in April 1994 had similarly been made possible when the Ministry of Religion formally registered the Baha'i Faith in October 1993. These developments and the expansion of the Baha'i community made possible the formation at RiQ.van 1994 of new National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies in Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Slovenia and Croatia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Among the many Local Spiritual Assemblies formed during the year, two merit particular mention. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Tbilisi (Tiflis), the capital of the Republic of Georgia, was re-established at RiQ.van 1993; an Assembly had first existed there during the 1930s. Likewise, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Leipzig, Germany, was re-established some fifty-six years after its dissolution during the time the Faith was banned.

The fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the first Local Spiritual Assembly of Santiago, Chile, at RiQ.van 1993, was celebrated with a special public meeting, preparation of an exhibit with photographs and text, the recording of a cassette of sacred writings with musical background, and production of a

## YEAR IN REVIEW

commemorative brochure. Finally, the Local Spiritual Assembly of Curitiba, Brazil, received a special certificate of "Public Recognition" from the City Council on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the city. It reads: "The City Council of Curitiba ... pays homage to the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Curitiba for its important services to the community of Curitiba."

## Advancement of Women

In May 1993, the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women was officially opened in New York

City. One of the principle teachings of Baha'u'llah is the

Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women, Mary Power, left, and "Women of Honor" award-winner Mildred Mottahedeh were among the nearly one hundred people present at the official opening of the office in May 1993.

equality of the sexes, and throughout its brief history, the Baha'i community has achieved an extraordinary record in this area. 4

4. For a detailed discussion of the Baha'i teachings regarding the status of women and a survey of activities undertaken by Baha'i communities around the world in this field, please see pp. 237-275 .

The Office for the Advancement of Women was created in response to greater demands for Baha'i interaction with international entities concerned with matters affecting the rights, status, and well-being of women. Its aim is also to advise National Spiritual Assemblies regarding programs and projects in which Baha'i involvement can encourage efforts toward the realization of equality. The ninety guests attending the opening of the office viewed an exhibit entitled "Baha'i Women in the Vanguard" which featured tributes to the work of Bahiyyih Khanum, Elsie Austin, Laura Dreyfus-Bamey, Magdalene Carney, Shirin Fozdar, Muna MaJ:unudnizhad, Martha Root, and Hilda Yen. 5

The Baha'i International Community has been extensively involved in projects related to the advancement of women for some time. Since 1988, the Baha'i International Community has served as convenor of the organization Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden on Women, and in October

5. Bahiyyih Khanum (1846-1932), daughter of Baha'u'l-hih and sister of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was designated by Shoghi Effendi as "the outstanding heroine of the Baha'i Dispensation." Elsie Austin, a lecturer with a distinguished career in law and public service, was the first African-American woman to serve as Assistant Attorney General of the State of Ohio. Laura Dreyfus-Earney (1879-1974), an American who was one of the earliest Baha'is in France, spent her life promoting unity and advocating women's rights through her work with the League of Nations and the United Nations. Her interviews with 'Abdu'l-Baha led to publication of the book *Some Answered Questions*. Magdalene Carney (1929-1991), a dedicated educator who earned her doctorate in the field, spent thirteen years on the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and the last eight years of her life as a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre at the Baha'i World Centre. Shirin Fozdar (1905-1992) devoted her life to defending the rights of women, voicing their concerns at the highest levels of government in Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand, and founding the Singapore Council of Women in 1952. Muna

Mal) mudnizhad (1966-1983) was a seventeen-year old teacher of children's classes who was hanged in Iran for refusing to recant her beliefs. Martha Root (1872-1939) was an American journalist who circled the globe several times during twenty years of travelling to teach about the Baha'i Faith. Hilda Yen (1905-1970) was born in China, educated in the United States at Smith College, and after World War II became a regular speaker on behalf of the fledgling United Nations and the Baha'i Faith.

1993 that organization sponsored a workshop at the Association for Women's Development Conference held in Washington, DC. The workshop was chaired by Mary Power, director of the new Baha'i office. The same month, the Baha'i International Community was represented at the second "Symposium for Women Farmers, Policy Makers and Agricultural Extension Workers" sponsored by Advocates for African Food Security and held in Tanzania.

In September 1993, the first phase of a project co-sponsored by the Baha'i International Community and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was completed. "Traditional Media as Change Agent," which began in October 1991, aims to uplift the status of women using traditional theater, songs, and dances to raise awareness of equality issues among both men and women. Begun in Cameroon, Bolivia, and Malaysia, where national and local Baha'i communities provided a network of motivated volunteers, the project shows signs of expanding to other countries.

In November 1993, the director of the Office for the Advancement of Women travelled with a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Asia, Lee Lee Ludher, to the Philippines for the Asia/Pacific Regional Non-Governmental Organization (N GO) Conference held in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to take place in Beijing, China, in 1995.

Representatives of the Office for the Advancement of Women were also present at the World Non-Governmental Organization Forum launching 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Baha'i participation in the event, held in Malta from 29 November to 2 December 1993, included presentation of a workshop entitled "Breaking the Equality Barrier: Emerging Roles of Men and Women in Families"; construction of a display featuring the Baha'i approach to family unity; and a new brochure explaining the Baha'i teachings on the family.

On all continents, national Baha'i communities also continued their work to raise the status of women. Conferences to address a range of issues related to women were held in Costa

The World NGO Forum in Malta, held to launch the United Nations International Year of the Family, was attended by representatives

of the Bahci 'i Office for the Advancement of Women.

Baha 'is in Zambia join representatives of other non-governmental organizations in a parade launching the International Year of the Family.

Rica, Germany, Kenya, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, and the Netherlands. A special conference to encourage indigenous women was held in Panama in July 1993.

The important roles women play in social and economic development were particularly emphasized in Asia this year. A Baha'i delegation attended an NGO Symposium on Women in Development held in the Philippines in November 1993. The 550 participants discussed how NGOs could help formulate a regional plan of action for the advancement of women in Asia and the Pacific. Another Baha'i delegation took part in the fiftieth session of the United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held in India in April 1994. The Baha'is presented a statement during discussion of regional preparations for the 1995 World Conference on Women.

The Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore, India, collaborated with the All-India Women's Conference to organize a workshop with two objectives: to prepare for the World Conference on Women and to identify the role of the woman as social change agent. The workshop was held on 8 March to celebrate International Women's Day. Also in India, the second Women's Tailoring and Integrated Rural Development Course began at New Era Development Institute in June. The course combines technical training in tailoring with development education. To commemorate International Women's Day in Bamenda, Cameroon, Baha'is distributed two hundred copies of a document called "Peace, Equality, Development" prepared by the Local Spiritual Assembly. The theme of International Women's Day in Uganda was "Women and the Constitution," and the National Spiritual Assembly of that country presented a Baha'i proposal for the constitution to the Central Government Representative. A conference held for International Women's Day in Lubumbashi, Zaire, included a drama portraying different ways women are treated and demonstrating an example of a Baha'i family. Baha'is co-sponsored the event, which attracted more than 130 people, including 55 representatives from different religious and cultural congregations.

A characteristic feature of the Baha'i approach to the advancement of women is the partnership of men and women in the process leading toward the realization of true equality.

Baha'i men in the village of Honsee Bazaar, Sri Lanka, acted

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

according to this principle by working with a local women's

organization to prepare a program for International Women's Day. After a walk through the town with banners proclaiming equality, the program unfolded until late in the night with talks, poetry reading, songs, and discussion.

The Centennial Year of Women's Suffrage in New Zealand was marked by the Whangarei Baha'i Women's Group with a dinner to acknowledge the contributions made by local women. More than one hundred women- health professionals, teachers, business women, public service managers, local authorities, media professionals, and social workers- listened to an account of the life and vision of Tahirih.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Hyderabad, Pakistan, celebrated Human Rights Day by organizing a seminar entitled "The Role of Women in Attaining Human Rights." Four professors of the Sindh University participated in a panel discussion attended by more than two hundred people. Radio Hyderabad recorded the proceedings and aired a twelve-minute program on the event.

Baha'i teachings on the key role of women in establishing lasting peace were communicated to the President of the Republic of Ireland, Mary Robinson, when she received a delegation of nineteen Baha'is from Northern Ireland. The delegation was one of six women's groups welcomed to the presidential residence in December.

A workshop entitled "Empowering Women: A Baha'i Perspective" was an integral part of a two-day conference held in Bendigo, Victoria, Australia, in June. The conference, "Criminal Assault in the Home," was organized by local community and health workers and the local police. The ninetyminute workshop considered the application of Baha'i principles of consultation, education, equality, and justice to the empowerment of women.

A seminar called "Transformation" was offered throughout Europe by the European Task Force for Women. The seminar aimed to release the capacities of women by awakening them to their own qualities. At seminars given in Moscow and Perm, Russia, women identified in themselves characteristics such as

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

enthusiasm, reliability, empathy, and wide-ranging interests which they could use for service to humanity.

In Togo, the Baha'i community of Lome created an exhibit entitled "The Role of the Mother in the Future of World Civilization" in honor of Mother's Day in May. It was displayed at the national Baha'i center.

Two Baha'i women were particularly honored this year for their outstanding lifetime achievements. In May, the Shirin Fozdar Trust Fund was launched by the Association of Women

for Action and Research (AWARE) in Singapore, in commemoration of the life of Shirin Fozdar. The Fund will support facilities that are beneficial to women, such as training centers and shelters for the needy; provide educational opportunities for women; support study of issues of gender and national development; and finance publications relevant to the advancement of women. Mrs. Fozdar's contributions to equality were also memorialized in the book *Voices and Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore* which was released in July. Mildred Mottahedeh of the United States was one of five recipients of the National Council of Women's "Women of Honor Awards," presented in May 1993. Mrs. Mottahedeh served for nineteen years as an observer at the United Nations on behalf of the Baha'i International Community, closely following the progress of assistance to developing countries. In 1954 she undertook the most comprehensive survey to date of development possibilities throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands. From 1961 to 1963 she served as a member of the International Baha'i Council in Haifa.

#### Indigenous Peoples

More than 2,100 tribes, races, and ethnic groups are now represented in the Baha'i community. It is not surprising that indigenous peoples, who have often felt forced to choose between relative isolation to protect their cultural traditions or interaction with the modern world which threatens their communities, would readily respond to the Faith of Baha'u'llah. They are reassured in finding that it embodies both eternal spiritual truths and teachings for today such as the value of cultural diversity and universal participation in the decisionmaking process. The number of indigenous peoples in the Baha'i community and the value Baha'is place on preserving the beauty of diverse cultures put the community in a unique position to respond to the United Nations designation of 1993 as the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples. In Australia, the Pacific Islands, and North and South America, particularly, Baha'is initiated and participated in special events related to this theme. The Australian Baha'i community and the Arrante Aboriginal tribe co-sponsored an intercultural celebration of indigenous peoples entitled "Heart of Australia Calling" in October 1993, in Alice Springs. This one-week festival brought together more than 150 Baha'is from Australia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu. Her Highness Princess To'oa Tosi Malietoa of Western Samoa officially opened the festival, which included workshops, entertainment, and consultation about future activities. Participants had been personally invited to the gathering by

Aboriginal elder Raymond Wymarra, who travelled across the islands of the South Pacific carrying a traditional Aboriginal "message stick" bringing greetings from the Australian government, the Arrente tribe of Alice Springs, and the Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly of Australia. In addition to the countries mentioned above, Mr. Wymarra visited Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, meeting with traditional leaders and political leaders and exchanging gifts. During his visit to Samoa in September, a special service was held at the House of Worship. The service was attended by the Head of State of Western Samoa, His Highness the Malietoa Tanumafili II, and readers included the Australian High Commissioner, the United Nations Coordinator for Samoa, and the Minister of Culture. In addition to the "Heart of Australia Calling" gathering, a number of other events in Australia commemorated the UN Year. In April 1993, an Aboriginal Institute was held at Yerrinbool Baha'i School to help the seventy-five participants become more familiar with Aboriginal culture and history. In July, the annual conference of the Association for Baha'i

People filing into the National Nakama! in Port Vila to hear speeches by Raymond Wymarra and Chief Mariasua during Mr. Wymarra's visit to Vanuatu in September 1993.

Aboriginal elder  
Raymond Wymarra of  
Australia raises the  
traditional "message  
stick" he carried  
throughout the Pacific  
region to invite  
indigenous peoples to  
an intercultural  
celebration.

Studies-Australia focused on indigenous peoples. The same month, National Aboriginal and Islanders' Week was celebrated with a multicultural service at the House of Worship. An audience of many different backgrounds listened to the sacred scriptures being sung by an a capella choir, and then moved outside the Temple to watch two Lakota Sioux Indians from the United States share their traditional dances and to hear a local Baha'i sing Aborigine songs accompanied by clapping sticks and didgeridoo.

In Sweden, American Baha'i Grace  
Growing-Medicine Eagle, right, and  
Auxiliary Board member Hans  
Ohman participate in a Baha'i

summer camp held in connection  
with the Cultural Festival for  
Aboriginal Peoples.

Three Native Canadian travelling teachers,  
Ernie Abel, left, Allison Healy, center, and Earl  
Healy, right, with a young friend in Ingra,  
Russia, at the annual Reindeer Festival.

I

Youth dressed in traditional reindeer outfits, Ingra, Russia, at the time of the Reindeer Festival.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

In September, the Australian Baha'i community took part in the launching of a Week of Prayer for Aboriginal Reconciliation, having been invited by the Australian government to read a Baha'i prayer during the program held at the Parliament House in Canberra.

The Baha'is of Tonga brought together members of nine nationalities in September for a cultural festival to mark the Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples. The more than one hundred people who gathered at the National Cultural Center in Tofoa came together to encourage harmony and understanding among the various races. When the Baha'i community of Tonga celebrated its fortieth anniversary in January 1994, members made a traditional presentation of a large pig, a kava plant, food crops, and traditionally strung flowers to the King, Taufa' ahau Tupou IV, thanking him for allowing the Baha'i Faith to become established in the country.

In November, the hereditary rulers of Wallis and Futuna, as well as all their ministers and village chiefs, formally received a group of Baha'is who came to present the Baha'i Faith in the customary and traditional manner. The Futunan leaders stated that the visit marked the first time a religious group had shown such respect to the islands' kings.

A special conference was held in August on the island of Upolu in Samoa to help deepen the understanding of village chiefs who had recently enrolled in the Baha'i community. They had learned about the Baha'i Faith from other village chiefs who made special efforts to share Baha'u'llah's message with their fellow traditional leaders.

In the Americas, special events marked the UN Year, and the involvement of indigenous peoples in spreading the Baha'i Faith to their peers continued. In November, representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada addressed Canada's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The delegation

pointed out that governance should aim to educate and elevate people, and the government should not be limited in conception to being merely a regulative agency. The Commissioners who heard the presentation stated they would bear in mind the willingness of the Canadian .Baha'i community to collaborate

with government and aboriginal associations to pursue new approaches to social and community development.

In Canada, too, indigenous Baha'is received special recognition. The Mayor and the Council of Coquitlam, British

Columbia, dedicated a park to the memory of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis, who spent her life preserving and promoting the

Salteaux culture and teaching the Baha'i Faith. Founder of the first Native Friendship Center in Canada, social reformer,

author, native dancer, artist, and respected elder, Mrs. Francis

had been awarded the Order of Canada, the highest honor conferred on a civilian by the Canadian government. Another

Baha'i, Cindy Kenny-Gilday of Yellowknife, NWT, received the

National Aboriginal Achievement Award for 1994. Mrs. Gilday,

one of the first aboriginal teachers in the Northwest Territories,

has worked for many years with aboriginal organizations, hosted

a special television series on aboriginal issues in Canada, and

moderated the United Nations Conference on Traditional

Knowledge and the Environment in 1993.

A Unity of Vision Conference for the Indigenous Peoples,

held in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, in September, brought together

representatives of four indigenous tribes. Rolf von Czekus,

member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in the

Americas, addressed the conference on the spiritual education

and the destiny of the indigenous peoples according to the

writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The Local Spiritual Assembly of Nueva Imperial, Chile, cosponsored an event in

December in honor of the Year for the

World's Indigenous Peoples. Other sponsors of the activity

included the Municipality of Nueva Imperial and the Special

Commission on Indigenous Peoples. A variety of music groups

visited eight schools in the area, and an Auxiliary Board

member spoke to a gathering of more than three hundred about

indigenous prophecies being fulfilled by the coming of

Baha'u'llah. The event was transmitted live by Radio Baha'i,

with simultaneous translations into Mapuche.

Indigenous peoples of South America actively spread the

teachings of Baha'u'llah. A group of Baha'is, many native

Wichis (Matacos) of Argentina, helped to establish the Baha'i

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Faith among their people by sharing its teachings, further

educating new Baha'is about the history and principles of the Cause, and conducting classes for children in aboriginal settlements. In Peru, a project organized primarily by native believers appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly introduced the Faith to fourteen new Aymara communities and seven new Quechua communities. More than two hundred people in these areas declared their faith in Baha'u'llah. A weekly Baha'i radio program called "Ewets Jolotsu Wataal Malaa" ("Looking for the Morning Star"), produced in Venezuela, has for more than three years been one of the few radio programs in the Guajiro language. In June 1993, the first programs completely written and produced by the Guajiro Baha'is were aired.

Washington Araujo, author of *Estamos desaparecendo da Terra* (We Are Disappearing from the Earth) and member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Brazil, was invited by the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain to speak in fourteen cities of Spain and Portugal to mark the Year for Indigenous Peoples. His book calls for recognition of the value of the indigenous cultures of the Americas, understanding of their history, and protection of their heritage.

The Baha'is of Sweden hosted an annual Scandinavian midsummer camp in association with the Cultural Festival for Aboriginal Peoples. Held in Karesuando in June 1993, the camp drew eighty participants, including a Hopi Indian Baha'i from the United States. Grace áGrowing-Medicine Eagle shared prophecies of the Hopi Indians and spoke in a kata, a traditional Lapp tent, where information on the Baha'i Faith was distributed during the festival.

#### Environmental Protection

Following extensive Baha'i involvement in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (known as the Earth Summit) in June 1992 and its companion conference, the Global Forum, Baha'is continued their efforts to stimulate education about environmental protection.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

The Baha'i International Community's Office of the Environment contributed an article called "The Earth One Country, Mankind Its Citizens" to the book *Masterworks of Man and Nature: Preserving Our World Heritage*, which was released in December 1993. The book was a joint project of UNESCO and the World Conservation Union. The Office of the Environment was approached for a contribution after an organizer of the book project read the Baha'i International Community statement "World Conservation Strategy for the

1990s."

In honor of the first anniversary of the Earth Summit, the Office of the Environment sent to every Head of State a copy of the book *Tomorrow Belongs to the Children*, which it had produced in collaboration with UNICEF. On World Environment Day 1993, June 4<sup>5</sup>, a special commemoration took place at the Baha'i Peace Monument in Rio de Janeiro which had been dedicated during the Earth Summit. Fifteen new soil samples from around the world were added to the fifty samples already displayed inside the monument as a symbol of the unity of nations. The new samples came from Chile, China, Colombia, Germany, Grenada, Greece, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Zaire.

For the five days preceding the ceremony at the Peace Monument, a display prepared by the Baha'is of Brazil and UNICEF was exhibited in a main hall of the Federal Chamber of Deputies. The display, which included drawings and messages from children around the world, was put together to commemorate the World Week for the Protection of the

Environment. Another Baha'i display on the environment was exhibited at the International Wildlife Management Conference in Costa Rica in September 1993. The conference was attended by approximately six hundred scientists, environmentalists, businessmen, and students from seventy countries. The Baha'i exhibit featured photographs and quotations from Baha'u'llah's writings on the balance between man, nature, and God.

A Baha'i exhibit entitled "Race Unity: America's Key to Sustainable Development," was displayed at the first large-scale

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

discussion of environmental concerns held in the United States following the Earth Summit. "From Rio to the Capitols: State Strategies for Sustainable Development" brought sixteen hundred representatives of state governments, NGOs, businesses, and environmental groups to Kentucky in May to find common ground. In two keynote speeches to a workshop panel on "Environmental and Economic Equity," the secretary-general of the National Spiritual Assembly, Dr. Robert Henderson, framed the issues in terms of social justice and the unity of mankind. The points made in his speeches were complemented by the exhibit, which showed that the promotion of race unity must be at the heart of local, state, and national strategies for successful sustainable development.

The crucial link between environmental protection and the principle of the oneness of humanity also guided the work of the Baha'i Office of the Environment for Taiwan. This agency

Dignitaries and onlookers gather on World Environment Day, 5 June 1993, in Rio de Janeiro to deposit the soil of fifteen nations in the Peace Monument.

developed workshop lectures, radio tapes, and a thirty-minute video on environmental education, all of which were made available to the community free of charge. Environmental education was also provided by the Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore, India, which increased its efforts in

this area after participating in the Earth Summit. In May the institute organized and hosted a five-hour workshop to inspire sixty engineering students to launch environmental awareness campaigns in their rural and tribal communities. A few days later, the institute hosted an environmental program and dinner for eighty guests in honor of World Environment Day.

Approaches to environmental education ranged from the diplomatic to the artistic. The Baha'i Office of the Environment in Singapore hosted a Japanese delegation in October, providing requested information on environmental activities organized by women. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Puerto Tejada, Colombia, created a mural on ecology, with the statement "Nature is a reflection of the Divine. Do not destroy it!" in response to an invitation from the municipality to participate in the community's first display of murals.

Two Baha'i communities were recognized for their efforts to preserve the environment. The National Spiritual Assembly of Mauritius was registered by the Ministry of the Environment and Quality of Life as a non-governmental organization for the purposes of promotion, protection, and conservation of the environment for the year 1993-94. The efforts made by the Baha'is

of Kigoma, Tanzania, in the area of tree conservation were cited by the government as positive examples for the community.

At news stands in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, the seventh edition of *Ecologia y Unidad Mundial* (Ecology and World Unity) became available for sale in the spring of 1994.

The magazine, which is produced by the Baha'i Department of Ecological Studies, contains articles related to the environment, social and economic development, and Baha'i principles. More than thirty-five hundred were sold during the Buenos Aires Book Fair.

### Social and Economic Development

During the period under review, Baha'is continued their efforts to contribute to the discourse on social and economic

development and to expand their involvement in development projects. 6

"A Global Strategy and Action Plan," a statement by the Baha'i International Community, was presented to the first conference of the

Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development. The conference was held in New York City in February 1994, as part of preparations for the World Summit to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995. The statement, which was read to the plenary session of approximately five hundred United Nations and government representatives, urged the prepcom to make the principle of the oneness of humanity the central unifying theme of the summit.

In December, more than 650 people representing nineteen countries gathered in Orlando, Florida, in the United States for the 1993 North American Baha'i Conference on Social and Economic Development. Participants consulted about how increasing knowledge and skills can bring about development initiatives in the areas of race unity, family cohesion, the advancement of women, education, environmental protection, health, and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Guyana Office of Social and Economic Development (GOSED), a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly, hosted a conference in January 1994 focusing on sustainable development. Approximately 185 people representing fifty nongovernmental associations and international donor agencies attended. The official opening of the conference featured an address by the Minister of Health, Gail Teixeira, and was attended by the United States Ambassador and the Deputy Ambassador of the People's Republic of China. The principal addresses at both the opening and closing sessions were delivered by Dr. Alfred Neumann, Director of the Preventative Health Program at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a representative of Health for Humanity, a Baha'i medical

6. For an overview of Baha'i social and economic development theory and practice, see *The Baha'i World 1992-93*, pp. 229-245.

Daily classes in vocational education are offered to street children at the Center for Social Well-Being operated by the Baha'i community of Brazil.

One of the highlights of the gathering was the premiere of the video edition of *Facts for Life*, a health education tool jointly created by UNICEF, the Guyana Community Based Rehabilitation Program, and GOSED.

The Baha'is of Ecuador participated in the first National Seminar on Social and Economic Development, held in Quito from 20 August to 2 September. The event was organized by two foundations: the Third Millennium and New America. The ninety participants heard presentations by a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Ecuador and a representative of the Cultural and Educational Baha'i Foundation.

The first document to outline the Baha'i concepts of development in Spanish was

released at the end of 1993. Bolivia's National Baha'i Economic and Social Development Committee published the proceedings of the first Latin American Seminar on Baha'i Social and Economic Development which had taken place in January 1993. The eighty-page document explains Baha'i approaches and shares the experiences of Baha'is in the field.

A seminar on development for the Pacific region was held in Auckland, New Zealand, in July 1993. More than three hundred

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Baha'is representing eighteen national communities listened to speakers who emphasized the spiritual foundations of Baha'i social and economic development and inspired the participants to put the principles into action.

An exhibit of photographs demonstrating the contributions of the Baha'i International Community to the social and economic development of some French-speaking countries was displayed at the City Hall of Port Louis, Mauritius, in October. The National Spiritual Assembly organized the exhibition to coincide with the French-Speaking Countries Summit.

In November, thirty individuals from ten countries gathered in Switzerland for the third annual meeting of the International Society for Agriculture and Rural Development, a Baha'i professional organization. The conference focused on the connection between agriculture, health, and nutrition, as participants represented agriculturalists, doctors, nutritionists, people involved in community development, and farmers.

### Education

On 26 November 1993, responsibility for the operation of five elementary schools in the Marshall Islands was entrusted to the Baha'i community when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Majuro Local Government and the National Spiritual Assembly. The agreement came after a feasibility study was completed by a consultant to the Office of Social and Economic Development at the Baha'i World Centre, an initial curriculum was drafted, and consultation took place among President Amata Kabua, the Minister of Education, and members of the National Spiritual Assembly. Members of the Assembly then met with principals, teachers, and parents, who expressed receptivity to the plan.

The turriculum for the Majuro Atoll schools will emphasize character development and understanding of world interdependence, equipping students with moral and intellectual tools for meeting the challenges of the modern age.

Baha'is continued to operate the hundreds of academic schools, tutorial schools, and literacy programs they have

initiated around the world. In Swaziland, where the Baha'i community runs five successful pre-schools, a new primary

In India, a young woman displays a sample of fabric she learned to tie-dye by the Pygmy children in Bengui IL Gabon, attend school in classrooms built by the National Spiritual Assembly. This project provides education for eighty children who have no other schools. literacy and community development.

Participants in the Rehema rug weaving project, a Baha'i social and economic development project established in Kenya by three Baha'i women.

school was completed in Mbabane. In Zambia, where a Baha'i literacy project is responsible for thirty-two classes, International Literacy Day was celebrated 12 November 1993 with a gathering of two hundred people. One local leader was so impressed that his sixty-year-old wife had learned to read and write that he declared he would donate land to help his village literacy class begin an income-generating activity.

In April 1994, the first graduation ceremony was held for participants in a new one-year pre-primary teacher training course offered by the New Era Development Institute in India. By the time of graduation, two-thirds of the twenty-two graduates had secured teaching jobs, and the rest had good opportunities.

Work in the field of education was balanced by participation in the discourse about the nature of schooling.

A copy of the statement "World Citizenship" was distributed to each of the twenty-one ministers of education and representatives of international organizations attending a meeting on education in Brazil in July. The meeting was held as part of the third Iberian-American Conference of Statesmen and Government Officials.

Following the success in Brazil of a Baha'i-produced radio show on health, the government station Radio Nacional da Amazonia invited the Baha'i community to produce a twenty-minute weekly talk show on education and family life. The broadcasts began in July. Also in July, the President of Honduras met with two representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly who presented him with Baha'i literature as a contribution toward the education reform being sponsored by the government.

A delegation of three Baha'is participated in the Non-Governmental Organizations' Second Regional Consultation on "Education For All by the Year 2000" in New Delhi, India, in September. In Zambia, the Minister of Education, Dr. Kabunda . Kayongo, invited Baha'i participation in an autumn seminar on 'the education of girls. Among the delegates was the principal of

the Baha'i-run Banani International Secondary School.

Ministry officials distributed copies of a paper prepared by the Baha'i International Community to all the participants.

At the request of the National Centre for Educational Resource Development of the Ministry of Education of Guyana, a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly presented a paper at a workshop on moral education held in November. The thirty participants in the five-day workshop were asked to examine papers presented by major religious, human rights, and other organizations and to evaluate their contributions for possible use in the country's school system.

Paraguay's Vice-Minister of Education and Religion received a document on moral education from Baha'is in the community in September. The Vice Minister promised to share the information with the team working to develop the nation's curriculum.

Baha'i co-authors of *The Virtues Guide*, Linda Kavelin Popov and Dan Popov, were presenters at the United Nations World NGO Forum held on the island of Malta in December to launch the International Year of the Family. Following the conference, the authors were invited by the Cana Society (Catholic Social Services) to stay and present *The Virtues Project* to the Maltese people. Clergy, teachers, caregivers, and lay people attended workshops on the strategies of the project.

Health Care

In the area of health care, Baha'i health educators addressed the long-term need to help local communities institute their own comprehensive disease prevention programs, while Baha'i doctors and health volunteers attempted to meet immediate requirements for care.

More than one hundred health professionals gathered in Evanston, Illinois, USA, in May 1993 for the first general conference of Health for Humanity. The organization, incorporated in March 1992, is sponsored by the National Spiritual

Assembly of the United States and is based on the principles of the nobility of humankind, group consultation, unified service, and comprehensive health. Conference participants consulted about the concept of linking hospitals in developed countries with those in areas of greater need. The Ocotal Hospital in Nicaragua linked with Princess Margaret Hospital in England beginning in 1991 as part of a "hospital twinning project" conceived by Nicaragua's Ministry of Health and the Nicaraguan Baha'i community.

The first European Baha'i Medical Conference brought together a similar number of professionals at De Poort, the Netherlands, in October. Participants from twenty-six countries

studied the Baha'i teachings on the nature of man, health, and

## YEAR IN REVIEW

healing and took preliminary steps to form a European Baha'i Medical Association.

Kenya's Baha'i Social Mobilization Programme, which trains community health workers for service in villages, was noted by a representative of the Ministry of Health as a positive example for other religious groups. The Baha'is were asked to describe the function of the village health committees during a seminar organized by a consultant from UNICEF to Kenya's Expanded Programme for Immunization. The gathering was arranged to enlist the assistance of religious leaders with improving immunization of children in Kenya. At the time of the seminar, Baha'i community health workers were providing classes on hygiene, immunization, breast feeding, malaria prevention, family planning, and diarrhea control in more than eighty villages. Health volunteers were also trained in Cameroon. The Baha'i Village Health Volunteer Programme, which began in East Province in October 1992, prepared another fifteen people in North West Province to teach their peers about nutrition, hygiene, and immunization.

The National Baha'i Development Institute in Rajshahi, Bangladesh, held its first Rural Health Workers' Training Course in August 1993. Twenty Baha'i youth who had applied

## I

In Burkina Faso, a local woman conducts a health education class.

to be trained as community health workers took classes about hygiene, child care, pre-natal care, common disease prevention, and basic health care. The program constituted an orientation preceding a full three-month training to be provided later.

Instruction was provided by two visiting doctors and doctors from the health clinic sponsored by the institute. The visiting doctors arrived in Rajshahi for the course after seeing more than one thousand patients at a medical camp in Mymensingh and speaking at the University of Dhaka.

A drug abuse prevention training course organized by the Bangladesh Interreligious Brotherhood Association in August was addressed by a member of the Baha'i Auxiliary Board. A crowd of two hundred people representing more than fifty associations heard ideas about prevention measures on individual, family, and societal levels, and listened to the Baha'i perspective that drug abuse is only one among many social problems which could be solved if humanity committed itself to finding global solutions.

Medical information about alcoholism was offered to the people of Bulgaria through television programs prepared by a Baha'i in Suriname. The programs, called "Because We Care," were delivered to Bulgaria as part of a cooperative project involving Alcoholics Anonymous, Radio Hilversum, and the Baha'i community of Utrecht, the Netherlands.

A program of public education about drug abuse was launched in Guyana in February 1994 with the reading of a statement prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly. The program is sponsored by the Camp David Foundation, whose aim is to educate and sensitize the public about the dangers of drug abuse.

Efforts in the area of health education were joined by efforts to meet immediate needs for health care. Two dentists and a hygienic assistant from Europe treated more than seven hundred patients in remote villages of India and offered classes on preventative dental care during a three-week visit in January. In

February, the National Baha'i Doctors Committee of Turkey organized a free check-up campaign which reached more than six hundred and fifty people.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Other Areas of Involvement

Issues related to women, indigenous peoples, the environment, education, and health care were only a few of those addressed by Baha'is, for whom the writings of Baha'u'l-hih, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi provide solutions to the complex problems of the day. Confident that world peace is inevitable, yet conscious of the intensive work required, Baha'i communities shared their ideas on the critical prerequisites for peace and strove to bring about these conditions.

A delegation representing the Baha'i International Community participated in the United Nations World Conference on

Human Rights held in Vienna, Austria, in June 1993. The delegation presented three statements at the conference, took part in a panel discussion on religious intolerance, and was represented on the twelve-person NGO Planning Committee which organized the International NGO Forum preceding the conference. The Baha'i display at the forum focused on protecting human rights through education, the advancement of women, and the strengthening of families.

Prior to the human rights conference, a representative of the Baha'i International Community in France had been regularly taking part in a series of meetings organized by the French government to prepare for Vienna. While the conference was proceeding in Vienna, Baha'is in the Netherlands, at the invitation of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, were

participating in a round table discussion on the right to freedom of thought and religion.

Human rights and conflict resolution were the topics addressed by the Director of the Center for International Development and Conflict Management of the University of Maryland at College Park when he travelled from the United States to Poland under the sponsorship of the Baha'i Chair for World Peace, Landegg Academy, and the Adam Minkiewicz University in Poznan. The Baha'i community of Poland played an important role in arranging for the April 1994 visit.

The Baha'i International Community was represented at the World Conference on Unity of Man held in Jalandar, Punjab, India, in February 1994. The aim of the conference, which was

organized by the followers of Sant Kirpal Singh, was to explain the basic unity of life and to make an appeal to the world against aggression and violence, religious sectionalism, and racism.

The Baha'i representative addressed more than nine thousand people.

The Baha'i view on peace was presented to a group in Sweden which formed to study the United Nations statute and make recommendations for revision. The Peace Popular Academy, which was preparing a submission to the Ingvar Carlsson Commission to help the Commission carry out its official assignment to recommend statute changes, invited the National Spiritual Assembly to share its perspective.

The Head of State of Jamaica, Sir Howard Cooke, invited the National Spiritual Assembly of his country to visit him, and ended up consulting with the members for more than an hour about the issues facing Jamaica. Cameroon's nationwide discussion about a new constitution prompted the National Spiritual Assembly of that country to prepare a document explaining Baha'i principles concerning the purpose and organization of government and law. It was presented to the members of the Constitution Drafting Committee, key members of the Parliament, and all major political parties.

As the people of Guinea-Bissau were preparing for their first elections, the National Spiritual Assembly planned a conference called "A New Model for Democratic Elections." Held in August, the conference was attended by the President and three members of the Electoral Commission, the Ambassador from Cuba, the Consul from Senegal, and representatives of two political parties.

In South Africa, where a Peace Day was held on 2 September 1993, the Office of the Mayor of Johannesburg invited the Local Spiritual Assembly to participate in a prayer and song meeting in the City Library Gardens. A Baha'i prayer for mankind was

recited for a group of more than six hundred, and copies of The Promise of World Peace were distributed.

The peace activities carried out by the National Spiritual Assembly of Uruguay were recognized by the Oriental Cultural Association with an award bestowed in September 1993.

In the Ukraine, a series of seminars on "The New World Order," conducted by a visiting scholar, formally inaugurated the Institute of Spiritual Foundations for World Civilization in November. The institute, inspired by Baha'i teachings, was constituted by the Ukraine Academy of Sciences for Social Progress in Kiev. A second series of seminars, called "The Spiritual Heritage of Humanity and its Relation to Civilization," was conducted in December.

The Baha'is of Northern Ireland organized a walk for world peace to bring The Promise of World Peace to the attention of their fellow citizens.

The first Baha'i exhibition for peace in Peru was displayed in Cuzco for five days in September. The documentary about Baha'u'llah, entitled Prisoner of 'Akkci, a video about the World Congress, and a slide show were presented. In conjunction with the exhibition, a panel discussion on peace was organized. Another panel discussion addressing the issues of moral education, the environment, and the advancement of women took place in Paraguay in November and was filmed for television.

Baha'i participation in the Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Chicago 28 August to 5 September, was vigorous. Baha'is presented some thirty workshops and talks. More than seven thousand people representing virtually every major religion and coming from fifty-six countries were in attendance at this commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the first World's Parliament of Religions. At the end of the event, a special assembly of religious and spiritual leaders came together to sign a "Declaration of a Global Ethic," a five thousand word document that seeks to identify those moral principles shared by the world's religions and promote them as the basis for a sustainable world order.

The seminar "Interreligious Harmony for World Peace" organized by the Religion and Peace Academy Nepal included Baha'i presenters. The Academy was established by the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace.

In the United States, where racism poses a major barrier to peace, the Baha'is tackled this issue in a number of ways. In Los Angeles, the Baha'i community, the Human Rights Commission, and the Office of the Mayor are co-sponsoring a

project called "Vision of a New Los Angeles." The project was conceived after a meeting with the city's mayor in 1991 and accelerated following race-related riots in the city in 1992. The steering committee produced a directory of the city's three to four hundred human rights agencies to promote collaboration and produced a fourteen-page vision statement with nine major premises on which participants in the project agree. On the anniversary of the riots, 29 April 1993, the Los Angeles Baha'i Center was the site of a day of spiritual cleansing organized by LA Clean-Up, a group which had designed a program of continual projects involving thousands of citizens. Because of the Baha'i Center's reputation as a place welcoming people of all backgrounds, it was selected as the location for a twentyfour-hour prayer vigil which began with a ceremonial planting of a "peace pole"- a redwood pole bearing the phrase "May peace prevail on earth; may peace prevail in our homes and communities" in four languages.

On the other side of the United States, in New York City, the "Racism. Just Undo It" Task Force of the Spiritual Assembly of New York made plans for its local campaign to expand nationally. Members of the campaign, who took part in twenty events in the five boroughs of New York during the summer of

. 110

1993, design~d a brochure explaining the effort, began preparing materials for schools, and held a contest to solicit creative approaches to healing racism.

In other cities across the United States, Baha'is made a variety of efforts to address this complicated issue. A full-length musical drama about interracial á relationships, called "Out of This Darkness," was created in Virginia with plans for a fivemonth tour of the mid-Atlantic region. Race Unity Day 1993,

13 June, was celebrated by Baha'is in numerous cities: a forum called "How will the elimination of racism change my life?" was sponsored in Waco, Texas; a "jazz jam" tribute to the late jazz musician and long-time Baha'i Dizzy Gillespie was organized in Ashland, Oregon; the first Race Unity Award was presented by the Baha'is of St. Tammany Parish West, Louisiana; and a celebration including dance, poetry, and music, drew two thousand people in Boston.

In December, when three thousand Baha'is gathered for the 1993 Grand Canyon Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, the city mayor proclaimed the dates of the meeting as Racial Unity Weekend.

In Canada, too, racial issues received attention. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination- 21

March 1994-was selected for presentation of the Race Unity

Award 1994 by the National Spiritual Assembly. This was the second annual presentation of the award.

Believing that individual moral rectitude is indispensable to the solution of social problems, the Baha'i community sought to draw attention to this critical, yet often ignored, issue. One example comes from Bulgaria, where a conference was held on "Moral and Ethical Principles in a Social Market Economy." The November event was co-sponsored by the European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF), the National Spiritual Assembly of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Association of the Club of Rome, and Bulgaria's Institute for Sustainable Development. During the conference, the EBBF was invited by the principal of the College of Trade Export Marketing to lead a seminar on integrating business ethics into the curriculum of the college.

### THE BAHAI WORLD

A national essay competition on the subject of "morality in education and life" was sponsored by the Baha'i community of Swaziland for students from high schools and universities. The awards ceremony was held in July 1993, with the participation of a representative of the Minister of Education.

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

Believing that Baha'i principles shed light on the major challenges facing humanity today, Baha'is are eager to share with individuals and groups pursuing similar aims the reason for their own optimism about the resolution of these issues. The fundamental belief of every Baha'i is that Baha'u'llah is no less than the Bearer of a Divine Revelation which fulfills the promises made in earlier religions and which is powerful enough to transform and unite the hearts of all people. Therefore Baha'is continually strive to offer, in a spirit of openness, their knowledge of Baha'u'llah.

Baha'u'llah's teachings are enshrined in numerous volumes of His writings, substantial portions of which have been translated into a wide range of languages. Baha'i information programs include presentation of the Creative Word of God, as well as the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, who were authorized to elucidate Baha'u'llah's writings after His passing. To promote recognition and dissemination of these sacred writings, Baha'i participation in book fairs and individual presentations of literature continued vigorously during 1993-94. Baha'i Publications International represented Baha'i publishing at the London International Book Fair in March 1994. For the first time, the Baha'i Faith was included as a classified subject category in the official fair catalogue. The Sixth International Book and Video Fair in Budapest, Hungary, also held in

March, featured a prominent stand with Baha'i literature. Baha'i books, including Spanish translations of *The Hidden Words* and the Baha'i International Community's statement on Baha'u'llah, were sold at the International Book Fair held in Guadalajara, Mexico, in November/December. Baha'is also participated in significant book fairs on the national level. A Baha'i booth at the Buenos Aires, Argentina,

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

The National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico is represented at the International Book Fair in Guadalajara by Editorial Baha'i Indolatinoamericana.

Book Fair, held 25 March to 12 April 1994, was visited by thousands of people. This is the largest Spanish language book fair in the world. Baha'is of India were involved in major book fairs in Bhubaneswar, Madras, and Phulbani. Approximately fifty thousand people visited the Baha'i exhibit at the Himachal Pradesh summer festival in Shimla, India. Spain's Barcelona Book Fair and Sweden's Gothenberg Book Fair included Baha'i exhibits. The Baha'i community of the Faeroe Islands displayed the nine books it had published during the 1992-93 period at the Faeroe Islands Book Exhibition held in November 1993.

More than five hundred Baha'i books in different languages were displayed at the National Library in Tirana, Albania, for one week in June 1993. The opening of the exhibit was attended by about eighty people, including the Vice Minister of Culture. A selection of Baha'i literature in Basque and French was displayed in France at an annual gathering of writers and publishers of the Basque Country in April 1994. Six Baha'i books have been translated into the Basque language.

Baha'i literature was presented individually during meetings with the President of Guinea-Bissau, Joao Bernardo Vieira; the

President of Suriname, Ronald R. Venetiaan; the Prime Minister of Guyana, Sam Hinds; and the Governor of the State of Orissa, India, the Honourable B. Satyanarayan Reddy, all in July 1993; the Prime Minister of Liechtenstein, Markus Biichel, and the President of Vanuatu, Fred Timakata, in October; the Prime Minister of Lesotho, the Right Honourable Dr. Ntsu Mokhehle, in January 1994; and the Premier of Bermuda, Sir John W.D. Swan, in February.

The President of Guinea-Bissau, Joao Bernardo Vieira, second from right, receives a copy of the statement on Baha'u'llah from three representatives of the National Spiritual Assembly.

Desiring to inform the public as quickly as possible about the claims of Baha'u'llah, Baha'is continued to organize systematic campaigns of education. Individuals travelled great distances to

help" their fellow Baha'is in other countries with these projects. In some areas, large numbers of people responded quickly to hearing about the Baha'i teachings, and they were welcomed into the Baha'i community.

The National Spiritual Assembly of Albania offered Baha'u'llah's message of hope to the people of Albania by writing an "open letter" to them. The letter was published in five newspapers and distributed throughout towns and villages

## YEAR IN REVIEW

by a group of two hundred volunteers from thirty-three countries during a two-week period in August.

In the Pacific region, a campaign called the "Ocean of Light," which seeks to spiritually empower indigenous Baha'is to express the Baha'i Faith within the context of their own traditions and cultures, continued into its third year. A dynamic exchange of indigenous travelling teachers took place, and institute courses taking into account different approaches to learning helped the islands' Baha'is gain a deeper knowledge of Baha'u'llah's teachings. One example of an Ocean of Light project comes from the island of Mare in the Loyalty Islands. A group of youth approached both the grand chief and several local chiefs with traditional greetings and requests for permission to teach. Then in each village they presented talks on various subjects, sang songs, and shared traditional dances. In this simple way, at least fifteen hundred people received the Baha'i message. This kind of individual exchange occurred all over Australasia. 7

The Baha'is in Africa also demonstrated their respect for traditional customs when teaching about the Baha'i Faith. In Chivhu, Zimbabwe, a team of four elders sought permission from the chiefs in the area to tell their people about Baha'u'llah. After reading some passages from the Baha'i writings, Chief Chapungu gave full permission, inviting the Baha'is to speak in his village. When they arrived, more than seven hundred people had gathered. By the end of five days speaking in several villages, more than one hundred people had joined the Baha'i community and two Local Spiritual Assemblies had been elected.

Gatherings of local chiefs were addressed in Kenya as part of a project which also informed a large number of administrators and teachers. More than 150 people declared their belief in Baha'u'llah and ten new Local Assemblies were formed. A tremendous response to the Baha'i Faith was encountered in Nigeria, where the teachings were shared with school administrators, clergymen, police officers, and village chiefs. During a

7. See also pp. 89-93 for more information on events in this region.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

four-month period, more than seven hundred people embraced the Cause.

Prominent people in the southern region of Guyana were invited to learn about the Baha'i Faith by attending viewings of films about the Baha'i World Congress and current international activities. In Taiwan, members of the Philosophy Club of the National Open University were offered a one-day seminar about the Faith. The Temenos Academy in London, which was founded in 1990 to study spirituality through traditional thought, art, and literature, invited Professor Soheil Bushrui, holder of the Baha'i Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, to present a lecture entitled "On Retrieving Our Spiritual Heritage" as part of its summer program.

The public was also educated about the Baha'i Faith on a broader scale, through the media. <sup>8</sup> In Zambia, two editions of the Baha'i Newsreel and Prisoner of (Akka were screened on national television during prime time. A thirty-minute program called "Baha'u'llah's New World Order" was aired on Portuguese National Television in July. A second program, called "Prayer and Meditation: Baha'i Temples" was broadcast later in the year.

Television viewers in La Ceiba, Honduras, were able to see three videos on Baha'i subjects and a live one-hour program on the Baha'i Faith. On another program, all nine members of the National Spiritual Assembly were introduced to the public and interviewed.

In South America, as elsewhere, youth played a key role in teaching the Faith. <sup>9</sup> An international team of youth travelled to villages in Bolivia over a period of several months, teaching classes and organizing public talks. At least 350 people enrolled in the Baha'i community. Almost 900 people embraced the Baha'i Faith in Kuna Yala, Panama, after ten Baha'is - including four local youth - informed them of the teachings.

8. See pp. 151-168 for article about news coverage of Baha'i activities.

9. See also pp. 121-125.

### Expressing Faith through the Arts

"All art is a gift of the Holy Spirit. When this light shines through the mind of a musician, it manifests itself in beautiful harmonies. Again, shining through the mind of a poet, it is seen in fine poetry and poetic prose. When the Light of the Sun of Truth inspires the mind of a painter, he produces marvellous pictures. These gifts are fulfilling their highest purpose, when showing forth the praise of God." 0

The number of artists inspired in their work by the revelation of Baha'u'llah is growing too quickly to allow mention of them all in this summary. The following examples are offered to provide a sense of the range of art forms and venues being used by Baha'i artists to share the richness of the Baha'i Faith with diverse audiences.

In October, a Baha'i choir travelled to Moscow, Kishinev, and Kiev to perform and record the music originally sung at the Baha'i World Congress in New York City in November 1992.

The choir consisted of forty-three singers from Antigua, Australia, Canada, China, Iran, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Each of eight formal concerts included an oratorio for choir and orchestra, reader and soloists, entitled "Baha'u'llah, The Promise of All Ages"; stylized contemporary choral interpretations of classical Persian, Jewish, and Indian themes; the music of Mozart; folk songs; and newly-composed gospel-style hymns in praise of Baha'u'llah. Audiences in Honduras, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand were treated to performances of the Lakota Sioux Indian traditional hoop dance of Baha'i Kevin Locke during a cultural tour sponsored by the United States government in commemoration of the United Nations Year for Indigenous Peoples. Travelling during the summer of 1993, Mr. Locke danced with his daughter Kimimihl and played a traditional flute before audiences ranging from several hundred to several thousand. Mr. Locke proclaimed the unity of mankind both

10. Attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha; cited in Lady Sara Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1967), 167.

Kevin Locke performing a traditional Lakota Sioux Indian hoop dance.

The Wildfire World Theatre group performed in Turkey, Romania, Mauritius, and Australia.

Baha'i Chorale at the Hall of Writers in Kiev, Ukraine.

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

through the stories interwoven in the performance and through the hoop dance, which vividly demonstrates the importance of all cultures working together to maintain balance and harmony in the world.

A group of eight Baha'i youth from Australia used their talents and energies to create a drama, music, and comedy production which conveys the principles of the Baha'i Faith.

Calling themselves Wildfire World Theatre, the group performed in Turkey and Romania in May 1993, Mauritius in September, and throughout Australia in the spring of 1994. Highlights of the tour included performing before eight thousand youth in Bucharest as part of an event co-sponsored by Romania's Ministry for Youth and Sport and the Municipality, and singing and being interviewed for a program broadcast on Turkey's national television station and in seventeen other countries of Europe and Central Asia.

Baha'i youth in North America, and increasingly around the world, formed Baha'i Youth Workshops to share their beliefs with peers using drama, dance, rap, and contemporary music. During 1993-94 the number of workshops increased from about twenty-five in five countries to about seventy-five in fifteen countries. In August, fourteen of these groups from around the United States and Canada converged on Atlanta, Georgia, to spread the message of Baha'u'llah through more than fifty public performances. The Vancouver, Canada, Baha'i Youth Workshop toured Hawaii in July, playing to enthusiastic crowds at schools, in parks, and in recreational centers.

"Art as an Act of Worship," an exhibition by Baha'i artists which was displayed in the Harbour Museum, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in March 1993, was one of several exhibits which demonstrated the effects of Baha'u'llah's revelation on His followers. The pilgrimage of two Australian artists to the Baha'i holy places in Israel and Turkey inspired them to create 93 paintings and 120 silk works which they displayed in a show in Midland, Western Australia, viewed by fifteen hundred people. Quotations from the writings of Baha'u'llah accompanied an exhibit in Luxembourg of large abstract paintings expressing the emotions of two German artists as they

encountered the Sacred Word. The drawings of Baha'i architect William Sutherland Maxwell and a model of the Shrine of the Bab, the superstructure of which Mr. Maxwell designed, were seen by an estimated seventy thousand people as part of a travelling display sponsored by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in Canada.

The first exhibit in Norway of paintings by Mark Tobey (1890-1976), distinguished American artist and member of the Baha'i Faith, was held at H0vikodden from 23 March to 2 May 1993. For the exhibition opening, composer Lasse Thoresen created vocal arrangements for two Baha'i prayers which were performed by opera singer Anne-Lise Berntsen. Other Baha'i writings set to music by Mr. Thoresen were aired on Radio France on 29 November 1993, from the Grieg Jubilee concert in Paris. Mr. Thoresen was the guest composer from Norway for

the event.

Pianist Mark Ochu, an American who has performed in many parts of the world, held a series of concerts in Sweden in October entitled "Prerequisites for Peace." Mr. Ochu combines his music with commentary on the social principles necessary for establishing peace. He also performed a concert for UNICEF in Luxembourg in November.

Youth in Gambia present a "world peace" drama during a competition on the theme of abolishing prejudice.

In Taiwan, Baha'i children sing in a public square as part of a Baha'i holy day celebration.

Five Baha'i singers and musicians were among those who performed for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held in Cyprus in October. Alex Zografov directed the musical opening, Vic Salvo played the piano, and three members of the Zografov family sang in the choir. The performance moved many of the forty-eight leaders of Commonwealth Nations so greatly that some of them commented on it in their speeches.

#### Baha'i Youth

Many of the groups developing their artistic capabilities to express the truths of the Baha'i Faith were composed of youth. In addition to sharing their artistic talents to benefit the Cause, youth also used their energy and creativity in other ways to spread Baha'u'llah's message of hope and to serve their communities.

The European Baha'i Youth Council, which was established in 1989 to coordinate the activities of the Baha'i youth in Europe, organized a series of training seminars during the year to strengthen the leadership qualities among youth and encourage them to exercise those qualities in their home

communities. During the summer of 1993, regional seminars were conducted in Dublin, Ireland; Marseilles, France; Wiesbaden, Germany; and Daugavpils, Latvia. During the remainder of the Baha'i year, national seminars were held in Bulgaria, England, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Turkey.

Thousands of people heard about the Baha'i Faith in Spain through a "Youth in Action" project held during the summer.

Two Baha'is created a sculpture exhibit composed of reproductions of places of worship from all religions, and the sixty youth helped set up the display in seven different cities. At times more than one thousand people a day visited the exhibit and heard about the Baha'i Faith.

Topics such as "Racism's Inability to Heal Itself," "Benefits

of Unity in Diversity," and "How to Act at the Grassroots Level" were discussed during a week-long Youth Forum organized by Baha'is in Naantali, Finland. Every evening a public presentation was made, including special guest speakers and performers.

The forum ended with a concert of international performers from various parts of Africa, Cambodia, England, India, Iran, and the United States.

The Boston Baha'i Youth Workshop performs a dance about domestic and societal violence entitled "This Strong Pillar. "

-----  
--

## YEAR IN REVIEW

In Gambia, four Baha'i youth from the United States and Canada pose with the children who attend their weekly literacy and moral education classes in the village of New Yundun.

The first International Baha'i Youth Conference to be held in Belarus took place in August. More than 160 young people from fifteen countries participated. The first National Baha'i Youth Conference in Bulgaria was preceded and followed by a service project cleaning a canal which runs through the center of Haskovo, while displays in the park informed people about the Faith.

In early April 1994, the European Baha'i Youth Council organized the fifth annual conference for representatives of National Baha'i Youth Committees around Europe. The gathering took place in Bmo, the Czech Republic.

Once again, a group of youth from the United States organized a trip to Siberia to help establish and strengthen Baha'i communities. Called Marion Jack V, in honor of a renowned Baha'i teacher, this year's project included fifty-six Russian youth and young Baha'is from eleven other nations, for a total of more than one hundred participants. Travelling through forty-nine cities in Siberia, Mongolia, and Sakhalin Island, the youth gave approximately two hundred presentations, granted one hundred interviews for television, radio, and

newspaper, and distributed about sixty thousand pteces of Baha'i literature.

The first Baha'i Youth Symposium to be held in the Marshall Islands took place in July 1993. Youth from the Eastern Caroline Islands, Hawaii, Kiribati, the Mariana Islands, and the Solomon Islands came to Majuro to consult with each other and with Counsellors, Auxiliary Board members, and members of the National Spiritual Assembly about service to the community. Four American youth who were volunteering a year of

service travelled to Guam and formed the Baha'i Youth Workshop to teach the Baha'i Faith using dance (see also section on the arts). Almost immediately, their performances led to twelve people accepting the Baha'i Faith. These youth, along with a Baha'i youth group from Saipan, performed before thousands of people at the Micronesian Day Festival in November.

In March 1994, a conference was held in Sydney, Australia, to mark the completion of the National Youth Scholarship Programme's term of classes and to give its students an opportunity to present the papers they had written. The participants undertook in-depth study of Baha'i writings over a period of eighteen months. Each student committed to running study classes for other youth in the area.

The Baha'i youth of the Cook Islands participated in a youth rally with the theme "unity in diversity" which was organized by the nation's Youth Council. The rally was the opening ceremony for Constitution celebrations. In Papua New Guinea, the first regional youth conference to be organized in the Southern Highlands attracted more than seventy youth.

The students of Maxwell International School, an accredited secondary school established in Canada by Baha'is, continued to demonstrate their commitment to community service. The Maxwell Baha'i Youth Dance Workshop participated in a program sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Multiculturalism to observe the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As a result of the program, the Workshop was asked to provide a panel of students to discuss youth violence with three hundred high school students.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Students from Maxwell also did well in the Cowichan Valley Music and Arts Competition, receiving eight awards for first place, four for second place, and one for third place. They also won awards in speech, poetry, drama, and essay-writing.

When the International Committee of the Global Youth Forum, an entity organizing an international youth gathering in Brazil, held a preparatory meeting with representatives from forty-four NGOs, the Baha'is participated. The Brazilian Baha'i Choir sang, one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets was read, and a presentation was made about the Tomorrow Belongs to the Children Project.

An International Baha'i Youth Conference with the theme "Let's Build a New World" was held in Otavalo, Ecuador, in August. More than two hundred youth from thirteen countries participated.

The youth of the Seychelles responded to an appeal made by

the Ministry of Environment, Economic Planning, and External Relations for help with cleaning a river. Baha'i youth removed five truck-loads of debris from the St. Louis River. It was the third time Baha'is had helped clean the river.

In India, 122 students from the New Era Development Institute conducted fourteen village-based youth institutes attended by 320 young adults. Each five-day institute had courses in the areas of spiritual foundations, technical training, service training, and cultural programs.

#### Baha'i Scholarship

The Baha'i writings exhort each individual to take personal responsibility for investigating truth and to view learning as an endless process. Baha'u'llah also gives His followers the obligation and privilege of sharing His teachings with humanity, relating His revelation to current knowledge, and applying its truths to the problems of the day. Thus each Baha'i is a potential scholar of the teachings, and the Baha'i community is committed to creating opportunities for serious study of its sacred writings.

The North American Association for Baha'i Studies held its seventeenth annual meeting in June 1993, marking the

Dr. Pierre- Ives

Mocquais, Academic

Director of the

Association for Baha'i

Studies, addressing a

symposium preceding

the 17th annual

conference of the •.ac>..\_f•á•á.n•,

association.

nineteenth year since the association was conceived. The more than six hundred people who gathered in Montreal, Canada, witnessed renewed contact with McGill University, intensification of dialogue with a broad variety of scholars, and artistic presentations of exceptional merit. Awards of excellence were bestowed for outstanding entries in an essay contest, and four names were placed on the 1993 Honor Roll for services to Baha'i scholarship: Dr. Will C. van den Hoonaard, Dr. Todd Lawson, Mr. Robert Ahdieh, and Mrs. Christine Zerbini. The twentieth international affiliate of the association was founded in October when the inaugural conference of the Russian Association for Baha'i Studies took place in St. Petersburg. Under the heading "The Spiritual Basis of Civilization," the conference included presentations on economics, gender and development, law and spirit, the concept of spirituality, and models

of the role of religion in society.

The inaugural address of the Baha'i Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland in the United States was delivered in March 1994. Professor Suheil Bushrui called on the more than two hundred faculty members, students, and other guests present to develop a global code of ethics from humanity's rich religious heritage as an essential step towards universal peace. The lecture was the first in what will be a series of annual lectures by the Baha'i Chair to be sponsored by the University.

In April 1994, the Baha'i Chair co-sponsored a gathering of scholars and eminent personalities who came together to consult

about how ethnic diversity and religious belief can become foundations for peace rather than conflict. "Once Empires Fade: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Possibilities for Peace" was also sponsored by the University of Maryland at College Park's Meyerhoff Centre for Jewish Studies and the Department of History.

Other activities of the Baha'i Chair in the past year include creation of a course on humanity's spiritual history which has become a major feature of the University's Honors Program, and co-sponsorship with the On Earth Peace Assembly of an interfaith conference called "Religious Perspectives on Peacemaking."

The University of Toronto, in Canada, offered its first credit course on the Baha'i Faith in the spring of 1993. Taught by Dr. Todd Lawson, the course covered the history of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, the distinctive teachings of the Baha'i Faith, and its current status. The course will be offered again in 1995.

A new course on the Baha'i Faith was also offered in Brazil by the State University of Rio de Janeiro during the spring of 1994.

Brazil's Federal University of Parana and the Baha'i community co-sponsored the first South American Symposium, "Foundations of a New World Order," in October. More than six hundred people participated, the majority being professors of the state system and people prominent in the nation's public and political life. The same month, an agreement on cultural, scientific, and technical cooperation was signed between Brazil's University of Bahia and the Local Spiritual Assembly of Salvador. The chancellor, Dr. Joaquim de Almeida Mendes, said the university had researched Baha'i educational activities and had obtained positive information from other sectors of the Brazilian university community.

In July 1993, a second class of students received certificates for successful completion of the Three-Year Program in World Order Studies at Landegg Academy in Switzerland. Landegg is

a Baha'i-sponsored institution which offers a variety of courses, forums, and symposia on aspects of the Baha'i Faith and on issues related to Baha'i principles. The Program in World Order

## THE BAHAI: WORLD

Studies, which graduated its first class in July 1992, requires participants to complete three month-long seminars in residence and submit assignments from home during the intervening months.

In each Baha'i community around the world, study of the sacred writings is undertaken by groups: some participate in ongoing institutes, others attend periodic conferences and seminars, and some take courses at permanent schools. Two examples of new developments in this area during the year include completion of the first in-depth, three-day, study course in Hindi offered by the National Baha'i Institute for Advanced Studies in India on 1 January 1994, and creation of the Baha'i Academy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which conducted its first weeklong course in September.

For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, a university student chose a Baha'i subject for his final year thesis. The student of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology designed and wrote his thesis on "Baha'i Temple Complex, Bangladesh." He successfully defended it in November before more than twenty-five professors and architects.

## Houses of Worship

Baha'i Houses of Worship (in Arabic, Ma.shriqu'l-Adhkar, which means "dawning-place of the remembrance of God") are open to followers of all faiths who wish to worship God within their walls. No sermons are given; only the revealed Word of God, as delivered by His various Messengers throughout history, is spoken, chanted, or sung, and private devotions are offered in the sacred atmosphere. At this time, seven Houses of Worship exist around the globe.

In January, severe bushfires which burned for days in the area of Sydney, Australia, causing widespread destruction, threatened the Baha'i House of Worship in that city. Twice the fire came within three meters of the property, but both times the wind suddenly changed direction, carrying the fires away. When the fire once again approached, the efforts of the caretaker, the book

## YEAR IN REVIEW

sales manager, and two neighbors, who fought the fires until 3:30 in the morning, were instrumental in saving the House of Worship. Sydney's Telegraph Mirror stated, "Amid the smoky

ruins of the parklands, the Baha'i Temple stood like a gleaming white beacon on the hill between Mona Vale and Ingleside." A special service was held in the Temple the following week to remember those who had suffered because of the blaze and to offer gratitude to those who had worked so hard to combat it. The House of Worship in New Delhi, India, continued to receive a record number of visitors, with more than three million people crossing its threshold during the year. One of these honored guests was Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, widow of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who visited the Temple in August 1993. In April 1994, two hundred of the delegates to the fiftieth session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific were received at the House of Worship by special invitation of the Baha'i International Community representatives to the conference.

In November 1993, the Baha'i Temple in Kampala, Uganda, was visited by Mrs. Mwinyi, wife of the President of Tanzania; Mrs. Chakaumba, wife of the Chairman of the Presidential Council of Malawi; Mrs. Neally Adyebo, wife of the Prime Minister of Uganda; and the Hon. Betty Okwir, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Affairs.

A public service to commemorate the forty-eighth anniversary of the United Nations was held at the Baha'i Temple in Apia, Western Samoa, in October 1993. More than 350 people, including government officials, UN personnel, and members of the diplomatic corps attended, some taking part in reading for the service.

The high quality of the concrete repair work done on the Mashriqu'l-A.dhkar in Wilmette, Illinois, USA, earned the House of Worship the International Concrete Repair Institute's "Repair Award of the Year" for 1993. A mounted photograph of the Temple was accepted by the project manager on behalf of the National Assembly during the Institute's annual convention in October.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

Also in October, a meeting room at the Mashriqu'l-Adbkar in Panama was the site of a seminar on the municipal development of Central America, organized by the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation. The more than seventy mayors from Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Spain were offered a devotional program each of the first four days of the sessions, and they were provided with a brief explanation of Baha'i teachings.

The House of Worship standing in the heart of Europe, at Langenhain, Germany, became home to the new German Baha'i Temple Choir, which began performing regularly at Baha'i holy

day commemorations and the last Sunday of every month as part of public worship services in the Temple. In order to create greater awareness of the interreligious character of the Baha'i House of Worship, the National Spiritual Assembly inaugurated a series of public events called "Forum Langenhain" at the National Baha'i Center located nearby. Once a month, issues of concern to society were addressed by guest speakers, including Kyrgyzian author Tschingis Aitmatow, whose talk on "Thoughts for a Better World" attracted three hundred people.

This article traces the Baha'i International Community's work as a non-governmental organization accredited by the United Nations.

### Historical Background

In 1945, one hundred and one years after the founding of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'i representatives at an historic conference in San Francisco witnessed the birth of the United Nations. Two years later the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada was accredited to the United Nations as a national non-governmental organization (NGO) qualified to be represented at United Nations conferences through an observer. A year after that, in 1948, the eight National Spiritual Assemblies then existing were recognized collectively under the title of "The Baha'i International Community." Since then the national affiliates of the Baha'i International Community have increased to 165. Today, Baha'i activities in relation to the United Nations are reinforced by an expanded permanent office in New York with a branch in Geneva and Baha'i representations to Regional United Nations Offices in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Nairobi, Rome, Santiago, and Vienna. Two associate offices of the Baha'i International Community's United Nations

Office have been established in New York: the Office of the Environment in 1989 and the Office for the Advancement of Women in 1992. They lend emphasis to these two areas of particular interest to the community.

The evolution of the Baha'i International Community's work at the United Nations has led to changes in its status through the years. In May 1970, it was granted consultative status, Category II, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); in 1976, consultative status with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and in 1989, working relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). 1

### Scope of Baha'i Activities at the United Nations

The Baha'i International Community is involved in a wide range

of issues of concern to the United Nations, including human rights, peace, the environment, social and economic development, and the advancement of women.

Under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the Baha'i International Community United Nations Office representatives participate in UN world conferences, preparatory committee meetings, and correlating activities, providing information and documents to special representatives and rapporteurs on various themes, such as the human rights situation of the Baha'is in Iran, religious tolerance, and freedom of expression. Additionally, the office supports external affairs of different National Spiritual Assemblies around the world and produces numerous statements and reports for the UN each year.

### Human Rights

With regard to human rights, the Baha'i International Community promotes the issue by contributing to those aims of the United Nations that are akin to the teachings of the Baha'i Faith, holding or collaborating in workshops, conferences and other events, or making statements, alone or in collaboration

1. For a more complete discussion of the Baha'i International Community's historical involvement with and activities at the United Nations, see *The Baha'i World*, vol. 19 (1983-1986), 378-397.

### BABA.'f I NTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

with other NGOs, to impart the Baha'i viewpoint. The Community also takes an active role in protecting the human rights of persecuted Baha'is and in correcting misinformation about the Faith. Finally, the Baha'i International Community assists national Baha'i communities to gain recognition by their national governments by making contacts with senior government officials, foreign ministers, and UN missions. Since human rights issues that have been raised by the Commission on Human Rights, the . Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, or by ECOSOC must be acted upon by the UN General Assembly, the Baha'i International Community must prepare materials for each of these bodies to ensure that its voice is heard effectively. During 1993-94, the Baha'i International Community was involved in the UN World Conference on Human Rights (UNWCHR) held in Vienna in June 1993. The Community took part in a number of different conferences and preparatory meetings for the conference, including a meeting on the "Role of NGOs in the UN Human Rights System," which was sponsored by the International NGO Committee on Human Rights and was held in New York in May 1993. At the UNWCHR itself, the Baha'i International Community representatives participated in

an "Expert Seminar on Appropriate Indicators of the Progressive Realization of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," monitored activities at the "Survivors' Committee and Ad Hoc Committee" organized by the US branch of Amnesty International, participated in the "Panel on World Report on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion or Belief, " and assisted in writing a report on religious freedom. Finally, a Baha'i International Community representative served as a member of the steering committee that organized the NGO Forum at the conference, with some fifteen hundred NGOs participating. The Community submitted three oral and three written statements that were issued as official UN documents, submitted joint oral statements to the plenary session on religious tolerance on behalf of sixteen religious NGOs, chaired one of the five workshops on "Democracy, Human Rights and Development," distributed one thousand packets of information, produced and

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

exhibited a display pronouncing "The Earth Is But One Country and Mankind Its Citizens" in six official UN languages, and held a reception and chamber concert for 110 invited guests. 2

A booklet entitled *The Baha 'i Question: Iran s Secret Blueprint for the Destruction of a Religious Community*, which examines the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran during the period 1979-1993, was also published and widely distributed in June 1993. As a result of the intensive work done by the Baha'i International Community, mention of the situation of the Iranian Baha'i community was included in the strongly worded resolution approved by the United Nations General Assembly. 3

#### Office of the Environment

The mandate of the Office of the Environment includes representing the diplomatic interests of the Faith to the UN on issues of environment, development, and such social issues as education, population, health, youth, aging, narcotic drugs, and indigenous peoples. To do this effectively, the office has developed relations with the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, WHO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Commission on Social Development, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and other regional UN commissions. The office also coordinates Baha'i International Community representation at international conferences on issues of environment and development. 4 During 1993-94, the Office of the Environment sent representatives to meetings such as those on "The Ethical Dimensions of Agenda 21" (New York,

January 1994) and the World Conservation Union General Assembly (Buenos Aires, January 1994), as well as NGO com-

2. For the text of three of the statements submitted at the conference, see pp. 311-316 of this volume.

3. See pp. 139-145 for further details regarding the situation of the Baha'is in Iran during 1993-94.

4. See *The Baha'i World 1992-93*, pp. 177-189, for a report on the Baha'i International Community's involvement in the Earth Summit, for example.

#### BAHA'f INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

mittees on sustainable development, youth and aging, indigenous peoples, education, and the UNICEF NGO Committee. It also continued to interact with the Worldwide Fund for Nature's Network on Conservation and Religion.

Follow-up to the Earth Summit and the Peace Monument Project in Rio de Janeiro also occupied the Office of the Environment during 1993-94, with the collaboration of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Brazil. The Baha'i International Community's goal is to continue soliciting soil samples from the different governments of the world until all countries have contributed. In 1993, a further fifteen countries added soil to the monument in a ceremony held on Earth Day; the countries were Chile, China, Colombia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, and Zaire. Initiated by the Baha'i International Community and the Baha'i community of Brazil with the support of the Mayor's Office of Rio de Janeiro and the '92 Global Forum, the Peace Monument is the only enduring monument in Rio to the Earth Summit and the Global Forum.

Leading up to the World Summit on Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, the office participated in the preparatory committee meetings held in January 1994 in New York and has generated a number of statements, including "A Global Strategy and Action Plan for Social Development," "A New Paradigm for Social Development," and "World Citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development." The latter is available in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese and has been widely distributed. 5

#### Office for the Advancement of Women

The mandate of the Office for the Advancement of Women is twofold: to promote the principles of the Baha'i Faith by interacting with international agencies and organizations involved in issues surrounding the rights, status, and well-being of women, and to keep National Spiritual Assemblies around the

5. This statement is reprinted on pp. 295-304.

world informed about projects and programs in which the Baha'i community can become involved to promote the equality of the sexes.

The major responsibility of the Office for the Advancement of Women is to represent the diplomatic interests of the Faith in relation to the UN and with international NGOs in consultative status with the UN with regard to the advancement of women and the family. The representative attends annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and develops the working relationship of the Baha'i International Community with UNICEF and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This has resulted in a growing number of collaborative ventures, such as the "Traditional Media as Change

Agent" project with UNIFEM. A report of this innovative project was featured in an article entitled "Approaching Men to Improve Lives for Women" in the June 1993 edition of UNIFEM News.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the Baha'i International Community has taken a lead role in the advocacy process, serving as convener of the group Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden on Women for several years. The Office for the Advancement of Women is currently heavily involved in preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995. In March 1994, the Baha'i International Community was represented at the first of five regional UN conferences and parallel NGO Forums. The director, in her position as chairperson of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, is a member of the Facilitating Committee organizing the NGO Forum on Women '95 to take place in Beijing at the time of the World Conference. In Geneva, a Baha'i International Community representative is the only male on the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva, and serves as convener of the Committee's NGO Working Group for the NGO Forum '95.

The Office for the Advancement of Women found itself particularly busy during the United Nations International Year of

6. See also pp. 259-263 for further details.

#### BAHA'I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

the Family (IYF), observed in 1994. A Baha'i International Community representative currently serves as secretary of the NGO Committee on the Family in New York, and the office was represented at the year's major conferences. At the NGO World Forum on the Family in Malta, held in November-December 1993 to launch the International Year of the Family, the Baha'i

delegation consisted of some twenty-three individuals from thirteen countries. Three of the one hundred "testimonial" awards given at the conference to organizations and individuals who promoted the IYF were given to the Baha'i International Community. The Community sponsored one of the conference's forty workshops, called "Breaking the Equality Barrier: Emerging Roles of Men and Women in the Family." A statement by the Baha'i International Community entitled "The Family in a World Community" was produced for, and first distributed at, the Forum in Malta; subsequently, in January 1994, it was printed as a pamphlet for use during the IYF. The establishment of the Office for the Advancement of Women has seen a visible increase in the response of National Spiritual Assemblies to the issue of the advancement of women, particularly with regard to the creation of their own agencies on the status of women.

#### Office of Public Information

As a corollary to the above-mentioned offices that attend to the diplomatic relations of the Baha'i International Community, an Office of Public Information was established at the Baha'i World Centre in 1985. With its branches in New York, London, and Paris, this office continued its activities in preparing and disseminating information about the Baha'i Faith and the Baha'i International Community to international and national organizations, agencies, and other bodies, as well as to leaders of thought, prominent people, the mass media, and the general public. Its main organ of communication with the public is One Country, the Baha'i International Community's award-winning quarterly newsletter, with a circulation of more than 25,000

7. This statement is reprinted on pp. 305-309.

readers in at least 150 countries. During 1993-94, One Country reported on issues pertaining to the environment, the advancement of women, social and economic development, and human rights, among other topics, including UN activities. By spring 1994, One Country was being published in English, French, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, and German.

#### Conclusion

The Baha'i International Community is generally recognized as a highly effective non-governmental organization at the United Nations. Its objectives- to establish and strengthen the links with the UN system, governments, and international organizations, as well as to increase the recognition of the Baha'i Faith in international circles, promote acceptance of its principles and defend its interests- are met through its service on committees at various levels and its statements and publications. Further, its

collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies around the globe provides it with a sizable army of fellow believers able to arise and promote- and sometimes to benefit from- its work at the United Nations which, in 1993-94, focused largely on issues concerning human rights, the family, the advancement of women, and the environment.

Update: The Situation of  
THE BAHÁ'Í'S  
IN IRAN

The situation of the Baha'i community in Iran remained precarious during 1993-94, despite a lessening of some of the more overt forms of persecution- perhaps a result of the government's intention to cool international concern. Nevertheless, violation of the full range of the community's rights in Iran persists.<sup>1</sup>

Overwhelming evidence indicates that the Iranian Baha'i community is still a major target of persecution. All Baha'i youth continue to be denied access to university. Thousands of Baha'is are still prevented from obtaining employment and are denied the right to own their own businesses or receive a pension. As of January 1994, eleven Baha'is were in prison, two under sentence of death. The rights of Baha'is to function as a religious community are entirely denied. Baha'i marriages are not recognized under the law; Baha'is are denied the right of

1. For a full discussion of the situation of the Baha'is in Iran, see "The Case of the Baha'i Minority in Iran" by Douglas Martin, in *The Baha'i World* 1992-93, pp. 247-271.

assembly; and Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, historical sites, and other assets have been either confiscated or destroyed.

#### Desecration of the Baha'i Cemetery in Tehran

In July 1993 a section of the Baha'i cemetery in Tehran was, under orders of the municipal authority, excavated by bulldozers for the construction of an Islamic cultural center. This involved the desecration of about two thousand graves. The remains of the Baha'is interred there were loaded onto trucks for an undisclosed destination. In response to protests, authorities responded with contradictory assertions and explanations, both denying and confirming the destruction of the cemetery. Some officials claimed that the cemetery was a public health hazard and that several Muslim cemeteries had been subjected to similar conversion projects. Others indicated that the purpose of the project was to level the uneven topsoil (about twenty to thirty centimeters) of graves older than thirty years to modernize and update the quality of the cemetery. The director of the

Muslim Burial Society asserted that such projects were approved and implemented only after replacement properties had been allocated and the Baha'is had been assigned a property of some twenty-five thousand square meters with mortuary and other facilities.

The facts of the case, however, contradict the various official explanations. The Baha'i cemetery was in usage for burial at the time of its confiscation at the beginning of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 and had not yet been used to full capacity. Even some of the Baha'is executed during the rule of the current regime are buried there, and the claim that only graves older than the thirty-year legal limit were interfered with is completely false. At the beginning of the Revolution, the cemetery's mortuary facilities and memorial hall were demolished, the marble grave coverings were removed, and all grave site marking was obliterated. The headstones, many of which were of high quality, were subsequently sold at public auctions. Since the confiscation, Tehran's Baha'is have been permitted to bury their dead only in a piece of wasteland measuring approximately ten thousand square meters, already almost filled to capacity,

#### BAHA.'is IN IRAN

which has not been officially allocated to them. In other localities, having access only to those cemeteries the government has designated for them, Baha'is also experience difficulties in burying their dead. Furthermore, they are not permitted to mark the graves of fellow Baha'is, making it almost impossible to identify the graves of their loved ones.

As the Baha'i International Community remarked in a statement on the situation of the Baha'is in Iran released in October 1993, the government's right to renovate areas formerly used for the burial of its Muslim citizens, in accordance with Islamic law, is not disputed. However, the seizure of the central cemetery of the oldest Baha'i community in the world, the erasure of all traces of its existence, and now the exhumation and removal of the corpses of illustrious figures of that religion "is an egregious offense against the conscience and cultural patrimony of the Baha'is throughout the world." The statement continued:

Attempts to minimize or obfuscate this basic truth only underscore the fact that this is but one more step in an ongoing campaign waged against the country's largest religious minority, deemed "unprotected infidels" and "members of the wayward sect" by the Iranian religious and judicial authorities.

The cemetery desecration brought vividly to mind the goal

of the revolutionary government of Iran, as stated in a secret 1991 memorandum endorsed by the Ayatollah Khamenei and disclosed in 1993, to block systematically the progress and development of the Baha'is in that country and "to combat and destroy the cultural roots which this group has outside the country."

#### Baha'is and the Iranian Justice System

While there was an abatement in the executions of Baha'is in Iran during 1993-94, on 8 December 1993 death sentences were pronounced by the Islamic Revolutionary . Council against Bihnam Mithaqi and Kayvan K.halajabadi. These verdicts rise solely from the men's membership in the Baha'i community.

The Court of Tehran accused them of collaborating with the United Nations to the detriment of their country by giving information on their case, but their only meeting with the United Nations Special Representative during his last visit to Iran was authorized by the Iranian government itself.

Their cases also underline the highly precarious situation facing Baha'is once in prison. When their original death sentences were overturned by the High Court, a second death sentence was handed down by the Islamic Revolutionary Council. Further, the death sentences were pronounced orally, and no written documentation exists of the court's verdict. The religious nature of such persecution is further underscored by the case against another Baha'i, Mr. Rami<;lan- 'Ali Dhulfaqari, who was arrested and charged with apostasy on 7 September 1993. He was subsequently released, but no reason was given, and the charge of apostasy has not yet been addressed. Indeed, it has been officially intimated to Mr. Dhulfaqari that he is condemned to death.

In another instance, an Iranian criminal court in a town near Tehran found that two Iranian Muslims had kidnapped and killed a Baha'i, Rul).u'llah Qadami. But because the victim was "a member of the misguided and misleading Baha'i sect," the court ruled, "the issue of retribution is null and void." Since a Baha'i is an "unprotected infidel," the accused were acquitted of murder. Instead they were sentenced to eighteen months in prison, including time already served, for "disturbance of order and security of society." Such a court decision sends a clear signal that Baha'is cannot expect any protection or redress from the Iranian justice system.

#### International Response

To address these and other similar situations, the Baha'i International Community turned once again, as it has done repeatedly in the past, to the United Nations. During 1993 three United

Nations committees- the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination monitored the human rights of minorities in Iran and received

#### BAHA'is IN IRAN

reports, both oral and written, made on behalf of the Iranian government. While the government asserted that no one in Iran can be harassed on the basis of his or her beliefs, and a press release issued by the Iranian Embassy in Bonn on 23 September 1993 declared that "the fact that the Baha'i Religion is not recognized as a revealed religion in Islam should not be interpreted as if the adherents of the Faith were persecuted," the findings of the three United Nations committees show that such statements do not reflect the actual situation of the Baha'is in Iran. In fact, the committees' comments not only express dissatisfaction with the Iranian delegation's presentation of the situation of the Baha'is, but convey in unequivocal language a grave concern for the treatment of the Baha'is in Iran.

The Baha'i International Community made a strong representation concerning the case of the Baha'is in Iran at the World

Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993. Later in the year, the United Nations Special Representative investigating the human rights situation in Iran, Mr. Reynaldo Galindo

Pohl, specifically mentioned the Baha'is in both his interim report of November 1993 and his final report of March 1994, where he devoted thirteen pages to comments on the Baha'is' situation. Shortly after the release of the interim report, in December 1993, the forty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on the human rights situation in Iran with specific mention of the Baha'is. On 9 March 1994 the United Nations Human Rights Commission adopted a strong resolution in which it cites religious discrimination against the Baha'is, "whose existence as a viable religious community" in Iran "is threatened."

#### Action by the Baha'i Community

Baha'i communities around the world, galvanized by the plight of their Iranian brethren, worked through legitimate governmental and diplomatic channels to keep the situation of the Baha'is of Iran in the consciousness of their elected and appointed representatives on the national and international stage.

The Baha'i community in France sent representatives to a meeting with the Iran Desk of the French government, resulting

#### THE BAHAI: WORLD

in newspaper articles in Le Monde and Liberation in July 1993. During the same month the British Broadcasting Corporation

(BBC) interviewed the secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom about the destruction of the Tehran cemetery and about the secret government memorandum outlining plans for the destruction of the Baha'i community both within and outside Iran. Also in July, a government deputy in Brazil met with the Iranian ambassador to that country in support of the Baha'is in Iran.

The American Baha'i community sponsored "An Appeal to the Conscience of Humankind," urging the world's leaders to continue to speak out against Iran's plan to destroy the Baha'is. It was co-signed by forty-nine prominent American cultural and political figures and appeared in the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times in November 1993. During that same month the US Senate adopted, by unanimous vote, a resolution calling upon Iran to end its persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, and in April 1994 the US House of Representatives adopted the same resolution, also by unanimous vote. This marked the sixth time since 1982 that the US Congress had expressed, in the words of Senators Christopher J. Dodd and Joseph I. Lieberman, "its deep sense of concern over the officially-sponsored repression that has been directed against Baha'is since the Iranian Revolution. While this repression has been less violent in recent years, we remain concerned that the Baha'is- Iran's largest religious minority-continue to be singled out for persecution based on their religious beliefs." Also in April 1994, in a speech at the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, President Clinton cited Iran's "abusive treatment" of Baha'is, along with "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia, as a critical human rights concern.

There is no doubt that the efforts of Baha'i communities around the world, from Africa to Europe, from South America to the islands in the South Pacific, from North America to Asia, have been instrumental in the abatement of the worst atrocities practiced by the Islamic Republic of Iran against the Baha'i minority in Iran. Through direct letter-writing campaigns from National Spiritual Assemblies around the globe to the Iranian government leaders, through urgent protests to the Iranian embassies or consulates around the world, through approaches to governments and requests for their intervention on behalf of the Baha'is, and finally through contacts with the news media resulting in widespread coverage, the Baha'i community has focused the world's attention on the activities of the Iranian government and has thus effectively stemmed the tide of executions.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the less sensational forms of persecution persist, and the dangers facing the Baha'i community are still very real. Until they are permitted by law to receive education

at the university level in the fields they wish to study, until they are permitted by law to own their own businesses and property, until they have the same privileges and freedoms by law as their fellow citizens, the Baha'is' rights are threatened, and the world must not forget their plight.

2. See pp. 153-156 of this volume for a survey of the coverage received in various print media about the situation of the Baha'is in Iran.

Murder of  
THR)3Jj  
BAHA'IS  
INCISKEI

On 13 March 1994, three Baha'is who had been living and working in South Africa for years and whose actions testified to their commitment to race unity were gunned down in a racially motivated attack at the Baha'i Center in Mdantsane, Ciskei. Two of the men had been invited by the Baha'i community of Mdantsane to consult on a program for the United Nations International Year of the Family and the third was manager of the center.

Around midday, four black gunmen burst into the center just as a prayer service was concluding, and they demanded that the white and black Baha'is be separated. The three men present who were considered white- Mr. Houshmand Anvari, Dr. Shamam Bakhshandegi, and Mr. Riaz Razavi- were lined up against a wall and ordered to empty their pockets of car keys. Then, as the adults and children who had gathered for Sunday classes watched in disbelief, the three men were shot with automatic rifles. Mr. Anvari, a 43-year-old computer salesman

with a wife and three young children, died instantly, as did Mr. Razavi, the 44-year-old director of finance at the nearby University of Fort Hare. Dr. Bakhshandegi, a 29-year-old dentist, died shortly after arriving at the hospital- the same hospital where he saw patients, mostly black, each weekday morning.

In a phone call to the South African Press Association, a man claimed the killings had been done by a militant black group called the Azanian Liberation Army.

The incident was reported in news media all over the world (see pp. 156-157), with both Baha'is and others expressing shock at this tragic and ironic attack. While those claiming responsibility said there is no place in South Africa for anyone belonging to the race that oppressed them, the commentator reporting the killings on National Public Radio in the United States noted that "since Baha'is arrived in South Africa about forty years ago, they have refused to accommodate themselves

to apartheid." All three of the murdered men were deeply involved in attempting to promote racial unity and to improve social conditions for the black majority. All were in South Africa by choice, attracted by the opportunity to work for racial justice.

Mr. Anvari and his 33-year-old wife, Dina, had recently established a tutorial school for young black children to

Mr. Houshmand Anvari                      Dr. Shamam Bakhshandegi

help them overcome the huge gap between the education they had received and the admission requirements of the white schools. At the time of Mr.

Anvari's death, the school was serving about eighty students.

Dr. Bakhshandegi, supervisor of the community dental section at the primarily black Cecilia Makiwane Hospital, had completed his research for a master's degree in com-

Mr. Riaz Razavi

munity dentistry, studying

"The Oral Health, Treatment Needs and Personnel Requirements of School Children in Mdantsane" (the first scientific

dental research performed in Ciskei). Mr. Razavi, who is survived by his wife, Vera, and two children, was likewise one of a

handful of white staff at the all-black University of Fort Hare.

Baha'is worldwide were deeply saddened by the news of the murders, yet they remained aware that such an event gives greater meaning to the work toward unity that dominated the men's lives.

Upon being informed of the tragic occurrence, the Universal House of Justice sent the following cable to the National Spiritual Assembly of South Africa:

SHOCKED GRIEVED NEWS VIOLENT DEATH  
HOUSHMAND ANVARI, SHAMAM BAKHSHANDEGI AND  
RIAZ RAZAVI IN CISKEI. PROFOUNDLY IMPRESSED  
STERLING EXAMPLE SET BY THEIR DEDICATION CAUSE  
BAHA'ULLAH IN WHOSE SERVICE THEY WERE  
DIRECTLY ENGAGED WHEN STRUCK DOWN BY  
ASSASSINS' BULLETS. DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE IRREPARA-  
BLE LOSS THEIR DEAR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS. MAY  
ALL HEARTS BE COMFORTED BY PROMISE BLESSED  
BEAUTY THAT THEY THAT HAVE FORSAKEN THEIR  
COUNTRY IN PATH GOD AND SUBSEQUENTLY ASCENDED  
UNTO HIS PRESENCE SHALL BE BLESSED BY

CONCOURSE ON HIGH AND THEIR NAMES RECORDED BY  
THE BAHAI WORLD

PEN GLORY AMONG SUCH AS HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR  
LIVES AS MARTYRS PATH GOD. CONFIDENT JOYOUS  
WELCOME ABHA KINGDOM THESE DISTINGUISHED  
SOULS. ARDENTLY PRAYING HOLY SHRINES THEIR  
PROGRESS DIVINE WORLDS. ALSO OFFERING SUPPLICA-  
TIONS BEHALF ALL RELATIVES FRIENDS. ADVISE HOLD  
MEMORIAL GATHERINGS THROUGHOUT SOUTH AFRICA.

This message was read during the funeral on 19 March,  
which was held in the town hall of Cambridge, a suburb of East  
London. More than five hundred people crowded the flowerfilled hall, including  
Baha'is from Bophuthatswana, Botswana,  
Ciskei, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Transkei, and the rest of  
South Africa. Prayers and readings were recited in English,  
Arabic, Persian, Xhosa, and Afrikaans. The Mayor of East  
London spoke of the sacrifice which had been made for the sake  
of the unity of mankind, a member of the Auxiliary Board spoke  
about the nature of the soul, and a member of the Continental  
Board of Counsellors delivered a moving tribute to the three  
martyrs.

The Baha'i community was established in South Africa in the  
mid-1950s. The first national Baha'i governing council, elected  
in 1956, had four white members and five blacks- a degree of  
integration that was extremely rare for any sort of national organization in  
South Africa at the time. Today, the Baha'i  
community is spread throughout the country, with Local  
Spiritual Assemblies in more than two hundred cities and towns  
and members representing the Zulu, Xhosa, Venda, Sotho,  
Swazi, and Tswana groups. "In times to come, we will probably  
hear more and more about the Baha'is," said Dr. Gerrie Lubbe,  
national president of the South African chapter of the World  
Conference on Religion and Peace, an internationally  
recognized interfaith organization that strives to promote the  
peace process worldwide. The Baha'i attitude about racial unity,  
he said, "is so much in line with how we hope to see the new  
South Africa developing."

This article highlights print media  
coverage of the Baha'i Faith  
during 1993-94.

The Baha'i Faith in the

EYES OF THE  
WORLD

The Baha'i World 1992-93 includes a survey describing the development of press coverage of the Baha'i community from its inception in 1844 through the Holy Year which ended at RiQ.van 1993. The present volume updates that article with a review covering the period from 21 April 1993 to 20 April 1994. As noted in its predecessor, the reporting of Baha'i activities and perspectives has now reached a scale such that it is not realistic to attempt a truly comprehensive summary. This article provides, rather, a general overview of the range of Baha'i activities reported by the print media, the wide geographic distribution of press coverage, and selected highlights from the year's stories.

One of the most laudatory summaries of Baha'i teachings and practice published this year came from Germany. Journalist Dr. Susanne Schaup, who is particularly known in Germany for addressing issues related to religion, women, development, and world peace, wrote an article entitled "The Earth Is But One Country" for an independent Christian weekly paper Deutsches

Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt (31 December 1993). Dr. Schaup explains and praises a wide range of Baha'i teachings and describes in a very positive manner her experiences interacting with members of the Baha'i community. She writes that the natural growth of the community is not surprising "since the Baha'is from the beginning have tackled all the problems of the world and have created credible models for a solution." Elsewhere in the article, she writes, "With the integration of 'diversity in unity' the Baha'is make a very important contribution to a future world society."

Journalists in countries ranging from Russia to Bolivia, from the United Kingdom to Thailand, wrote general articles on the Baha'i Faith, thereby informing the public about the basic Baha'i teachings. Many were based on interviews with Baha'is. Some articles were extensive, including photographs of Baha'i holy places and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and quite a few, although written as features rather than editorials, implicitly expressed support for the efforts of Baha'is. Articles providing general information on the Faith were also contributed, and sometimes sponsored, by Baha'is. Regular columns on the Baha'i Faith included "Baha'i Forum" in New Zealand (Northland Age Courier), "Baha'i Comer" in Swaziland (Swazi News), and "Baha'i: The Spirit of the Age" in Canada (Opascula Times). Two national Baha'i communities wrote "open letters" to their fellow citizens and paid to print them in newspapers so they could share with their compatriots the perspective Baha'u'llah's teachings offer regarding the challenges facing their nations. Such letters were printed in Albania and in Nigeria.

Another frequently noted type of general article on the Faith covered a story on a particular Baha'i event and included basic facts on Baha'i teachings. Baha'i conferences, summer schools, public talks, visits of Baha'i travelling teachers, and exhibits were among the events covered in newspapers all over the world. (For a summary of reporting on Baha'i events explicitly aimed at addressing social problems, see "Service to Society" section on pp. 162-163.) Commemorations of Baha'i holy days accounted for nearly as many articles as the other activities combined. This year, for example, readers in Belgium, Ethiopia,

Nepal, and Sri Lanka were informed about the anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah; in Germany, Ireland, Macau, and the United States about the anniversary of Baha'u'llah's ascension; and in Austria, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, and France about Naw-Ruz (the Baha'i New Year). In addition to the articles printed in papers in Germany, India, and Northern Ireland to mark the anniversary of Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission in the garden of Riqvan, the BBC World Service broadcast an explanation of Riqvan by the secretary-general of the United Kingdom's Baha'i governing council on its "Words of Faith" program.

News coverage of meetings between Baha'is and prominent people, such as a London luncheon given by the Law Society in honor of Madame Rul\_iiyyih Rabbani and attended by prominent figures, also brought the name of the Faith to public attention. The visit of Papua New Guinea's Deputy Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan to the Baha'i World Centre in Israel was mentioned in Papua New Guinea's Post-Courier (16 June 1993). The Dalai Lama's visit to the World Centre was reported in the US paper the Baltimore Sun (22 March 1994). The attendance of Her Highness Princess To' oa Tosi Malietoa of Western Samoa at the Baha'i-sponsored "Heart of Australia Calling" conference in Alice Springs, Australia, was reported in the Samoa Observer (15 September 1993).

Other meetings reported in newspapers included a ceremony at the Hawaii Baha'i Centre recognizing Her Highness Tosi Malietoa; a visit by several First Ladies of Africa to the Baha'i House of Worship in Uganda; and a presentation by the State Baha'i Council of Orissa, India, to the Governor of Orissa.

#### Persecutions in Iran

The ongoing persecutions of Baha'is in Iran took a new turn in June 1993 when it was discovered that in a Tehran cemetery, the bodies of Baha'is were being exhumed and trucked unceremoniously to unknown destinations, while burial plots were being bulldozed, ostensibly to make way for construction of an Islamic cultural center. The cemetery contains the graves of many of the

Faith's earliest adherents and was also in current use. News of the desecration spread quickly to countries on every continent and was reported in newspapers throughout the world, including Canada, the United States, El Salvador, and Peru; France, the Netherlands, and Portugal; Botswana, Kenya, and Tanzania; Australia, the Cook Islands, and the Mariana Islands; and India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Many of the articles reported the shock and sadness expressed by local Baha'i communities regarding these attacks on their fellow believers in Iran. Editorials condemning the actions taken to destroy the graves were also printed worldwide, the most notable being a New York Times piece called "Iran Stoops to Grave-Robbing" (8 July 1993). The editorial, which mentioned the history of persecutions of Baha'is in Iran, said, "Reverence for the dead reaches across all cultures and religions. A regime that stoops to bodysnatching can hardly reach lower."

In early 1993, a secret Iranian government document written in 1991 had come to light which explicitly called for the destruction of Baha'i cultural roots both inside and outside the country and outlined a series of discriminatory practices sanctioned by the government. Reports on this document, and on efforts made to raise international protest concerning it, continued during the rest of 1993 and into 1994. Bolivia, Chad, Ecuador, the Republic of Ireland, Mauritius, and Spain are a few of the countries where newspapers kept the public aware of the document. On 22 November 1993, the op-ed section of the New York Times carried a quarter-page statement, "An Appeal to the Conscience of Humankind," sponsored by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States. Co-signed by forty-nine leaders of thought, the appeal stated, in part: "As Americans who cherish religious freedom and tolerance, we urge the world's leaders to continue to speak out against Iran's plan to destroy the Baha'is. We urge the United Nations and other organizations such as the Council of Europe and the European Community to call upon the Government of Iran to extend to Baha'is the religious rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." The same appeal appeared in the Los Angeles Times one week later.

When three Baha'is in Iran were condemned to death in December 1993, solely because of their beliefs, the news was reported as far away as the Cook Islands. Editorials quickly appeared in the New York Times (31 December 1993) and in Germany's *Franliferter Allgemeine Zeitung* (27 January 1994). Commenting on the case of two of the Baha'is, the New York Times editorial read, in part: "No criminal acts are cited in the 700-word verdict reaffirming the death sentence. The two

Baha'is are simply accused of holding feasts, owning books and being 'unprivileged infidels at war with the Muslim nation.'"

The editorial ended with the following: "As many as 350,000 Baha'is, who are the largest religious minority in Iran, are already deprived of jobs, property and schooling. If revolutionary courts carry out these death sentences, which are reportedly under appeal, Iran will have compounded bigotry and persecution with murder."

In addition to articles specifically about the situation of Baha'is in Iran, numerous stories mentioned the ongoing persecutions in the context of reports about human rights abuses or interviews with expatriate Iranian Baha'is. When United States President Bill Clinton spoke at the dedication of the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, on 23 April 1993, he said the evils the museum represents still find echoes in the oppression of today, and he specifically mentioned "the abusive treatment of the Baha'i in Iran." Mr. Clinton's speech was widely reported by the major newspapers in the United States. Other mentions of the persecution of Baha'is in Iran came in *Le Monde* (France) in an article about persecuted minorities being forced to leave their homelands (10 March 1994), and in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* (14 December 1993) as part of a letter to the editor about barriers to peace in the Middle East. United Nations action related to the persecutions also garnered press coverage. *Le Monde* (France) reported adoption by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of a resolution on human rights in Iran (25 August 1993). The article refers to the ongoing persecution inflicted on the Baha'is. Also reported in a variety of papers was the United Nations General Assembly's call, in December

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

1993, for Iran to comply with international human rights agreements. The General Assembly took special note of the religious discrimination faced by the Baha'is and warned that "the existence of the Baha'i community is threatened." On 18 February 1994, special rapporteur Reynaldo Galindo Pohl's report to the UN Commission on Human Rights was released; it said Iran's Islamic government relies heavily on executions, torture, repression, and intimidation to enforce obedience to its ideals. The report mentioned that repression of the Baha'is was continuing.

The public was made much more aware of the painful individual stories behind the statistics and reports when the book *Olya's Story* was released in 1993 and its author, Olya Roohizadegan, travelled to speak about her experiences. Eleven years ago, Mrs. Roohizadegan was one of a group of eleven Iranian

women jailed and tortured for their Baha'i beliefs; she was released and the ten other women were all hanged. Interviews with Mrs. Roohizadegan and synopses of her book were published in newspapers in Canada, the United States, Panama, and extensively- approximately two hundred articles- in the United Kingdom.

#### Killings in Ciskei

On 13 March 1994, gunmen entered a Baha'i centre in Ciskei, separated the worshippers according to race, and murdered the three Baha'is they classified as white. 1 News of this reprehensible act was carried in newspapers around the world, including the New York Times, France's Le Figaro, newspapers in Guam, the Mariana Islands, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal, and papers throughout South Africa.

The murders in Ciskei formed the basis of an op-ed article by Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. which was printed in the New York Times (27 March 1994) under the title "A Liberalism of Heart and Spine" and in the International

1. See pp. 147-150 for more on this story.

Herald Tribune (30 March 1994) under the title "Living Together: For a Humanism That Cares to Speak Its Mind." National Public Radio in the US aired an item about the killings on 19 March 1994, noting:

The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is in South Africa has reacted to the killings with a sadness and a sagemess that says much about their Faith. They've called the deaths of their brethren a tragedy but go on to say that the last remorseless legacy of apartheid is that people who were brutally kept down because of their color might rise up now with indiscriminate revenge pressed into their hearts rather than love. The Baha'is have their own experience of repression, especially in today's Iran, where they've been hunted down and suppressed by a fundamentalist government that cannot abide the Baha'i dedication to the equality of all races, genders, faiths, and nations.

#### Seventh International Convention

More than 750 Baha'is from 150 countries gathered in Haifa, Israel, from 29 April to 2 May 1993 for the Seventh International Baha'i Convention. The Convention is held every five years to elect the members of the Universal House of Justice and to provide an opportunity for consultation among members of various Baha'i institutions. 2 Newspapers in a number of the countries sending delegates reported on their citizens' participation in the Convention. The articles explained the spiritual

nature of the elections, the absence of electioneering and nominations, and the importance of a prayerful attitude. A reporter from United Press International also covered the events. Delegates to International Baha'i Conventions are all members of National Spiritual Assemblies and are elected during National Conventions held each spring. Among the countries reporting on their communities' National Conventions in 1993 were Albania, Guyana, Macau, Malaysia, New Caledonia, Panama, and Papua New Guinea.

2. See pp. 51-58 for further information on the Seventh International Baha'i Convention.

#### The Advancement of Women

The opening of the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women in New York City in May 1993 received press coverage in such disparate locations as Grenada, New Zealand, Panama, and Sri Lanka. In addition to printing news of this international event, newspapers covered national and local Baha'i activities dedicated to the advancement of women, such as courses at India's Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women, which were reported upon at least four times as classes of women graduated. The Vocational Institute for Rural Women was also in the news at least five times when it joined with the All-India Women's Conference to organize a preparatory workshop in advance of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in 1995.

Baha'i involvement with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was reported in at least five features on Malaysia's participation in the UNIFEM-funded project "Traditional Media as Change Agent." <sup>3</sup> The efforts of Baha'is in New Zealand to support UNIFEM by holding informational and fund-raising breakfasts in a dozen cities resulted in four newspaper articles. When a member of the Baha'i Women's Association in Guam returned from a UNIFEM conference in Fiji for non-governmental organizations around the Pacific, her thoughts on the event were reported in Pacific Daily News. This paper also carried a story on two members of the Guam Baha'i Women's Association attending the Asia-Pacific Symposium on Women in Development in the Philippines.

Coverage of Baha'i efforts to educate the public about Baha'u'llah's teachings on the status of women included stories on an exhibit about the importance of women in society, organized by the Baha'i Women's Association of Guam; a celebration of women's suffrage hosted by a Baha'i women's group in Whangarei, New Zealand; and interviews with Baha'i professor Dr. Tahirih Vajdi, printed in Fiji and the Marshall

Islands during her visit to those countries.

3. See pp. 259-263 for further details on this project.

Publication of the book *Voices and Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore*, which was commissioned by the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations and the Singapore Baha'i Women's Committee, resulted in at least two full-page reviews.

Baha'is also wrote and sponsored articles on topics such as women and education (Portugal), equal rights for women (Zimbabwe), and Baha'i heroine Tahirih (New Zealand).

### Indigenous Peoples

The second half of the United Nations International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples fell into the period under review, and a number of stories about Baha'i activities and statements related to this topic appeared in print. A National Baha'i Studies conference on indigenous peoples took place in Brisbane, Australia, in July 1993, and was reported in the *Australian* and the *Courier Mail*. The travels of Raymond Wymarra throughout the Pacific to invite indigenous people to a festival of cultural unity in Australia were reported in Samoa and New Caledonia. A newspaper in Norway covered the visit of Grace Growing Medicine Eagle, a Baha'i of Native American and Dutch background. In Portugal, two papers printed stories about a conference organized by Baha'is in honor of the visit of Washington Araujo, Brazilian author of a book about the destiny of indigenous peoples.

Baha'i commentary on the importance of preserving indigenous cultures and treasuring indigenous contributions to discussion of the world's issues appeared in papers in the Canary Islands, Guatemala, and Honduras.

### Environment

Baha'i participation in efforts to educate the public about environmental concerns entered a new stage in 1989 with establishment of the Baha'i International Community's Office of the Environment in New York City and expanded dramatically with Baha'i involvement at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Peace Monument erected in Brazil by the Baha'is

during that Summit continued to be mentioned in the news as more countries donated soil to be deposited in the hourglass-shaped monument.

The Grenadian Voice (4 September 1993)

announced that Grenada was among fifteen nations to add soil to the monument on World Environment Day 1993. In April 1994, articles appeared in the Cook Islands and in Denmark reporting that soil from those countries would be added to the monument

in 1994.

A two-day public conference on sustainable development sponsored by the Guyana Office of Social and Economic Development, a Baha'i agency, was reported in the Mirror (19 January 1994). The article said the conference was being organized to "encourage 'open and equitable consultation' as an integral part of Guyana's developmental process, encourage environmental preservation and sustainability, promote the wisest use of environmental resources, and forge harmonious development consistent with local culture and social mores."

Two statements relating the Baha'i perspective on environmental protection were printed in newspapers in Honduras and

Ghana. The latter was a half-page commentary in the Weekly Spectator (8 May 1993) by Michael Richards of the International Institute for Environment and Development which quoted

Baha'u'llah in explaining that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a reflection of mankind's spiritual crisis and that the remedy must involve spiritual solutions. The article, which ran under the headline, "Religion, Science and the Environment," said:

Our relationship with nature reflects the stage of the development of our society or civilization. This has evolved from a childlike stage characterized by ritualistic belief systems which worshipped nature, the sun, 'Mother Earth', etc., and in which material understanding was very limited. We are now passing through an adolescent, 'rational' and exploitative phase in which science and religion are divorced, and need to evolve towards maturity through a conscious integration of scientific and spiritual viewpoints.

#### Human Rights

The Baha'i International Community presented three statements at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, in June 1993, a fact that was reported as far away from this gathering as El Salvador (El Mundo, 30 June 1993). A summary of the contents of the statements, which was printed in New Zealand (Northland Times, 24 June 1993), pointed out the interdependence of different kinds of rights.

"Without economic rights, the exercise of civil or social rights is severely attenuated,' the statement says. 'Without cultural rights, an individual or community will have the greatest difficulty in exercising political or economic rights to a degree that meets the essential requirements of their respective situations.'"

Baha'i participation in the World Conference on Human Rights was noted in an article written by Ronald Bates, a Baha'i, to mark Human Rights Day in New Zealand. "Protecting human

rights globally" (Northern Advocate, 11 December 1993) related the Baha'i International Community's emphasis on the importance of education in promoting human rights. Baha'i activities for Human Rights Day were also reported in two newspapers in Belgium. Baha'is in the city of Mons organized a gathering of approximately five hundred children who created a cooperative mural to illustrate Baha'u'llah's assertion that "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

#### Moral Education

Public talks by Baha'i educators, commenting on the distinctive Baha'i approach to moral education, were covered by reporters in several countries. The visit to India of American education professor Dr. Dwight Allen resulted in numerous articles. Dr. Allen, author of seven books on educational reform, spoke at the National Baha'i Conference on Education held in Panchgani and delivered the Silver Jubilee Celebration Lecture at the Inter-University Consortium under the auspices of the Institute of Management Studies and the Centre for Baha'i Studies. He also

}

gave interviews to various reporters. In Australia, newspapers

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

carried reports about Canadian educator Ed Muttart, who visited the country to speak about an educational children's publication called The Virtues Guide and his commitment to "re-awakening in human minds and hearts what it means to be a human being." In November 1993, the Chinese-English Weekly in Taiwan reprinted an interview with Dr. Farzam Arbab, member of the Universal House of Justice, who has extensive experience with educational programs in developing countries. Dr. Arbab described how moral education is not simply a matter of inculcating do's and don't's, but rather involves nurturing understanding of principles such as unity in diversity and the oneness of humanity as bedrocks of a whole moral framework. Articles on the subject of moral education, written by Baha'is, were printed in the Canary Islands, Panama, and Paraguay, and a description of classes for the moral education of children in India formed an article in The Daily (Bombay).

#### Service to Society

Reporters around the world wrote about projects initiated by Baha'is to serve immediate community needs or to address longterm issues. Among the projects reported upon were the agreement signed in the Marshall Islands for Baha'is to run five government schools; involvement in a local program in the United States to support social workers meeting the needs of

neglected or abused children; training of literacy instructors in India and Zambia; organization of a festival for intercultural understanding in Germany; the voluntary services of a Canadian Baha'i doctor to the people of Guyana and help with the rehabilitation of a hospital in that country; donation of bedding to the children's ward of a Malawi hospital by Baha'i youth and children; sponsorship of an essay contest in the Cook Islands on the theme "Elimination of Violence"; and organization of "walks for peace" in Ireland and Panama.

A conference held in Ireland in support of the United Nations International Year of the Family was reported in four papers. The gathering was entitled "The Family: Unity in Diversity." Another conference on the family was organized by the Baha'is in the Canary Islands. Stories on other activities in support of the Year of the Family were printed in the Cook Islands and Macau, and articles expressing Baha'i views on the family were printed in Finland and Singapore.

News of events organized to promote racial harmony appeared in print in Ireland, Norway, the West Leeward Islands, and the United States. The Los Angeles Times (2 June 1993) ran a brief story announcing "'A Year of Healing' at Baha'i Center" - an art show created by children from the areas of Los Angeles affected by race riots in 1992. Statements by Baha'is urging their fellow citizens to embrace race unity were printed in Australia, Northern Ireland, and Panama.

In support of international cooperation, celebrations of United Nations Day 1993 were held in Botswana, India, and Sri Lanka, and the forty-eighth anniversary of the United Nations was commemorated with a special service at the Baha'i House of Worship in Apia, Western Samoa.

#### Baha'i Artists

The performances of Baha'is expressing their Faith through music, drama, and dance and exhibits by Baha'i visual artists were the subject of stories on every continent. Wildfire World Theatre is a group of young people from Australia who present a program of music, comedy, and dance that conveys the essential principles of the Baha'i Faith. Their 1993 tour generated numerous articles in the Czech and Slovak Republics, Germany, Hungary, Mauritius, Romania, Switzerland, Turkey, and back home in Australia. Other Baha'i artists who received press coverage were pianist Mark Ochu, who played in Denmark, and native American dancer, musician, and storyteller Kevin Locke, whose performances in Thailand were both previewed and reviewed in the Bangkok Post (27 and 31 May 1993). The premiere of a new vocal composition by Norwegian composer Lasse Thoresen, which opened the first exhibition of the late

noted American artist Mark Tobey's paintings in Norway, was reported during the early spring of 1993 in several newspapers, including Oslo's Aftenposten and Verdens Gang, and Sandvika's

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Asker og B(ørum's Budstikke. Other stories on Baha'i musical performances or art exhibits were printed in such widely scattered locations as Ghana, France, Macau, Mexico, and Northern Ireland.

On 17 May 1993, the Canadian newspaper The Independent reported that an album of eleven devotional songs

written by sitar maestro Ravi Shankar was being released by the Baha'i community of Toronto. The songs, all in Hindi, are based on the words of the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah, and were written for the opening of the Baha'i House of Worship in New Delhi, India. On 19 May 1993, the Chicago Tribune printed an item from Reuters news service announcing that the late American jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, a long-time Baha'i, had been posthumously awarded one of the world's most valuable musical prizes by the King of Sweden, the 1993 Polar Music Prize.

### Local Human Interest

Profiles of individual Baha'is and Baha'i families described how the Faith affects the daily life of its adherents, influencing their decisions, behavior, and outlook. American Janet Coester's walk alone across Russia to spread the cause of peace and ecology resulted in dozens of articles mentioning her Faith. Some of the six hundred or so volunteers at the Baha'i World Centre were interviewed about their services for their hometown newspapers. A reporter in India interviewed American Baha'i Allison Vaccaro who spent three months volunteering at the House of Worship in India before returning to her home in Dominica. When the Irish-born deputy secretary-general of the Baha'i International Community Paul Reynolds visited his birthplace, several interviews with him were printed. A young Russian Baha'i, Svetlana Vinnik, visiting Northern Ireland on a student exchange, spoke to a reporter about what attracted her to the Baha'i Faith. A New Zealand paper ran a story about Judy Forbes, director of anaesthetics for Christchurch Women's Hospital, preparing to leave for a three-month trip to South Africa organized by Health Volunteers Overseas.

## IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD

### Response to Attacks and Misrepresentation

Of course, not all press coverage was posttlve. When widespread coverage of the persecutions in Iran appeared, some

articles defended the actions of the Iranian government and accused the Baha'is of committing actions that justified their harsh treatment. Such claims were printed, for example, in letters to the editor from representatives of the embassies of Iran in India, Kenya, and Namibia, and in interviews with the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations, Kamal Kharrazi, who insisted that there is nothing wrong with the Iranian government's treatment of the country's Baha'is.

In Romania, two newspapers printed an interview with an unnamed individual who claimed to be a Baha'i but then attacked Baha'i materials and proceeded to inaccurately explain Baha'i teachings and make wild and unsubstantiated statements about the Bab and the activities of the Baha'i community. In such cases the Baha'i community often did not formally respond, because the statements were outrageous and could easily be investigated.

In other cases, where opposition seemed to be based on misinterpretation of authentic Baha'i texts, Baha'is defended their

Faith with letters to the editor. One example comes from St. Vincent. A letter to the editor of the Vincentian argued that Baha'u'llah claims to be God and that the Bab should not be considered a Prophet because He claims several stations for Himself. The National Spiritual Assembly responded to these arguments with a letter in the same paper clarifying the stations of both Baha'u'llah and the Bab and stating that the Baha'i sacred writings were available for independent investigation. In Albania, the monthly newspaper *Le Religioni Nei Balcani* printed extracts from interviews with various religious leaders in the country. A representative of the Muslim believers in Albania referred to the "viruses of pseudo-religions like the one of the Baha'is" and said "we are at war with them." The secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Albania replied to the criticism by saying, "When Jesus Christ came, he was not welcomed and everybody is aware of the persecutions that His disciples had to suffer. The same occurred to Muhammad, even though His preachers were irreproachable. In essence, this is a matter of misunderstanding if not of ignorance, that often the one that criticizes lacks knowledge ..."

#### Interfaith Dialogue

The Baha'i Faith was first publicly mentioned in the United States at the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago in 1893. One hundred years later, in August/September 1993, a commemorative conference brought together leaders from approximately 125 religions and denominations and six thousand participants to pray together and share ideas about solutions to the world's ills. A Chicago Tribune article about the

planning of the second Parliament mentioned that Baha'is were among the dozen people who initiated preparations for the centennial event five years before it took place. A member of the Baha'i host committee, Leilani Smith, was quoted as saying, "We are coming to this parliament because our basic belief is that we should consort with followers of all religions in harmony." The Associated Press story on the event noted the invocation given by Dr. Wilma Ellis representing the "Spiritual Assembly of Baha'i": "If warfare and strife be for the sake of religion, it is evident that it violates the spirit and basis of all religion," she said. "The fundamental truth of the manifestations of God is peace. This underlies all religions." Other print media mentioning Baha'i participation in the Parliament of the World's Religions included the New York Times, the Chicago Sun-Times, and Tribune Magazine. Stories from the Associated Press and Reuters news services were printed in Germany, Hawaii, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

Baha'i participation in other interfaith activities- such as celebrations of World Religion Day, a seminar on finding common ethics in a multicultural society, the formation of an interreligious organization to promote unity and tolerance, and interfaith prayer services for world peace- were reported in such diverse locations as Ghana, Norway, Trinidad & Tobago, El Salvador, Mozambique, Germany, Panama, and the United States.

It is significant that the Baha'i Faith, which has often been mistakenly referred to in the media as a "sect" or not mentioned at all in the context of articles on major religions, was repeatedly noted in articles about the world's religions. In a special issue of Time magazine called "The New Face of America" (November 1993), a chart was printed showing the Baha'i Faith to be the fifth most populous non-Christian religion in the United States. A feature in Canada's Toronto Star called "Time to bring spirituality out of the closet" (14 November 1993) quoted a Baha'i International Community public information officer as saying, "There is a growing recognition by political leaders that political ideology and money can't solve problems. They recognize that there is another component, which you can call values, or ethics, or morality, or spirituality." An Associated Press article about a Harvard University professor tracking religions in the United States mentions her "notebooks stuffed with research about Baha'i." When an interfaith panel was established to monitor South Africa's first non-racial elections, representatives came from "the Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, Baha'i, Muslim, and Christian faiths" (Church Times, London, 4 June 1993). An item in the Orange County Register in the United States (4 May 1993) noted that at the request of Mayor Robert Breton, the city clerk drafted a policy that would

avoid scheduling city meetings or public events on "major religious holidays, including holy days for Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, and Baha'is. Breton emphasized the need to limit the policy to major religions; otherwise 'we would never be able to hold a meeting.'"

### Houses of Worship

The Baha'i House of Worship in Sydney, Australia, figured prominently in a story about the devastating bush fires in the region, which caused widespread destruction but left the Temple intact. Sydney's *Telegraph Mirror* reported, "Amid the smoky ruins of the parklands, the Baha'i Temple stood like a gleaming white beacon on the hill between Mona Vale and Ingleside." The *Herald Sun* reported on a special service held at the Temple after the fire to thank firefighters and the caretakers who saved the House of Worship. At least ten articles about the House of

Worship in India appeared, including interviews with visiting architect Fariborz Sahba and reviews of books about the Temple. A photograph and brief article on the Temple in Panama was printed when the site was used for a meeting of Central American mayors. A photograph of the Temple outside Chicago, in the United States, accompanied a paragraph about the contributions made by African-Americans to construction of the House of Worship, motivated by the Baha'i Faith's teaching of racial equality.

### Conclusion

In summary, print media articles about the Baha'i Faith, Baha'i communities, and individual members of the Faith appeared in widely divergent locations and publications throughout 1993-94, and members of the press were drawn to report on diverse aspects of Baha'i life. Some covered artistic presentations, service projects, major events and prominent people, while others focused on principles such as the advancement of women, moral education, and human rights. Still others showed efforts made by Baha'is around the world to tackle issues such as environmental concerns and the promotion of interfaith dialogue. The plight of the Baha'is in Iran and the murder of three Baha'is in Ciskei received much coverage. Local human interest stories and general introductory articles about the Faith were also widespread.

From this survey, it is clear that the Baha'i Faith enjoys mostly positive coverage by print media and that it is increasingly viewed by writers as one of the world's major religions. Indeed, the number of times the Baha'i Faith has been mentioned in passing references to major religious groups is growing yearly. Much of this increase is, no doubt, due to the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran and the continuing coverage their situation has received over the past decade and a half, but both large-scale and local coverage

of activities in which Baha'is have been involved is growing steadily as well. Stories about the Iranian situation have shown vividly the suffering of the Baha'i community in that country, but the efforts of Baha'is in their own communities from Western Samoa to Siberia have garnered coverage with a different slant, showing how the Baha'i Faith contributes positively to society all over the globe.

## ESSAYS

### STATEMENTS

Ann Boyles comments on the effects of the postmodernist perspective on our contemporary worldview and offers an alternative framework for understanding current trends and events.

wr,WORLD

w'ATCH

### Introduction

In the closing years of the twentieth century, the moral paradoxes and tragic juxtapositions of life on this planet are becoming increasingly insupportable. The horrors of tribal violence in Rwanda and "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans appear in vivid images on television screens and magazine and newspaper pages around the globe, yet no agency seems to possess the moral and practical authority to do more than utter a hollow condemnation of the atrocities. The media report the proliferation of drug trafficking and child prostitution in various parts of the world and the rise in teenage violence, but no body or government has stepped forward to curb these activities. The traffic of drugs that cause untold human misery is acceptable in some quarters because the income generated by the cultivation of drug-producing plants brings prosperity to impoverished rural villages around the world. Child prostitution in southeast Asian cities is quietly condoned by some governments because it increases regional tourism. Powerful lobby groups in the United

States agitate against more stringent gun control laws as an infringement on their personal liberty, while children with automatic weapons kill each other in schoolyards across the nation. The moral failings of politicians all over the world are widely publicized and condemned by a public that engages in many of the same activities. The gap between public morality and private life grows ever wider.

Such contradictions are, in no small measure, the legacy of intellectual and political ideas that have carried us through much of the twentieth century. On the one hand, we want to believe

that we can build a better world, but on the other, while we may cry for the leadership that will assist us to build such a world, we reject the idea of central global authority or a structure of governance capable of dealing with the pressing problems confronting us all. The result is essentially a world adrift, where no certain values remain. There is a sense of events running out of control, accompanied by a perception of randomness- an impression that many things occur without cause and are therefore irresolvable.

Yet an irrepressible sense of hope remains: people still dare to believe that the world will become a place of peace, that the poverty-stricken will one day live in dignity, that the oppressed will be released from their bondage. The world looks hopefully towards a post-apartheid South Africa. Peace negotiations between entrenched foes inspire cautious optimism. And people's unhappiness with their governments and leaders generates a re-examination of outworn political systems. In essence, then, the world is currently torn by two opposing forces: an almost nihilistic conviction that humanity is destined to pursue a path of self-destruction versus a drive towards redefinition of ourselves, our social systems, and our world. How can we come to terms with these two opposing views? Is the world caught in an irreversible spiral towards anarchy, as many modern commentators would have us believe? In considering these questions, a critical look at a theory that has held sway over many thinkers during the past decades will be helpful.

### Modernism and Postmodernism

The problem with structure and authority that lies at the heart of modern life is part of a phenomenon that has acquired the designation "postmodernism." It underscores discussions about organized religion and the authority of religious leaders, colors perceptions of political and civil life around the world, shapes current literature and contemporary arts, calls into question the validity of the traditional family as an institution, and determines theories and practices in the fields of business and economics.

Postmodernism's precursor, the modernist movement, originated in the early years of the twentieth century, the result of the modern perception of a loss of center in the world and the search to regain that center. The postmodernist era into which we have moved in the latter half of this century could be termed a period when people have given up searching for that lost center and have come to believe that there never was such a thing in the first place. Among the major characteristics of postmodernism that have drifted from the intellectual arena into popular culture and thus affect our daily life are a real or

perceived lack of leadership; a questioning and rejection of authority; an absence of systems of hierarchical ordering, resulting in fragmentation and a sense of randomness; attempts to redefine basic structures in society; an assertion of invalidity of many previously held beliefs; a lack of accountability; violence; discordance; studied ugliness.

The paradigm contains both positive and negative implications. This is a pluralistic world, in many ways, where it is no longer generally acceptable to impose Western culture and values on others. Similarly, in the realm of belief, many people now recognize that there are many different religions and values systems operating in the world. It is no longer tolerable for one race or culture to be enslaved in any way by another. These are forward steps. But the loss of a common point of reference or authority has alarming ramifications. Since there are no unalterable rules and everything is negotiable, nothing possesses absolute meaning. For example, if we talk about "human rights," how can we agree on exactly what are human rights? Or

if we talk about the equality of women and men, how can we agree exactly what that entails? If we accept that there is validity in many different religions, how do we decide which teachings, if any, are to be universally respected?

An illustration of the difficulties engendered by such a lack of authority is found in several issues arising in the field of medical ethics during 1993-94. Discussions concerning legality of euthanasia, the cloning of human embryos, and post-menopausal pregnancies exposed the ethical dilemmas created by the rapid advance of science beyond traditionally accepted limits. How can one resolve such discussions without recourse to a central, universally respected moral authority? Such is the difficulty encountered in many fields throughout the postmodern world, leaving us with more "deconstructions" than "constructions," more of a fragmented view than one of wholeness, and more questions than answers.

### Postmodernism and Reportage

While historical events of the past century have served to destabilize and fragment established patterns of society around the world, the rapid development of telecommunications has given steadily greater substance to Marshall McLuhan's "global village," so that we now have the technology to communicate in ways scarcely dreamed of in past ages. The technological tools available to create a peaceful, unified world exist. Yet they have seldom been effectively used towards such ends.

Contemporary reportage in the global media clearly evidences the tendencies and biases of postmodernism.

Information is disseminated broadly and rapidly; strange juxtapositions occur,

and what may be considered important one day is forgotten the next, as illustrated by the following example. "New world order" became a buzzword in the late 1980s with the breakup of the Soviet Union, the demolition of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, and a variety of other occurrences that were hailed widely by the international media as proof that the world was being reshaped and reconfigured into a new, global order that would be significantly different from

## WORLD WATCH

and better than the previous one. Yet, within a very brief timespan, the same international media were trumpeting the downfall of the new order, branding it the "new world disorder" and generally heralding its quick demise.

Perhaps the world was too naive in its expectations about what the "new world order" would bring and about the effort required to ensure its survival. It quickly became apparent that the structure of this new order is ill-defined- even chaotic; with one of the two former superpowers now gone, the tensions driving international relations, directing nations' foreign policies, and governing international economics have radically changed. Small nations attempting to establish their own sovereignty are largely inexperienced in the art of governance; governments all around the world have been subverted by internal strife, corruption, public dissatisfaction, recalcitrant military forces, and by their own ineptitude. In some cases their structures have begun to disintegrate, and in others their stature has declined considerably. Who or what, then, will provide structure in this post-Colonial, post-Cold War world? To whom are people to turn as an authority? Such questions have assumed central importance as either explicit or implicit concerns of media coverage of current events.

The major stories and editorial commentaries of 1993-94 clearly reflect this preoccupation with our destabilized present and our uncertain future. In the spheres of politics and civil life, the press worried constantly about the absence of strong, upright leadership in various countries of the world, from the US to Russia, from Japan to Italy; civil uprisings against governments occurred in widely disparate areas, including Moscow in October 1993 and the Chiapas region of Mexico in January 1994; international organized crime was seen as a growing problem around the world.

In the realm of the family, 1994's United Nations International Year of the Family sparked broad discussion about the viability of the family as an institution, and commentators mused whether the family as a social unit needed to be redefined. Meanwhile, various stories in the media examined

family breakdown, citing examples of neglect of children by their parents, the selling of children into prostitution, and the rise in violence among teenagers.

The business world experienced a strange volatility in the stock markets, saw a "jobless recovery" to the global recession, and witnessed the emergence of competitive new economic centers around the world- particularly in the Far East and Latin America- to the consternation of traditional leaders such as Europe and the US . While China was hailed as a new "superpower" on the world scene, concerns about its human rights violations were renewed, and in the West alarms were sounded about the North Korean government's capability to produce nuclear arms .

Conflicts fuelled by racial and ethnic hatred escalated in various locations : "ethnic cleansing" occurred in Cambodia and in Bosnia, in spite of the establishment of "safe havens" by the United Nations peacekeeping forces; tribal violence erupted in Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, and Algeria; there was a general backlash against foreigners in western Europe, and fascism gained popularity as a movement; the path to South Africa's first multiracial democratic elections was paved with bloodshed. Commentators noted the rising number of conflicts between ethnic identity and the modern nation; such retreats into tribal and ethnic conclaves are marked by a disregard for laws of governments and established national boundaries.

Some of these conflicts were additionally kindled by religious strife; the term "religious nationalism" defined movements in which religious beliefs combined with political ambitions to create explosive situations such as the murder of Muslim worshippers in a mosque in Hebron, Israel, by a fanatical Zionist, the call by Hindu revivalists for India to become a solely Hindu nation, and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York by Muslim fundamentalists. The Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, also made the news with the violent deaths of its members in a standoff with the FBI. In the mainstream Christian churches, the authority of the Pope came under heavy fire with regard to his position on abortion

## WORLD WATCH

and birth control issues, and revisionist histories of the life of Christ promoted a far different understanding of His life and mission than the generally accepted one.

In the face of international disputes, the United Nations was pressed to send peacekeeping troops, but the success of these interventions was, at best, limited. The press endlessly debated the actions of UN peacekeepers in Somalia and Bosnia, and some commentators urged that the entire UN peacekeeping

system be overhauled to meet the new and expanding demands placed upon it by the world situation. The reluctance of the US to assume a large share of peacekeeping duties was increased by the deaths of a number of American soldiers in Somalia.

Meanwhile, members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) considered the post-Cold War future of the body, debating whether it should assume peacekeeping duties similar to those of the UN.

With increasing ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious conflicts, the number of the world's refugees continued to rise dramatically in 1993-94, while fewer and fewer countries appeared willing to welcome them, fearing a decline in their own standard of living. Clearly such a global problem demands a comprehensive global solution, but none appears in sight.

Other stories featured in the news during 1993-94 dealt with widely contrasting issues: the resurgence of a number of diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria that health officials considered to be under control; the AIDS epidemic that continued to ravage populations, largely in Africa; the information highway on the anarchical Internet system, which allowed the millions who logged on instant access to information and other users in far distant locations. And finally, in the realm of arts and entertainment, the press obliged the public's taste for scandal in its tabloid depictions of the private lives of celebrities.

All of these stories illustrate the sense of fragmentation, randomness, and inability to deal effectively with crises besetting humanity. But perhaps the most cogent and succinct example of the postmodernist view of the world offered to the reading public by contemporary commentators on the world

scene can be found in an article entitled "The Coming Anarchy," written by Robert Kaplan and published in the February 1994 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*. This piece graphically depicts the social and political ramifications of the postmodern condition and makes shocking predictions about the future according to current trends. It is a graphic and compelling discussion, outlining, in Kaplan's own words, the "political and cartographic implications of postmodernism- an epoch of themeless juxtapositions in which the classificatory grid of nation-states is going to be replaced by a jagged-glass pattern of city-states, shanty-states, nebulous and anarchic regionalisms."

This view of "re-primitivized man," depicting "warrior societies operating at a time of unprecedented resource scarcity and planetary overcrowding" and a world where "technology will be used toward primitive ends," comes to Kaplan through the research of scholars such as Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon,

whose study of planetary overcrowding suggests that global strife fuelled by environmental degradation, ethnic hatreds, overpopulation, and a widening gap between the rich and poor will shape our future. Kaplan calls to witness incidents from his own travels through West Africa and the Balkan areas of Europe as support for his conclusions, and there are certainly major recent news stories that bear out these observations as well. Tracing factors such as environmental degradation, ethnic and historical disputes, cultural conflicts, the breakdown of the family, the drift of populations away from rural life to the cities, and the population swell, Kaplan envisions three choices for future governance of the world: totalitarianism, fascist ministates, or road-warrior cultures. We live in a "bifurcated world," as he expresses it, with "cadillac" societies on the one hand, impoverished have-not states on the other, and the gap between the two widening with every passing day. In Kaplan's view, there is only one logical outcome to such a situation: conflict. War is, in fact, a step up for the povertystricken, he points out. There is "liberation in violence," and "worrying about mines and ambushes frees you from worrying about mundane details of daily existence." Increasingly, he predicts, there will be a breakdown of the distinctions between "war" and "crime," with wars waged by small "subnational" groups for "communal survival." Witness, for example, the militia forces of Beirut in the 1980s and, more recently, those of Haiti. Maps, asserts Kaplan, no longer indicate real borders, nor do they indicate the impending global political crackup. The era of the nation is past. Rather, we will retreat into ethnic enclaves and stay there in our isolated cocoons.

#### An Alternative Perspective

Kaplan's graphic depiction of global social breakdown is welldocumented, but his scenario for the world's future is colored by a number of rather doubtful assumptions about the nature of humans and society. In evaluating his analysis and predictions, we need to consider an alternative perspective offered by the Universal House of Justice, in a statement on peace addressed to the peoples of the world and widely disseminated by the members of the Baha'i community in 1986, the United Nations International Year of Peace, and in the years since. 1 The document states unequivocally, "World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet ...." Lest one think this is some sort of naive utopian view, however, the Universal House of Justice goes directly on to position the world at a dramatic crossroads: "Whether peace is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behaviour, or is

to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth." While Kaplan's analysis and predictions seem to assume that humanity exercises no real choice in its actions but is merely prey to external forces and its own aggressive tendencies, the Universal House of Justice asserts that humanity can and must assert control over its own destiny and then outlines concrete actions it can take towards establishing a peaceful world.

One of the factors identified in the peace statement as crippling efforts to establish peace is a paralysis of will

1. The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1985).

centering around a widely-held conception of human nature as incorrigibly selfish and aggressive. In "The Coming Anarchy," for example, Kaplan asserts, "Physical aggression is part of being human," and "Only when people attain a certain economic, educational, and cultural standard is this trait tranquilized." Certainly relief from poverty and the benefits of education can allow people and their societies to develop; however, there are also examples from recent history amply demonstrating that relative prosperity and high educational standards do not necessarily lead to a peaceful society. Further, the word "tranquilized" suggests that the aggression remains beneath the surface much as the feral instinct remains in domesticated animals. Such a view ignores the widespread expression of longing for peace and harmony current in the world. It seems impossible to reconcile the view of human nature as innately aggressive with the widely-held desire for peace, and therefore some reassessment of our conception of human nature is in order.

Viewing selfish, aggressive behavior as a "distortion of the human spirit" rather than its true expression and accepting such behavior as part of a phase of immaturity promotes acknowledgement and transcendence; it frees us to establish social structures that will enhance the peace-building process. Then consultation can take place among the world's peoples, leading to a "united search for appropriate solutions." The longer humanity remains mired in the perception of innate aggression, the longer we impede the journey towards peace, as we merely justify our current behavior rather than promote the will to change.

Other factors contribute to the world's paralysis of will in addressing humanity's current ills. One such factor, according to the statement on peace, is an unwillingness to face the implications of the establishment of a world authority; thus, we retreat into nationalistic or ethnic enclaves that mistrust each

other, and no effective model of international authority exists to assure us that we should place our trust in it. Another factor is the incapacity of uneducated masses to articulate their desire for a new order. Additionally, the Universal House of Justice

## WORLD WATCH

identifies several barriers to peace, including racism, disparity between the rich and poor peoples of the world, unbridled nationalism, and religious strife. These factors are very similar to those outlined in the Kaplan article, but the Universal House of Justice, in contrast, goes beyond mere analysis to articulate the means whereby, if humanity chooses, we may take the alternative route leading to peace, without experiencing the preceding global anarchy.

The Baha'i approach to the subject is essentially optimistic, but the pursuit of peace is recognized as complex, involving three essential prerequisites: the equality of the sexes, universal education, and improved global communication, including the selection of a universal auxiliary language. Underlying each of these is a notion of organic unity concerning human relationships; as the Universal House of Justice phrases it: "Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind." This view stands in direct opposition to the prediction of retreat into ethnic enclaves, an action that an observer like Kaplan seems to regard as inevitable.

In its peace statement, the Universal House of Justice stresses that

the emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified.

Women are strangely absent from Kaplan's view of the future. Their status does not seem to be of any concern to him, though surely the condition of half of the world's population and, at that, the half that is chiefly responsible for raising the next generation- is significant to the direction humanity will take. Ignoring women perpetuates the idea that they are

## THE BAHAI WORLD

insignificant in factoring the course of humanity's future . Surely this must be questioned. In fact, as the world gears up for the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995, the situation and condition of women around the world is coming under growing scrutiny. To ignore the progress that has been made thus far, and the very real challenges that remain to be met, is to do a disservice to women and their power to shape the course of future generations as well as to participate in the governance of peoples around the world. Kaplan overlooks them at his own peril.

Further, to view education as "tranquilizing" aggressive tendencies is to disregard its power to change people's attitudes and thus the course of the future. The Universal House of Justice identifies "ignorance [as] indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice." Further, it states, "No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens." This issue is crucial and is connected to the issue of women's status.

Although universal education is the ultimate objective, nations with limited resources must reconsider their priorities to meet this need; the Baha'i teachings give preference to the education of women and girls, "since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society." Significantly, one subject identified as crucial for study by all children is the concept of world citizenship. Within a generation or two, such study would certainly promote the development of societies able to withstand the temptation to retreat into ethnic, racial, or cultural enclaves.

"The Coming Anarchy" asserts that borders drawn on maps no longer represent any real separations into different collections of populations, as the idea of the state is outdated. Baha'is have held this view for over one hundred years, but their vision of what is to replace the state is rather different.

Baha'u'llah wrote, in the late nineteenth century, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."<sup>2</sup> Then, writing in

2. Baha'u'lhih, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust), 250; cited in *The Promise of World Peace*, 11.

## WORLD WATCH

1936, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, analyzed the world situation in the following terms: "The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life."<sup>3</sup> Where Kaplan sees

humanity's retreat into small ethnic or tribal enclaves as something amounting to the inevitable, Baha'is see another force at work in the world counteracting such action: "Together with the opposing tendency to warfare and self-aggrandizement against which it ceaselessly struggles, the drive towards world unity is one of the dominant, pervasive features of life on the planet during the closing years of the twentieth century."<sup>4</sup> The real issue here is choice- the exercise of human will and responsibility, not inevitability. The view represented in "The Coming Anarchy" may well prove to be an accurate picture of the direction humanity takes over the next years, but there is nothing inevitable about it. Governments and leaders in many fields have the knowledge necessary for them to choose a path that addresses the fundamental problems Kaplan delineates. Issues related to human rights, global prosperity, the equality of men and women, and moral development need the world's serious, sustained attention characterized by a unity of approach. Yet we cannot lay all the responsibility at the feet of governments. Individual citizens of this global village need to be educated about their responsibilities as members of a new kind of civilization. If we envision ourselves on the threshold of maturity rather than retreating into a re-primitivized state, then we can raise ourselves up according to that vision. If we envision an ever-advancing civilization rather than a disintegrating one, then we have an orientation that will lead us forward rather than backward.

3. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha 'u 'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), 202; cited in *The Promise of World Peace*, 18-19.

4. *The Promise of World Peace*, 19.

No consideration of society's development and future can ignore the importance of religion as a force. Although religious strife abounds in the world, we cannot disregard the essential benefits conferred upon humanity by religion. It is a potent positive social force- "the greatest of all means for the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein," in the words of Baha'u'l-hih, who also cautioned, "Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine."<sup>5</sup> Within religion lie the possibilities for the reconstruction of the world's society on a more just and equitable basis.

At present, there are two processes simultaneously at work in the world: the rolling up of the old world order and the rolling out of the new. The media, with their postmodernist perspective, largely focus on the former, with its emphasis on violence, randomness, disintegration, despair, and, eventually, complete

breakdown and anarchy. But we can see evidence of this other process, which admittedly receives much less emphasis. Nevertheless, some of the news stories of 1993-94 can be summoned to witness this second process.

The world, for example, anticipated widespread bloodshed during the first democratic elections ever held in South Africa, and indeed, the prelude to the elections was violent to the extreme.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the voting itself was carried out peacefully, and the transition to the new government was an emotionally moving experience to witness, even for a cynical public.

Despite tremendous difficulties, democratic elections were also held in Cambodia for the first time in over twenty years, under the watchful eyes of UN observers.

Economic forces led different governments to move towards regional and even global free trade zones. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the qualified success of the

5. Baha'u'lhih, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1978), 125; cited in *The Promise of World Peace*, 5.

6. For an account of the effects of this violence on the Baha'i community of South Africa, see pp. 147-150.

Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) were heralded by some critics as disasters- the "GATTastrophe," according to one commentator- and as major steps towards the recognition of a global economy by others. Whatever their limitations, they do show a world attempting to come to terms with itself on a global scale. Such agreements may be first steps towards more comprehensive endeavors, leading perhaps to a world economy.

While the United Nations and NATO struggled to make or maintain peace in some parts of the world, peace talks sprang up in some surprising locations and between some unlikely negotiators. In the Middle East, negotiations commenced in Israel between two former bitter rivals, with the goal of resolving longstanding disputes. In Ireland, the Irish Republican Army signalled its willingness to talk with the government about ending the twenty-odd years of violence in Northern Ireland.

And in contrast to the divisive religious strife occurring in various locations, ecumenical activities proliferated, including the gathering of representatives of the world's major faiths for the second Parliament of the World's Religions. Held in Chicago in September 1993, the event demonstrated through the manifesto produced at the end of the session that goodwill and tolerance are possible among peoples of differing beliefs.

Such stories show that on the world stage there are efforts being made to come to grips with what it actually means to be part of a global society. Rather than focusing on disintegration,

some forces and agencies have elected to focus on integration and redefinition. But efforts in this direction are also possible on a small scale, and the Baha'i international community offers one working model of a functioning world entity. Throughout the world, the affairs of Baha'i communities are governed by Local Spiritual Assemblies. As the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, these nine-member bodies, elected by secret ballot in every community where there are nine or more adult believers in good standing, govern the affairs of the Baha'i communities they serve. A 1993 count indicated that there were almost 18,000 of these bodies around the world. Members of these institutions are elected for their spiritual qualities and service to the community;

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

they are not necessarily highly educated or even literate, though of course many are. Yet they learn to function as a united body through experience in the art of consultation. The existence and increasing maturity of functioning of these assemblies in all parts of the world is a potent argument against the kind of global anarchy that Kaplan predicts. If nations break down, Local Spiritual Assemblies will still be able to govern the affairs of the communities they serve, often with a greater sense of service than officials elected through the traditional democratic process, where campaigns feature empty promises, attacks on opponents, and various types of electioneering. In Baha'i elections there is no campaigning or electioneering. Every adult believer is eligible to vote and to be voted for; if elected, she or he must serve. The existence of such a broad-based, functioning system of governance in the Baha'i community around the world shows that all people, from villagers in remote rural areas to inhabitants of large cities, can assume responsibility for the affairs that affect them. This sort of responsible community-based government is a strong alternative to the forces of violence some see as taking over the world.

Kaplan himself posits, "Whereas the distant future will probably see the emergence of a racially hybrid, globalized man, the coming decades will see us more aware of our differences than of our similarities." To this assertion, one may well respond by asking whether it is not possible to see both differences and similarities and to accept them as essential parts of our humanness. The unity about which so much has been written in the Baha'i Faith is not uniformity. Shoghi Effendi described it thus:

It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts,

nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity ... 7

Unity and diversity are not mutually exclusive or incompatible, in the Baha'i view. In fact, they enrich one another by their interaction. Against what, then, does the Baha'i Faith stand? This question is, once again, answered succinctly by Shoghi Effendi:

The call of Baha'u'llah is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine. 8

#### Conclusion

Could it be that our notions about what is happening in the world around us, shaped by postmodernist theorists, belong to those obsolescent doctrines that should be swept away because they no longer minister to our needs? Could it be that we are too attached to the prophecies of the doomsayers, which predict momentous and catastrophic future events far larger than the

7. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), 41- 42.

8. *Ibid.*, 42.

scope of individuals to deal with, thus paralyzing our collective will?

We choose the way we view the world. There are powerful forces at work to shape our view- political, journalistic, commercial, social- but we are capable of choosing whether or not we wish to view the world through the lenses offered to us by these forces, which are often sustained by powerful selfinterest. Do we really believe that we are doomed to endure global anarchy and that there is nothing we can do to halt the process? Or can we adjust our vision somewhat to see that there are other constructive forces at work in the world, that what may appear randomly destructive is part of a process of renewal of civilization, and that it is in our power to determine the speed and course of that process?

William S. Hatcher explores the philosophical framework of the Baha'i Faith as a basis for an adequate understanding of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha 'u 'llah's Most Holy Book.

THE ~  
KITAB-I-AQDAS:

The Causality Principle in the  
World of Being

Introduction

The usual articulation of the well-known Baha'i principle that prejudices are truly immoral and not just socially troublesome affective attitudes tends to obscure another, cognitive defect of prejudice: prejudiced thinking is lazy thinking, signifying the subject's refusal to come to grips with the object as it truly is, in all its dimensions. Prejudiced thinking is stereotypical thinking in which we try to assimilate or reduce something new to a previously known category. Such a reductionist approach to life deprives new experiences of their capacity to transform or change us. In our rigidity and self-satisfaction, we require that each newly encountered phenomenon somehow accommodate itself to our preconceived categories of thought and experience.

Nowhere else will the reductionistic approach to life be more disastrous than if applied in our attempt to understand the Kitabi-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah's Most Holy Book, for this work can in no way be assimilated to any previous category of religious writing

or any pre-existing conception of religious thought. It sees spiritual laws neither as social conventions nor as divinely imposed rules of behavior, but rather as exact expressions of fundamental, objective relationships inherent in the very structure of reality.

Thus, the worldview of the Kitab-i-Aqdas is fundamentally scientific. It considers that reality is structured by objective relationships of cause and effect (i.e., laws) which can be rationally understood and articulated. The very purpose of the Kitab-i-Aqdas is the articulation of some of the most basic laws of spiritual reality. However, an adequate understanding of these laws also involves some knowledge of the overall philosophical framework of the Baha'i Faith. The next four sections seek to provide the essentials of this framework, after which we will undertake a more direct and detailed study of the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself.-

#### Levels of Existence; the Material World

The Baha'i writings affirm that reality is an integrated whole but that this wholeness is a unity in diversity, not a uniformity. In particular, within the context of overall wholeness, there are distinct levels of being. The lowest of these levels is the natural or material world, where the principle of existence is one of composition of elements. As 'Abdu'l-Baha has expressed it:

Nature is that condition, that reality, which in appearance consists in life and death, or, in other words, in the composition and decomposition of all things.

This Nature is subjected to an absolute organization, to determined laws, to a complete order and a finished design, from which it will never depart- to such a degree, indeed, that if you look carefully and with keen sight, from the smallest invisible atom up to such large bodies of the world of existence as the globe of the sun or the other great stars and luminous spheres, whether you regard their arrangement, their composition, their form or their movement, you will find that all are in the highest degree of organization and are under one law from which they will never depart. 1

1. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), 3.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

'Abdu'l-Baha further explains that this natural order, though objective, is an expression of the will of God: " ... Nature, which has neither perception nor intelligence, is in the grasp of Almighty God, Who is the Ruler of the world of Nature; whatever He wishes, He causes Nature to manifest." 2 Bereft of the capacity for thought (intelligence) or experience (perception), the material world also lacks the power of will:

" ... when you look at Nature itself, you see that it has no intelligence, no will." 3 In other words, the material world totally lacks the capacity of consciousness or self-awareness.

One of the consequences of the composite principle of existence in the material world is that all material systems are temporary; they have a finite life span. A material entity is born when the particular combination of elements that determines its existence is established. As long as the relationships necessary to sustain this configuration are maintained, the material entity exists, and when these relationships are destroyed it dies or decomposes, i.e., ceases to exist:

The whole physical creation is perishable. These material bodies are composed of atoms; when these atoms begin to separate decomposition sets in, then comes what we call death. This composition of atoms, which constitutes the body or mortal element of any created being, is temporary. When the power of attraction, which holds these atoms together, is withdrawn, the body, as such, ceases to exist.<sup>4</sup>

Another feature of the material world is that it is dynamic; it is in continual movement:

Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion. From his birth, a man progresses physically until he reaches maturity, then, having arrived at the prime of his life, he begins to decline, the strength and powers of his body decrease, and he gradually

2. Ibid., 4.

3. Ibid., 3.

4. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), 90-91.

arrives at the hour of death . . . All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. <sup>5</sup>

As explained here, the nature of movement in the material world is a reciprocal, back-and-forth motion both of progress and of regress. This, 'Abdu'l-Baha explains, is because the material world is a tension of opposites, an arena of opposing forces: "The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory everything must either go forward or retreat. " <sup>6</sup>

Thus, the dynamic of the material world is one of continual motion within fixed limits. This kind of motion is called periodic or cyclic, and it is the fundamental characteristic of all material phenomena. From the beating of the human heart, to the movement of the planets around the sun, the material world exhibits this cyclic feature. Periodic motion is the way God has chosen to endow the material world with both dynamism and stability. Dynamism without

stability produces an unbridled, purely quantitative (and ultimately catastrophic) growth, while stability without dynamism is death.

Even though the material world, and all material composites, are on the same ontological level, there is nonetheless an ordering or hierarchy among physical systems resulting from the relative complexity of their structure, the lower systems being less structured (or ordered) and the higher more structured. At the top of this hierarchy is the human body, which constitutes the most complex and highly structured physical system: "The body of man, which is composed from the elements, is combined and mingled in the most perfect form; it is the most solid construction, the noblest combination, the most perfect existence." 7

5. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 88-89.

6. Ibid., 90.

7. 'Abdu' l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, 143-144.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

1

That the human body is indeed the most complex of all systems in the known physical universe has also been confirmed and validated by modern neuroscience. 8

#### The Knowledge of Material Reality

According to the Baha'i teachings, God has not only established the laws that govern material reality, but He has also given to humanity the power for the rational and systematic understanding of these laws. This power is what we call 'science':

The outcome of this [human] intellectual endowment is science, which is especially characteristic of man. This scientific power investigates and apprehends created objects and the laws surrounding them. It is the discoverer of the hidden and mysterious secrets of the material universe and is peculiar to man alone. The most noble and praiseworthy accomplishment of man, therefore, is scientific knowledge and attainment. 9

'Abdu'l-Baha makes it clear that science is not just a serendipitous accident of history, but a divine, supernatural endowment:

All blessings are divine in origin, but none can be compared with this power of intellectual investigation and research, which is an eternal gift producing fruits of unending delight. Man is ever partaking of these fruits. All other blessings are temporary; this is an everlasting possession .... it is an eternal blessing and divine bestowal, the supreme gift of God to man .

. . . science or the attribute of scientific penetration is  
supernatural.... 10

8. See, for example, the four-volume series *The Neurosciences: [First] Study Program*, Rockefeller Press, New York 1967; *Second Study Program*, Rockefeller Press, New York, 1970; *Third Study Program*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1974; *Fourth Study Program*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1979.

9. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), 29.

10. *Ibid.*, 50.

-----,

I

THE BAHAI WORLD

!

As we have already noted, material reality is composed of physical systems in continual movement. Through science, we gain knowledge of the laws governing the evolution of these systems and also of their current, particular conditions (states). This scientific knowledge enables us to determine and predict not perfectly but with a practically significant degree of accuracy- the future states of these systems, given some particular set of initial conditions. This, in turn, enables us to act in the present so as to bring about a desired future configuration of a system: by deliberately establishing, in the short run, certain particular conditions of a system, we can bring about, in the long run, certain desired future states of the system, i.e., configurations that are favorable to our goals and our (perceived) interests. This is the power that scientific knowledge gives us, the power to control our future- to participate in the processes of the natural world and not just endure them. In other words, scientific knowledge has the effect of increasing our autonomy with regard to the natural world.

Of course, what we perceive to be in our own interest will, in itself, depend on our knowledge of reality, including the reality that is within us, the reality of our own selves. But whatever we perceive our interest to be, we generally seek to bring about those configurations that will, according to our present knowledge of reality, maximize the joy and pleasure of life and minimize its pain and suffering. Thus, scientific knowledge is a knowledge of the relationship of cause and effect in material reality, and this knowledge, when properly used, gives us the power to produce or increase our material happiness and wellbeing. This power of scientific knowledge to produce happiness and to increase our autonomy depends fundamentally on two things: (1) that the material world is regulated by objective laws, and (2) that we are able to apprehend these laws, if not absolutely, at least to a degree sufficient to allow for reasonably accurate

predictions and manipulations of future events. These two features of the material world are all we need if our goal in life is to maximize our well-being and our autonomy. The other particular features of the material world (e.g., periodic motion,

### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

the temporary existence of objects) are incidental to this fundamental, binary goal.

### Spiritual Reality

Above and beyond material reality lies a second level of existence that is not directly accessible to physical observation. In the Baha'i writings this is called spiritual reality or the spiritual world. Like material reality, spiritual reality has objective existence and is governed by lawful, cause-and-effect relationships. However, the laws governing spiritual reality, and the structure resulting from the operation of these laws, are significantly different from the laws and structures of material reality, mainly because the principle of existence in the spiritual world is different from that of the material world: spiritual entities exist as undivided wholes rather than as composites; and chief among these spiritual entities is the soul or spirit of each human being: "The soul is not a combination of elements, it is not composed of many atoms, it is of one indivisible substance and therefore eternal. It is entirely out of the order of the physical creation; it is immortal!" 11

Because spiritual entities are noncomposite, there is no tension of opposites in spiritual reality, and thus no retrogression:

In the world of spirit there is no retrogression. The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory everything must either go forward or retreat. In the realm of spirit there is no retreat possible, all movement is bound to be towards a perfect state. 'Progress' is the expression of spirit in the world of matter. The intelligence of man, his reasoning powers, his knowledge, his scientific achievements, all these being manifestations of the spirit, partake of the inevitable law of spiritual progress and are, therefore, of necessity, immortal. 12

Thus, in contrast to the movement of physical systems which, as we have seen above, is cyclical and always within fixed

11. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 91.

12. Ibid., 90.

### THE BAHAI WORLD

limits, the motion of the soul is unidirected, irreversible and

potentially infinite:

Now let us consider the soul. We have seen that movement is essential to existence; nothing that has life is without motion. All creation, whether of the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom, is compelled to obey the law of motion; it must either ascend or descend. But with the human soul, there is no decline. Its only movement is towards perfection; growth and progress alone constitute the motion of the soul.

Divine perfection is infinite, therefore the progress of the soul is also infinite. 13

The Baha'i writings teach that the fundamental capacities of the soul are those of knowledge, of love, and of will. That is, the soul has the intellectual capacity of understanding or mind, the affective capacity of feeling or emotion, and the voluntary capacity of willing or acting. Because the soul is a noncomposite entity, it has no parts. Thus, the soul's capacities are inherent in its very nature, rather than being alienable parts of it.

This characteristic of the soul constitutes an extremely important difference from a physical system such as the body.

The higher-order properties of the physical body are entirely due to its relative complexity in terms both of the number of its components (i.e., the cells of the body) and the complex nature of the relationship between these components. Any such composite entity has parts which may be alienated from the organism without necessarily destroying the organism. For example, a person may well survive the amputation of both his legs. But he will have lost the function of autonomous ambulation.

According to the Baha'i writings, the intrinsic capacities of the individual's soul (called his 'spiritual' capacities) are eternally fixed. They can never be diminished or alienated from the soul, nor can they be increased; they can only be developed:

13. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 89.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

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 pre-ordained 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. 14

Thus, the soul can never lose any of its capacities, unless it be totally destroyed, which, we are assured, God will never do. This fundamental difference between the nature of the soul

and the nature of the physical body is important for an understanding of the difference between the laws governing spiritual reality and those governing material reality. Because it is such a delicate and complex system, the physical body is fragile and vulnerable. It is more or less continually threatened by the possibility of either a partial or total loss of functioning (i.e., death). But the soul is threatened by neither of these possibilities. However, the soul does face a different kind of threat: it is threatened by the possibility of a relative underdevelopment of its intrinsic capacities. To say that the soul cannot retrogress is not to say that its progress is automatic:

My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid

stagnatiOn .... 15

The process of developing the intrinsic capacities of the soul is called 'spiritual growth' or 'spiritual progress'. Such a process implies both an increase in spiritual autonomy and an increase in spiritual happiness and well-being.

The Baha'i writings affirm that learning how to grow spiritually is the fundamental purpose of our existence. We

14. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'l/ah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), 149.

15. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, 90.

accomplish this purpose by first understanding the laws that govern spiritual reality and then by applying them to the particular circumstances of our life. Just as scientific knowledge of the laws of physical reality enables us to act in the present in such a way as to produce a desired future state of increased material happiness, so a knowledge of the laws governing spiritual reality enables us to act in the present in such a way as to produce a desired future state of increased spiritual happiness. Thus, we progress towards spiritual happiness by increasing our knowledge of spiritual reality, and this, in tum, represents an increase in our spiritual autonomy. This accretion of spiritual happiness and spiritual autonomy is just another name for spiritual growth, or the development of the intrinsic capacities of our souls.

The Knowledge of Spiritual Reality

In the foregoing, we have seen that science is the means God has given us for the understanding of material reality. Scientific

method is based on direct observation of the physical world followed by logically sound deductions based on such observations. But spiritual reality is not directly observable. We do not have direct access to spiritual reality, only an indirect access through observation of the effects of the action of spiritual forces on observable phenomena, such as the action of the soul on the physical body. God has therefore ordained a second source of valid knowledge about reality: religion.

The Baha'i writings make it clear that religion and science are just two different segments of a continuum of knowledge about reality. Since the laws governing spiritual reality are objective, they are potentially discoverable by scientific method. However, because of the relative inaccessibility of spiritual phenomena to spontaneous human observation, it would take us an impractically long time to discover even the simplest of spiritual laws by an unassisted application of scientific method. Thus, religion operates by revelation in which God freely explains or 'reveals' to us certain of the laws and principles governing spiritual reality. We are thus spared the pain and effort that would be involved in discovering these truths for

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

ourselves. However, these spiritual truths are objective and can therefore be tested experientially and applied practically when once understood.

Thus, in the Baha'i conception, religion, like science, is most correctly viewed as a knowledge-generating enterprise, rather than a belief-affirming or rule-making enterprise: " .. religion is the essential connection which proceeds from áthe realities of things. . . . [it] is the necessary connection which emanates from the reality of things .... " 16

This conception of religion clearly differs from the received idea that science is an expression of reason and rationality while religion operates on "blind" faith and unreasoned belief. Indeed, the Baha'i writings define faith as the deliberate implementation of consciously-acquired knowledge: "Although a blind man produceth a most wonderful and exquisite art, yet he is deprived of seeing it .... By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds." 17

The Baha'i Faith teaches that the revelation of religious truth (that is, of valid knowledge of the laws and structure of spiritual reality) is a progressive phenomenon in which God periodically communicates with humanity through the agency of a specially chosen human being or Manifestation. These Manifestations are none other than the great religious Founders of history, some of whose names we know (such as Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mu}ammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah, Founder of the

Baha'i Faith). These unique beings are endowed by God with a direct knowledge of spiritual reality, and this endowment allows them to become the teachers of the laws of spiritual reality to humanity:

Briefly, the supreme Manifestations of God are aware of the reality of the mysteries of beings. Therefore, They establish laws which are suitable and adapted to the state of the world of man .... the supreme Manifestations of God are aware of

16. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, 158-159.

17. Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha 'u 'llah and 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), 382-383.

the mysteries of beings, therefore, They understand this essential connection [emanating from the realiti of things], and by this knowledge establish the Law of God. 8

In further elaboration of this point, 'Abdu'l-Baha explains:

Knowledge is of two kinds. One is subjective and the other objective knowledge- that is to say, an intuitive knowledge and a knowledge derived from perception. The knowledge of things which men universally have is gained by reflection or by evidence .... The circle of this knowledge is very limited because it depends upon effort and attainment.

But the second sort of knowledge, which is the knowledge of being, is intuitive; it is like the cognizance and consciousness that man has of himself [i.e., of his own being or existence]. ... This knowledge is not the outcome of effort and study. It is an existing thing; it is an absolute gift.

Since the Sanctified Realities, the supreme Manifestations of God, surround the essence and qualities of the creatures, transcend and contain existing realities and understand all things, therefore, Their knowledge is divine knowledge, and not acquired- that is to say, it is a holy bounty; it is a divine revelation. 19

In other words, in the same way that ordinary human beings have the spontaneous knowledge of their own being and existence, the Manifestations of God are endowed with the spontaneous knowledge of the laws of all being. In fact, the Manifestations constitute a distinct ontological level intermediate between God and ordinarily-endowed humans: "Know that the conditions of [conscious] existence are limited to the conditions of servitude, of prophethood, and of Deity, but the divine and the contingent perfections are unlimited [on each level of existence]. " 20

Elsewhere, it is explained that the Manifestations can be thought of as absolutely perfected human beings- as human

18. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, 158-159.

19. Ibid., 157-158.

20. Ibid., 230.

### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

beings all of whose spiritual capacities have been developed to the maximum degree possible. They thus represent an ideal or model of the ultimate limits of human á spiritual development. However, the Manifestations are created in this state of absolute perfection, whereas ordinary humans can only progressively approximate this condition through the process of spiritual growth. As 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, there is "progress in perfection but not in state." 21 In other words, 'progress' never implies a change from one level of being to another, only a progressive unfolding of the potential inherent in a given level of being.

We can thus sum up the Baha'i teachings concerning the levels of existence as follows : Within the framework of the overall wholeness of reality, there are four distinct levels of being. The first and highest level is that of the essence or being of God. The second level is that of the Manifestation of God, who perfectly manifests or incarnates all of the attributes of God but not His essence. The third level is that of the human soul, which has consciousness and the capacity to reflect progressively all of the attributes of God. Finally, the lowest level is that of the material world, which is totally devoid of consciousness and will. The third level, that of the human soul, is the only level of being that exhibits true irreversible progress. God and the Manifestations are already in perfect states of existence on Their respective levels of being and therefore have no need of progression. The material world exhibits continual movement within fixed limits, which involves temporary progression, but a progression that is always followed sooner or later by retrogression and degeneration. However, the human soul, while created in an unperfected state, has the potential for perfection. After being freed from the constraints of the material world, the only movement of the soul is an irreversible progression towards God. The rate of progression, however, is specific for each person and depends on the quality and appropriateness of that person's response to the circumstances of his life.

21. Ibid., 237.

The Baha'i writings further explain that, from the point of view of human spiritual development, the material world

functions as the womb of preparation for birth into the purely spiritual world. The special conditions in the physical womb of our mother enable us to progress from a one-celled organism to a mature human form- effectively compressing five hundred million years of biological evolution into nine short months. In the same way, it is explained, the tests and trials of this material world provide us with the possibility of compressing an immense quantum of spiritual growth into the short period of a human physical lifetime.

However, whereas the physical growth and development in the maternal womb is an automatic process, our spiritual growth during our earthly lives depends on the efforts we make in response to the conditions of our lives. Moreover, during our earthly life, but not afterwards, our souls are subject to the effect of material forces that serve as a resistance against which we struggle in our efforts to grow spiritually. It is this aspect of the material world, the tension of opposition between spiritual and material forces, that provides the opportunity for rapid spiritual growth. But a necessary concomitant of this configuration is that both spiritual progression and spiritual retrogression can occur in this life, whereas (relative) progression alone is the movement of the soul in the next life.

Thus, the fundamental task of our earthly lives is to understand and apprehend the laws governing the process of spiritual growth so that we may generate the appropriate, growth-inducing responses to the circumstances of our lives and thereby profit from the unique opportunities for spiritual growth with which God has endowed this life. This knowledge and understanding can only come from religion and, more particularly, from the holy books of the Manifestations, which explain and expound the principles of spiritual reality.

The experience of five hundred million years of biological evolution is genetically encoded in the DNA of the human genome, and it is this "knowledge" that enables the human fetus to profit from the special environment of the maternal womb and accomplish its astonishing development from a single fertilized

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

egg to a multi-billion-celled mature and complex organism. The teachings of the Manifestations may be thought of as the spiritual counterpart of the genetic code. These teachings are recorded (encoded) in the holy writings of the great religions, and when the knowledge they contain is implemented, genuine spiritual growth is the result.

The revelation of God to humanity is progressive, because spiritual growth is both collective and individual, and the knowledge appropriate to one stage of spiritual growth may not

be appropriate to a later stage. Thus, as the most recent Manifestation of God, Baha'u'lhih represents the most appropriate and mature expression of our understanding of spiritual laws and principles, and the Kitab-i-Aqdas is the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah- the book that epitomizes His divinely-inspired articulation of the laws governing spiritual reality. Because spiritual growth is collective as well as individual, the laws and principles of the Kitab-i-Aqdas are partly social and partly individual. Indeed, Baha'u'llah explains that religion has always had these two fundamental aspects:

God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established. 22

According to Baha'u'llah, the history of the last few thousand years has been the history of the childhood and youth of humanity, during which most social forms and structures have had a temporary, experimental quality. We are now in late adolescence, in the transition towards full maturity, when all the potential latent within the human being will be actualized. Thus, the social laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas seek to provide the basis for this transition, as well as to establish the framework for the emerging, mature, and stable world order, founded on spiritual principles.

22. Baha'u'lhih, Gleanings, 79-80.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas therefore represents the culmination not only of the revelation of Baha'u'llah, but also of the process of progressive revelation itself. Humanity now stands on the brink of its maturity, and we are now in the throes of the greatest single transition in the history of the human race: the transition from our collective adolescence to our collective maturity. The Kitab-i-Aqdas reveals to us the knowledge necessary for the successful completion of this transition.

The Laws of Spiritual Reality

In God Passes By, Shoghi Effendi describes the Kitab-i-Aqdas as, among other things:

... the principal repository of that Law which the Prophet Isaiah had anticipated, and which the writer of the Apocalypse had described as the "new heaven" and the "new earth," as "the Tabernacle of God," as the "Holy City," as the "Bride," the "New Jerusalem coming down from God," this "Most Holy Book," whose provisions must remain inviolate

for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet. .. as the brightest emanation of the mind of Baha'u'llih, as the Mother Book of His Dispmsation, and the Charter of His New World Order. 23

In the light of this, and other similarly exalted descriptions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, one might expect to be confronted with a formal legal text in an inflated style. Instead, one finds nothing less than an extended love letter from God to humanity, an outpouring of tenderness and concern for every detail of human existence such as to dispel any possible doubt of God's overwhelming love for His creatures. Moreover, the Kitab-i-Aqdas exhibits a remarkable harmony of content and style that heightens this impression of God's love and concern for us. The development of ideas in the Kitab-i-Aqdas is not strictly linear but rather cyclical or spiral. The Author discusses certain

23. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), 213; quoted in the introductory material of the first authorized English translation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), 13.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

questions, then turns to other issues, and later returns to the initial questions, amplifying and elaborating with each subsequent discussion. There is also an ongoing alternation between the abstract and the concrete, the general and the specific, the universal and the particular. Nevertheless there is an overall progression throughout this dialectical development. Fundamentally, the Kitab-i-Aqdas views life as a continual dialogue between God and humanity. Thus, not only does the content of the Kitab-i-Aqdas treat a wide spectrum of life's questions, the work's very form reproduces our experience of life, in which profound philosophical and moral issues are continually juxtaposed with practical and concrete questions of everyday life. By reproducing this existential juxtaposition within the text itself, Baha'u'llah allows us to see how the most significant and abstract philosophical and spiritual questions are indeed related to the most homely issues of our material existence. Also, these textual juxtapositions help the reader make logical connections that might otherwise remain obscure. This, in tum, increases the reader's autonomy in confronting and understanding the Kitab-i-Aqdas, enabling him to "see with his own eyes and hear with his own ears." 24

According to Baha'u'llah, our dialogue with God is pursued on both the individual and the collective level; it is initiated by God, who also establishes its parameters, but its success is dependent upon our ability to generate an appropriate response

to God's overtures. Thus, the laws and principles of the Kitab-i-Aqdas are presented in the form of a covenant or agreement in which God requires certain things from us but solemnly promises that spiritual growth, progress, and happiness will inevitably follow if these actions and attitudes on our part are forthcoming.

The opening paragraph of the Kitab-i-Aqdas states that the fundamental duty of man towards God is "the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws ... " and that the second duty is "to observe every

24. See 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1978), 29.

ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world." It is then stated that "These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the individual dialogue takes place within the framework of the collective dialogue. The collective dialogue is initiated by God's sending of the Manifestations, and the first response required of us is to recognize and accept the spiritual authority of these figures. Indeed, if God has taken the trouble to send the Manifestations to give us valid knowledge of the laws governing spiritual reality, then the minimal acceptable response on our part is to turn to Them and follow Their instruction. In particular, we must signify our true acceptance by implementing the laws and principles They teach.

Following this opening statement, paragraphs 2-5 of the Kitab-i-Aqdas constitute a powerful articulation of the importance generally of obeying and implementing the laws of God and of the benefits to be derived from such obedience.

For example:

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures ....

... "Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty." Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. 26

This portion of the text culminates (paragraph 5) in the following metaphor for the whole of the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself:

"Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power ... Meditate upon this, O men of insight! " 27  
The symbolic use of "Wine" in this passage powerfully conveys

25. Baha'u'lhih, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 1. The presently-published version of the Kitab-i-Aqdas has sequentially numbered paragraphs, which we will use as our main reference points in alluding to the text.

26. Ibid., K 3-4.

27. Ibid., K 5.

## CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

the notion that implementation of the laws of spiritual reality produces an effect of spiritual euphoria- thus of extreme spiritual happiness. Baha'u'llah's choice of image here is particularly significant given the fact that, subsequently in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, He strictly forbids the drinking of wine and other intoxicants (paragraph 119), stating, "It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away. " 28

Thus, true happiness- spiritual euphoria--comes not from the abandonment of rationality but by its disciplined application to an understanding of the laws governing spiritual reality.

Divine proscriptions are not intended to deny us genuine joy but rather to teach us the conditions under which the greatest and most enduring joy can be obtained. What is being given us is no less than the keys to a true and lasting paradise.

In this way, the opening five paragraphs of the Kitab-i-Aqdas lay out the general parameters of the dialogue, or covenant, between God and humanity: God initiates the dialogue by sending the Manifestations to teach us the fundamental laws of spiritual reality. We respond by recognizing the spiritual authority (validity) of the Manifestation and obeying His laws. The result is increased spiritual development leading to increased happiness and, ultimately, to a state of extreme and enduring joy.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas also affirms that the implementation of the laws of spiritual reality increases the individual's spiritual autonomy, which Baha'u'llah calls "true liberty":

Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. Happy is the man that hath apprehended the Purpose of God in whatever He hath revealed .... Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. 29

28. Ibid., K 119.

29. Ibid., K 125.

## THE BAHAI.'f WORLD

In this and other passages, Baha'u'l-hih makes unequivocally clear that God does not seek an obedience of childlike weakness, but a mature, intelligent obedience based on deliberate individual choice. We must submit our wills to God's, but this submission results from a disciplined accretion of spiritual power to the individual, not from a helpless capitulation.

#### The Covenant and the Universal House of Justice

Before examining some specific laws and principles contained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, it is important to understand several fundamental features of Baha'u'llah's Covenant, which, as mentioned above, constitutes the basic framework for the dialogue between God and humanity. The first concerns the question of the interpretation of Baha'u'llah's writings and, in particular, the interpretation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Baha'u'llah Himself wrote elucidations of several passages of the Kitab-i-Aqdas during His lifetime, many of which are included in the current English edition of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Given the fact that certain laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas "have been formulated in anticipation of a [future] state of society destined to emerge from the chaotic conditions that prevail today ... ," Baha'u'llah foresaw the necessity of providing for further authoritative interpretation of His writings after His death. 30 He therefore appointed His eldest son 'Abdu'l-Baha as the "Center of the Covenant," the authorized interpreter of Baha'u'llah's writings, and as the perfect exemplar of Baha'i teachings. 'Abdu'l-Baha survived Baha'u'llah by twenty-nine years during which time He wrote a number of texts, including explanations of certain passages of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. 'Abdu'l-Baha in turn appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed Him as the authorized interpreter of the Baha'i writings.

Beginning in 1921, Shoghi Effendi's ministry continued for thirty-six years until his death in 1957. During this period, Shoghi Effendi generated an extensive corpus of detailed commentary and interpretation of the writings of Baha'u'llah, including the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Certain portions of Shoghi

30. Baha'u'l-hih, K.itab-i-Aqdas, 7.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

Effendi's commentary are likewise included In the present English edition of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Thus, in a certain sense, "the Kitab-i-Aqdas" is not just the relatively brief (but extraordinarily concentrated) text of the Kitab-i-Aqdas itself, but also includes the extensive body of authoritative commentaries by Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi.

Another fundamental aspect of Baha'u'llah's Covenant

derives from Baha'u'llah's declared intention of establishing a system of divine governance adequate for the needs of humanity for at least a thousand years. Such a system must take into account permanence, stability, and order, on one hand, and change, progression, and dynamism, on the other. The specific laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas constitute the permanent or stable underpinnings of Baha'u'llah's system; they are to remain inviolate for at least a thousand years. To provide for change and flexibility in His system, Baha'u'llah has established a supreme legislative organ, called the Universal House of Justice. According to the specific texts of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Universal House of Justice is invested with the authority to legislate on all matters not specifically dealt with in the Kitab-i-Aqdas or elsewhere in the Baha'i sacred writings. Moreover, the Universal House of Justice can repeal or alter any of its previous decisions. This feature provides Baha'u'llah's system with a great flexibility and adaptability. As the conditions of humanity change and as scientific progress alters various social realities, the Universal House of Justice can legislate in order to take into account this evolution. For example, the Kitab-i-Aqdas specifically proscribes murder, defined as the willful taking of another human life. This, then, is an absolute prohibition. However, while specifying certain penalties for murder (either execution or life imprisonment), Baha'u'llah leaves the Universal House of Justice free to determine their application. Moreover, He also leaves to the Universal House of Justice the task of establishing various degrees of murder and the appropriate penalty for each degree. Or, to take another example, the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas do not deal directly with the question of birth control,

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

leaving the House of Justice free to legislate (or not) in this area. It is therefore logically possible for the Universal House of Justice to legislate in a certain manner regarding this question and later, perhaps in the light of changed demographic circumstances, repeal or alter this legislation.

Though the Universal House of Justice cannot repeal or alter any of the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, it is nevertheless empowered by Baha'u'llah to oversee the gradual and progressive application of those laws. The Universal House of Justice is also invested with the quasi-judicial function of rendering an authoritative and final verdict in all disputes or controversies that arise within the Baha'i community. These functions are summed up in the following passage from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and 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. And inasmuch as this House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear upon daily transactions, so also it hath power to repeal the same .... The House of Justice is both the initiator and the abrogator of its own laws. 31

The House of Justice was first elected in 1963 in the manner outlined by 'Abdu'l-Baha and has functioned continually since that date. Election of the membership of the House of Justice is held every five years.

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas Baha'u'llah also establishes local Houses of Justice, which have administrative jurisdiction on a local- usually municipal or county- level. Acting on the authority given Him by Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha established secondary Houses of Justice on an intermediate- national or

31. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament of 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), 20.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

regional- level. Membership in these governing councils is also by election. 32

Thus, the administrative structure of the Baha'i community exists at three levels: local, national, and international.

Decisions of local Houses of Justice can be altered by the secondary House of Justice on which they depend, and the Universal House of Justice can change a decision of any local or secondary House of Justice.

Underlying all the laws and community structures in the Baha'i Faith is a group decision-making process called consultation. This process was instituted by Baha'u'llah himself in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and further elaborated and explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. Essentially, Baha'i consultation involves a frank but loving exchange of opinions by members of a group with a view towards the determination of the objective truth of some matter and the consequent establishment of a genuine group consensus. In particular, consultation is the basic mode of functioning of the Houses of Justice. Thus, in Baha'u'llah's system of governance, all decision-making authority derives from consultative bodies. No individual has decision-making authority unless such authority has been specifically granted by an appropriate consultative decision of a collective organ functioning under one

of the Houses of Justice.

The central role that consultation plays throughout Baha'u'llah's system, and Baha'i community life in general, gives a non-authoritarian, collaborative spirit to the functioning of the Baha'i community at all levels. The ideal of Baha'i consultation is to arrive at a unanimous decision of the consultative group. In the instances where such unanimity is not forthcoming, a vote is taken and the majority view prevails.

Unity, the Fundamental Goal of the Baha'i Faith

It is important here to stress that all of the laws, institutions, and principles that Baha'u'llah has established are expressions of the

32. It should be noted that local and secondary Houses of Justice are presently known as Spiritual Assemblies.

### THE BAHAI WORLD

two fundamental principles of justice and love. Justice has to do with the recognition of and respect for the role, status, and worth of a given individual, of a given social function, or of a given institution or principle. Justice provides the component of stability and order to the social fabric and to human relationships generally. Love is the underlying dynamic and motivating force of the whole of creation. Without love, justice degenerates into dry formalities, and without justice love may be improperly channeled and therefore unproductive of effective results.

The principles of justice and love are thus complementary, and each is essential to the fundamental Baha'i goal of establishing the unity of humanity at all levels of human interaction.

Indeed, the unity of the material world itself results from the natural laws (Justice) which regulate the dynamic interactions (love) among the different physical forces and entities.

According to Baha'u'llah, the ultimate expression of the unity of humanity will be the organization of the life of the entire planet into one coherent social system based on justice and cooperation: "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." 33

Given the breathtaking scope of Baha'u'llah's vision of the future of mankind, we might anticipate that His system would exalt justice over love, order over dynamism. However, we will see that, if anything, the opposite is true: love is the most fundamental principle of all, and the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas reflect the fact that, in all of God's creation, justice is the servant of love. As 'Abdu'l-Baha has expressed it:

Love is the mystery of divine revelations! ... Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit inspired into the human spirit! Love

is the cause of the manifestation of the Truth (God) in the phenomenal world! Love is the necessary tie proceeding from the realities of things through divine creation! Love is the means of the most great happiness in both the material and spiritual worlds!. ... Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God! Love is the one law which causeth and

33. Baha'u'lhih, Kitab-i-Aqdas, 12.

### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

controlleth order among the existing atoms! ... Love is the cause of the civilization of nations in this mortal world! 34

#### The Individual Dialogue with God

Having established, in the opening passages, the fundamental premise of the Kitab-i-Aqdas- the collective and individual dialogue or covenant between God and humanity- Baha'u'llah now turns, in paragraphs 6-15, to the first specific and most basic law of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the law of prayer. Prayer is the foundation of the individual dialogue between God and man. Through it, the individual establishes a direct, unmediated, inner connection between his soul and God. Moreover, this relationship is the most fundamental of all relationships accessible to the individual. Unless this relationship be correctly and firmly established, all other relationships, whether with other individuals, with society, or with nature, will be essentially flawed.

The following statement, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, illustrates the importance that Baha'u'llah gives to prayer:

How to attain spirituality is indeed a question to which every young man and woman must sooner or later try to find a satisfactory answer ....

Indeed the chief reason for the evils now rampant in society is the lack of spirituality. The materialistic civilization of our age has so much absorbed the energy and interest of mankind that people in general do no longer feel the necessity of raising themselves above the forces and conditions of their daily material existence. There is not sufficient demand for things that we call spiritual to differentiate them from the needs and requirements of our physical existence ....

The universal crisis affecting mankind is, therefore, essentially spiritual in its causes .... the core of religious faith is that mystic feeling which unites Man with God. This state of spiritual communion can be brought about and maintained by means of meditation and prayer. And this is the reason why Baha'u'llah has so much stressed the importance of

34. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), vol. 3, 525-526.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

worship . . . The Baha'i Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is thus fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through the acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man which has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourishment prayer can best provide. 35

Among the various prescriptions Baha'u'llah gives concerning prayer is a specific, daily obligatory prayer. This prayer has three forms: short, medium, and long. Baha'u'llah makes it clear that the individual is entirely free to choose, each day, whichever of the three forms he prefers, but is spiritually and morally obligated to offer an obligatory prayer at least once every twenty-four hours. The text of the short prayer is as follows:

I bear witness, O My God, that Thou has created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. 36

A detailed study of the obligatory prayers is beyond the scope of the present article, but one main feature is already clear from the content of the short obligatory prayer: the key to spiritual happiness and autonomy is recognition of our total dependence on God. In other words, spiritual growth is not a process of becoming more dependent on God, but of becoming more aware of our dependence on God.

The obligatory prayers, as well as other prayers, are offered individually in private. The Baha'i Faith has no priesthood or clergy, and each individual believer is responsible before God for his own spiritual development.

The habit of regular prayer is collateral with other spiritual disciplines such as the daily reading of and meditation upon the

35. Shoghi Effendi, Directives from the Guardian. Compiled by Gertrude Garrida (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), 86-87.

36. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, 101.

## CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

texts revealed by Baha'u'llah. For example, in paragraph 149 of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah says: "Recite ye the verses of God every mom and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them

hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament .... " 37 Thus, prayer, meditation, and the thoughtful study of the holy writings constitute the fundamentals of the individual covenant or dialogue between God and ourselves. However, it is important to realize that the daily obligatory prayers constitute only a spiritual minimum, not a maximum or an optimum. Baha'u'llah stresses throughout His writings that we should pursue communion with God at every moment of our existence, in such wise that the attitude of prayerfulness pervades our entire life and all of our human interactions. As Shoghi Effendi has expressed in a letter written on his behalf: "We must become entirely selfless and devoted to God so that every day and every moment we seek to do only what God would have us do and in the way He would have us do it." 38 A second key element of individual spiritual discipline is fasting, and Baha'u'llah mentions the law of fasting in paragraph 16, immediately following his initial discussion of the obligatory prayers. He later elaborates the details of the law of fasting: Baha'is are to fast from sunrise to sunset for nineteen successive days during the same period (2 March to 21 March) each solar year. This periodic, temporary suspension of eating and drinking allows the individual to experience his soul as an entity separate from the body. In this way, the individual's soul or spirit becomes a palpable reality and not just an intellectual abstraction.

Most of the other prescriptions pertaining to individuals are related, in one way or another, to prayer and fasting. For example, Baha'u'llah stresses physical cleanliness, stating that it has an effect on spiritual purity and thereby on the heart's receptivity to communion with God. As mentioned above, He also forbids recourse to alcohol, opium, and other substances

37. Ibid., K 149.

38. Lights of Guidance: A Baha'i Reference File. Compiled by Helen Hornby. 2nd rev. and enlarged ed. (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), 111.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

which distort perception and thus inhibit the individual's capacity to maintain an ongoing state of communion with God.

The importance Baha'u'llah gives to our individual relationship with God and the centrality of this relationship within

Baha'u'llah's system are expressions of the fundamental role that the love of God plays in all human relationships.

### Lateral Relationships; Marriage

The vertical relationship between each individual and God is the necessary basis for harmonious and productive lateral relationships between and among human beings. Of all these lateral

relationships, the most fundamental is that between husband and wife. Indeed, society comes forth from the family and the family from the couple. Ultimately, society cannot be more healthy than its families nor families more healthy than the relationship between wife and husband. Thus, Baha'u'llah devotes a portion of the Kitab-i-Aqdas to laying out the fundamental parameters of the marriage relationship.

As viewed by Baha'u'llah, the relationship between husband and wife is governed by two basic principles: equality (or reciprocity) and fidelity. The principle of equality is the expression of justice within the marriage, and the principle of fidelity is an expression of love. We will discuss each in turn. The equality of women and men is a fundamental principle of the Baha'i Faith. This principle implies not only social equality but total reciprocity within the marriage relationship. In making decisions that are not purely individual- that relate to the married couple as a social entity- the marriage partners are enjoined to use consultation. As mentioned in our brief discussion of Baha'i consultation above, the goal is to seek a consensual view of the matter at hand, and to abide by a majority view when such a consensus cannot be attained. When, as in the case of husband and wife, no non-unanimous majority is possible, then the couple must find a creative way of making a given decision when differences of opinion persist. This may involve either one deferring to the other in certain given instances, but in the Baha'i conception of the marriage relationship, there is no presumption that either party should

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

ever dominate the other or impose his or her will by force or manipulation.

Consultation, and the pursuit of justice within the marriage relationship, is best thought of as a lateral extension of the intimate dialogue between each individual and God. Viewed in this way, consultation between the couple becomes a sort of collective prayer: in the same way that the individual seeks the truth through his internal dialogue with God, so the couple must seek the truth in their intimate dialogue with each other.

Clearly, this conception of the relationship between marriage partners represents a certain challenge to the maturity of their relationship. But this can be seen as a healthy challenge, conducive to spiritual growth and thus to the purpose of human existence.

The second basic principle governing the relationship between husband and wife is absolute fidelity. Among other things, the Kitab-i-Aqdas specifically states that a sexual relationship is spiritually legitimate only between a man and

a woman who are married to each other. Thus, sexual relationships outside of the marriage bond are proscribed in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and those who violate this prohibition are subject to a penalty which, in the case of consenting adults, is the payment of an identical fine by both parties, the amount being doubled with each subsequent offense. The penalty for other particular violations of this law, such as rape, incest or adultery, are to be determined by the Universal House of Justice.

Baha'u'llah's conception of loyalty between the marriage partners implies not only the act of sexual faithfulness, but also an attitude of mind in which each partner continually gives priority to the well-being of the other in all circumstances. The importance Baha'u'llah gives to loyalty within marriage is apparent from His first mention of the principle in paragraph 19: "Ye have been forbidden to commit murder or adultery, or to engage in backbiting or calumny; shun ye, then, what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets. " 39

39. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 19.

Just as murder is the most grievous possible violation of the sanctity of individual life, so adultery is the most grievous possible violation of the sanctity of the marriage relationship. Backbiting and calumny destroy the individual by assassinating his character and reputation rather than his physical person. Similarly, other more subtle forms of unfaithfulness may assassinate the marriage relationship. But sexual faithfulness is the minimum challenge to be met by the marriage partners. Probably most people would agree that the combination of sexual chastity before marriage and faithfulness within marriage will serve to strengthen the marriage bond. However, many may also feel that this discipline will impose an intolerable hardship on the individual. The accepted idea in many quarters is that men especially cannot be seriously expected to restrain themselves sexually before marriage or to confine themselves to only one partner after marriage.

Clearly, Baha'u'llah does not agree with such notions. To begin with, there is no trace whatsoever of any sexual double standard in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Marriage is monogamous, the principles of chastity and fidelity are equally binding on men and women, and all penalties for violations of these principles between consenting adults apply equally to both partners. Moreover, a number of special conditions regarding prayer and fasting apply to women only, such as special prayers to be said in lieu of fasting for menstruating women. The overall result confirmed in other writings of Baha'u'llah as well- is to exalt the position of the woman as the bearer and nurturer of life, while maintaining total social equality between women and men

in all other respects.

As to the question of sexual discipline, Baha'u'llah considers this to be a particular means God has provided for our spiritual development. If God has so freely endowed us with the precious and potent gift of sexuality, He has also endowed us with the capacity for its disciplined and responsible use. Throughout His writings, Baha'u'lhih insists that one of the basic principles God has established in His dealings with humanity is that He never requires from us anything of which we are not truly capable: "He will never deal unjustly with any one, neither will He task

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

a soul beyond its power."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, explains Baha'u'lhih, everything God imposes upon us is for our benefit alone, for there is no self-interest on the part of God. God is totally self-sufficient and His love for us is absolutely pure.

Thus, according to Baha'u'llah, the sexual discipline of chastity and fidelity contained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas is for our benefit and fully within our God-given power to accomplish. Had God withheld the gift of so powerful a sexuality from us, we would have been spared the tensions sometimes involved in the exercise of sexual discipline, but we would have been denied the opportunities for substantial and rapid spiritual growth this discipline affords. Thus, Baha'u'llah's prescriptions regarding sexuality constitute a prime example of teachings that can be understood only in the light of Baha'u'llah's conception of human purpose.

Although the prescription of chastity and fidelity are not original with the Baha'i teachings, historical attempts to practice these disciplines have been marred by several factors. First is the often unspoken assumption that human sexuality is animalistic, dirty, or debased. The Baha'i teachings specifically contradict this notion, teaching that all of the naturally-given human capacities- both physical and spiritual-----come from God and are good in themselves. Any evil connected therewith is strictly a result of our misuse of them. Human sexuality is divine and sacred, not animal and exploitative, unless we debase it through willful misuse. Moreover, Baha'u'llah specifically states that there is no moral value whatsoever in celibacy itself. Not only does the Kitab-i-Aqdas condemn asceticism and other forms of extreme self-denial, it criticizes harshly anyone who, for example, "hath secluded himself in the climes of India, denied himself the things that God hath decreed as lawful, imposed upon himself austerities and mortifications," stating that such a person "hath not been remembered by God, the Revealer of Verses."<sup>41</sup>

40. Baha'u'lhih, Gleanings, 106.

41. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 36.

A second feature that has prevented mankind from benefitting appropriately from the disciplines of chastity and fidelity has been the historic inequality between men and women. Polygamous marriage (specifically forbidden in the Kitab-i-Aqdas), the sexual double standard (in which, curiously, women are blamed for male promiscuity), and the dominance of women by men generally have prevented the marriage relationship from reaping anything like the full benefits of sexual discipline, even when it was sincerely practiced. However, the channelling of sexual expression into long-term, stable marriage relationships, in conjunction with the Baha'i practice of equality, reciprocity, and consultation between the marriage partners, will undoubtedly allow marriage relationships to achieve unprecedented levels of harmony, loyalty, intimacy, and satisfaction.

Indeed, 'Abdu' 1-Baha is reported to have said that no human can conceive of the union and harmony that God has destined for husband and wife. 42 In Baha'u'lhih's view, such a consummation is more than adequate compensation for whatever temporary frustrations must be endured in the practice of sexual discipline before marriage.

Importantly, the Kitab-i-Aqdas allows divorce:

Should resentment or antipathy arise between husband and wife, [they must] bide in patience throughout the course of one whole year, that perchance the fragrance of affection may be renewed between them. If, upon the completion of this period, their love hath not returned, it is permissible for divorce to take place. God's wisdom, verily, hath encompassed all things.<sup>43</sup>

It is often true that whatever has great potential for good when properly implemented also has great potential for evil if misused. Thus, Baha'u'llah exalts the station of marriage and its positive spiritual potential, but recognizes that there is no spiritual value- and, in fact, much potential spiritual harm- in

42. From the "Marriage Tablet" of 'Abdu'l-Baha; see, for example, *Star of the West* 11: 1 (21 March 1920), 20.

43. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 68.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

forcing a couple to maintain the formalities of a relationship that no longer exists in fact. Notice that the grounds for divorce are "resentment or antipathy," not necessarily a specific act of (sexual or other) unfaithfulness. As with other aspects of marriage, both husband and wife have an equal right to divorce,

when once the year of waiting has been accomplished. Neither party can block or refuse divorce to the other.

### The Family

We have seen that the two basic parameters of marriage—equality and fidelity—are particular instances of the two

fundamental pillars of all human relationships, justice and love.

We now want to see how these same principles operate in the context of the next most intimate category of human relationships, namely the relationships within the family.

Equality and reciprocity are the expression of justice within the marriage relationship because Baha'i marriage is conceived as a completely symmetrical relationship between two equally mature and competent adults. But other relationships within the family, and in particular the relationship between parents and children, are not symmetrical. Therefore, the expression of justice within the family involves certain subtleties and nuances, which Baha'u'llah addresses in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*.

To begin with, Baha'u'llah makes it clear that the primary purpose of spiritually healthy marriages is to bring forth spiritually healthy children. Indeed, a high quality of relationship between the marriage partners provides an appropriate milieu for the healthy growth and development of each member of the family and, in particular, for the children: "Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves."<sup>44</sup> Thus, the purpose of the family is not just the physical propagation of children but also their spiritual education. The emphasis which Baha'u'llah places on the parents' responsibilities is indicated by the following commentary of Baha'u'llah:

44. *Ibid.*, K 63.

Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily we have made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, MY loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world. 45

Elsewhere it is explained that the spiritual and moral obligation to educate children devolves equally upon both parents, but in different ways. The mother is declared to be the

"first educator" of the child, and she has the right to material support from the father in this task. Indeed, each succeeding generation of the human race is founded on the willingness of its mothers to dedicate themselves to the best interests of their children. This pivotal role of motherhood is stressed throughout the Baha'i writings. It means that society in general, and men in particular, must arrange their affairs so that mothers receive all of the necessary recognition, support, and reward for their accomplishment of this sacred task.

For example, Baha'u'llah states that sons and daughters must be educated equally (and, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha, with the same curriculum), but that whenever choices must be made in the education of children, preference is given to daughters because it is they who, upon becoming mothers, will be the first educators of the next generation. This principle shows clearly a shift of values away from the traditional view that the primary goal of education is to prepare males for economic or material success and towards the view that education must serve the primary goal of fostering the spiritual development of the entire future generation.

Thus, according to Baha'u'llah's view of the family, children have certain rights, such as the right to education, which the parents are obliged to respect. In a commentary on the Kitab-i-

45. Baha'u'lhih, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 48.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

Aqdas, Baha'u'lhih states that a parent who neglects these sacred obligations may be declared by the House of Justice to have lost his rights of parenthood: "Should a father neglect this most weighty commandment [to educate one's children] laid down in the Kitab-i-Aqdas by the Pen of the Eternal King, he shall forfeit rights of fatherhood, and be accounted guilty before God."<sup>46</sup>

Thus, children are not viewed as chattels or possessions of their parents, and parents do not have absolute authority over their children. Appropriate community agencies and authorities, under the guidance of the House of Justice, can intervene when necessary for the protection of children. According to Baha'u'llah's prescriptions, children reach the age of discretion at fifteen, after which they are held individually responsible for their actions and for the fulfillment of all adult spiritual responsibilities. Fifteen is also the age at which individuals are free to contract marriage.

A counterpart to these spiritual obligations devolving upon parents are similar obligations on children to respect the rights and station of their parents. Baha'u'llah has said:

Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon His precepts and hath not deviated from His true and fundamental Law. The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due to one's parents .... Observe how lovingkindness to one's ~arents hath been linked to recognition of the one true God! 7

The mutual respect for the rights and obligations of each member of the family provides a framework of justice which allows for true and enduring love to exist within the family. In the past, family relationships have too often been based on power rather than love. If the power of the parents is dominant, then the family falls into an authoritarian mode in which

46. Ibid., 136.

47. Ibid., 136-137.

children can become virtual slaves to their parents' purely egotistical wishes. If the power of the children is dominant, the family tends to become indulgent and degenerates into anarchy and chaos.

In Baha'u'lhih's conception of the family, none have dominance over others. Rather, the entire family and its members are subject, one and all, to the spiritual authority of Baha'i principles and laws. In particular, parents recognize and acknowledge that they also are guided by a moral law greater than their own individual will. This acknowledgement confers upon them the necessary moral authority to direct, guide, and teach their children. Thus, the parents function as instruments or vehicles for the spiritual education of their children, not as tyrants or dictators who rule over them.

Of course, this quality of education requires continual and significant sacrifice on the part of the parents. Thus, children are obliged to show forth respect and kindness for their parents as a recognition of the sacrifice their parents make for the sake of the children's education. The experience of many Baha'i families has been that children respond positively to principles to which their parents also submit, whereas the common experience of humanity is that children tend to resent the imposition of principles and rules they perceive as arbitrary dictates of their parents as individuals. Indeed, is it not the gap between deeds and words that so often leads the younger generation to view the older generation as hypocritical? Because of the great sacrifice parents make for the spiritual education of their children, and because of the seriousness of

marriage and its centrality to the human enterprise, Baha'u'llah requires that a couple, once they have freely chosen each other as future marriage partners, must seek the blessing and permission of their parents for the marriage. This requirement serves the fundamental Baha'i goal of promoting unity. It can also be seen both as a formal recognition of the contribution the parents have made to the person's spiritual development, as well as a protection against a hasty choice of marriage partner, perhaps made under a spell of infatuation. Here is Baha'u'llah's statement of this principle in paragraph 65 of the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

... marriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple's wish is known, upon the permission of their parents, lest enmity and rancor should arise amongst them. And in this We have yet other pur.&oses. Thus hath Our commandment been ordained.

Those who have some knowledge of the immense cultural diversity abroad in the world today can appreciate the fineness and wisdom with which Baha'u'lhih has established these various parameters of marriage and family relationships. One cultural extreme places the emphasis on absolute parental authority, where marriages are forced and arranged for economic or cultural reasons having little or nothing to do with the quality of spiritual relationship between the marriage partners. This has led to such terrible abuses as bride selling, bride burning, and involuntary surrogate motherhood. Thus, Baha'u'lhih makes it absolutely clear that, unless and until the marriage partners have made a personal decision that they desire to marry, the parents have no right to interfere in the process. Furthermore, the Kitabi-Aqdas strictly limits any dowry to a symbolic amount, thereby permanently removing any basis for the infernal manipulations so widespread in many parts of the world today.

At the other end of the cultural spectrum, as for example in North America, marriage is usually viewed as an absolute free choice between two individuals, without regard for the perceptions or wishes of the parents. As a consequence of this pattern, marriages are often entered into for immature and frivolous reasons, and frequently without the vital and necessary support of the families involved. Consequently, marriages may begin under conditions of intolerable stress, leading to early and acrimonious divorce, with attendant destabilisation of the family milieu and catastrophic effects on the children involved. By making marriage conditional upon parental consent, "once the

couple's wish is known," Baha'u'llah maximizes the possibility that marriages will begin under conditions of loving family

48. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 65.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

support and that young people will be protected from immature choices.

Interestingly and significantly, Baha'u'llah has not made divorce conditional on the approval of others, once the year of waiting and attempted reconciliation has been faithfully observed. Thus, on one hand, Baha'u'llah optimizes the possibility that marriages will be spiritually healthy and successful, and, on the other hand, He allows for the possibility that sincere mistakes can and will occur. Such a balanced, responsible and reasonable approach to the whole question of marriage and family shows the faith that Baha'u'llah has in the human potential for mature and responsible spirituality.

The Baha'i principles regarding marriage and family life are not the only examples where the Kitab-i-Aqdas deals with the question of cultural relativity and conflicting cultural traditions. Indeed, many of the ordinances in the Kitab-i-Aqdas represent liberalizations and abolitions of past practices. For example, in paragraphs 74-76 of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah states:

God hath decreed, in token of His mercy unto His creatures, that semen is not unclean ....

God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of "uncleanness," whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure ....

God hath enjoined upon you to observe the utmost cleanliness, to the extent of washing what is soiled with dust, let alone with hardened dirt and similar defilement.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, with one stroke of His pen, Baha'u'llah completely abolishes the whole, hoary fetish of ritual uncleanness, which has lain at the root of centuries- indeed millennia--of superstitious and obsessive social practices in many parts of the world.

He likewise stresses the importance of genuine physical cleanliness.

There are a number of other instances in the Kitab-i-Aqdas where Baha'u'llah specifically declares previous religious

49. Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 74-76.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

practices to have been based on superstition or gross misinterpretation of previous holy texts such as the Qur'an or the Bible.

## The Extended Family; the Larger Society

In a certain sense, all of the challenges of human relationships are reproduced within the milieu of each extended family. The dynamics of family relationships are subtle and constantly changing. As time passes, the parents, who were once young, vigorous, and powerful, become weak, fragile, and vulnerable; whereas the children, who were dependent, vulnerable, and untutored, become strong, virile, and accomplished. The children no longer see their parents as god-like- as representing the ultimate in human accomplishment. They began to achieve things their parents have not or could not have achieved. When the parents approach old age, there is almost a complete reversal of roles in which they become, in some ways, like dependent children to the same younger generation they have propagated. Nevertheless, as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, they have various other important roles to play, providing a needed sense of historical perspective and continuity to the family. Under stable social conditions, the experiential oral history of a family can encompass almost a hundred years, involving three or even four generations.

These same dynamics exist within the larger society, in which roles and interdependencies are constantly shifting. This raises, in a very sharp way, the question of how to maintain the cohesion, the stability and progressiveness of social systems, while giving ample scope for individual freedom and initiative. Baha'u'lhih articulates two fundamental principles that are necessary to the spiritual health of society: cooperation and service. These are the general social expression of justice and love. To the degree that society, at any level, is founded on cooperation and service, it will succeed and prosper, spiritually and materially. And, in the same way, the extent to which competition displaces cooperation and self-seeking displaces service in human motivation, society will degenerate. Here is one strong statement Baha'u'llah makes concerning the

## THE BAHAI WORLD

destructive effects of competition and self-seeking in human society:

And amongst the realms of unity is the unity of rank and station. It redoundeth to the exaltation of the Cause, glorifying it among all peoples. Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It hath become desolate. Those who have quaffed from the ocean of divine utterance and fixed their gaze upon the Realm of Glory should regard themselves as being on the same level as the others and in the same station.

Were this matter to be definitely established and conclusively demonstrated through the power and might of God, the world would become as the Abha Paradise. Indeed, man is noble, inasmuch as each one is a repository of the sign of God. Nevertheless, to regard oneself as superior in knowledge, learning or virtue, or to exalt oneself or seek preference, is a grievous transgression. Great is the blessedness of those who are adorned with the ornament of this unity and have been graciously confirmed by God. 50

Although most people would admit that competition does indeed have negative aspects, the extreme individualism and competitiveness of modern Western society are often justified as an evil that is necessary for the achievement of excellence. However, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha strongly reject this view. The pursuit of excellence proceeds by vertical comparisons between the performances of the same individual at different times; whereas competition proceeds by the horizontal comparison of the performances of different individuals at the same time. As a basic motivation, pure competition may sometimes stimulate the pursuit of excellence, but it may also generate efforts to sabotage or undermine the performance of others (by the passive refusal to collaborate, if not through more active means). The Baha'i writings stress that the underlying motivation for the pursuit of excellence should be to put our God-given talents at the service of others. When this intrinsic

50. Quoted in a letter of the Universal House of Justice, published in Baha'i Canada (June-July 1978), 3.

#### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

motivation is dominant, individuals strive to enhance their performance for greater development both of society and self, regardless of whether this leads them to outperform other individuals.

The other pillar of the spiritualization of society is service. Service involves not only a general attitude towards others, but also the discipline of daily work at a chosen profession:

O people of Baha! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation- such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. Reflect, O people, on the grace and blessings of your Lord, and yield Him thanks at eventide and dawn. Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others. 51

Other statements in the Baha'i writings make it clear that the obligation to work is a spiritual law equally binding on everyone, regardless of the degree of material necessity. Homemaking is considered a noble profession and, accordingly, an act of worship. However, this in no way precludes mothers' and homemakers' engaging in other professions outside the home.

The Baha'i view of work as worship brings us back again to the theme that the fundamental purpose of the laws and principles of the Kitab-i-Aqdas is to foster the spiritual and material development of humanity. Baha'i morality is thus not a morality of avoidance and withdrawal but a proactive dynamic of accomplishment and progression, motivated by the principles of justice and love, service and cooperation, reciprocity and loyalty.

Inheritance Laws; Ifuququ 'l/ah

The application of the general social principles of service and cooperation can take many forms in particular contexts. In most instances, Baha'u'llah has left to individual judgment, and to the

51. Baha'u'lhih, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 33.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Universal House of Justice, the task of establishing or defining the implementation of these important principles. With regard to the age-old question of the distribution of wealth,

'Abdu'l-Baha has enunciated the general principle that gross accumulation of wealth, whether by individuals or groups within society, should be avoided. He states that such overconcentration of wealth is harmful not only for society but also for the individuals involved. In the light of this principle, Baha'u'llah has instituted certain practical measures that, while allowing the necessary latitude for entrepreneurial initiative and individual freedom of economic action, nevertheless help to avoid extremes both of poverty and of excessive wealth.

One of these measures is called J:luququ'llah or "the right of God." In summary form, this measure stipulates that every believer must pay, once only, 19 percent of the value of his possessions, less various exempt items, such as one's home and its furnishings. Baha'u'llah extols the spiritual benefits of J:luququ'llah and states, "By this means He [God] hath desired to purify what ye possess and to enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed. " 52

J:luququ'llah is paid to the Universal House of Justice, and thus sums derived from it can be redistributed and redeployed to maximum social benefit. One can imagine, for example, that

favorable local conditions could create an economic boom in one area of the planet while difficult financial conditions elsewhere generate poverty. The Universal House of Justice could use the sums derived from the J:Iuququ'llah paid in the prosperous region to help alleviate economic hardship in the depressed zone. Since such patterns of economic boom and bust are often temporary and shifting, it might be that, subsequently, the operation of redistribution of wealth will take place in the opposite direction. In any case, the Universal House of Justice, as the supreme governing organ of the entire Baha'i world, will have the necessary information to assess accurately the situation

52. Baha'u'lhih, Kitab-i-Aqdas, K 97.

### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

and the necessary authority to implement the appropriate measures.

Through the payment of I:Iuququ'lhih, the believer "purifies" his savings. Baha'u'llah institutes another tax, called Zakat, through which the believer purifies his means of sustenance: "It hath been enjoined upon you to purify your means of sustenance and other such things through payment of Zakat. " 53 The term "Zakat" derives from the Qur'an and refers to an obligatory tax levied for the relief of the poor and other charitable purposes. Baha'u'llah has left to the Universal House of Justice the freedom to determine the various parameters of Zakat (e.g., exemptions, categories of income, scales of rates, frequency of payment).

I:Iuququ'llah and Zakat, together with the general mandate given the Universal House of Justice, provide the necessary measures for the "horizontal" adjustment of gross economic disparities within each generation. However, there is also the question of "vertical" inequities resulting from the gradual overconcentration of wealth over succeeding generations. Baha'u'llah addresses this issue by specifying certain principles for the distribution of inheritance in the absence of a will on the part of the deceased: "We have divided inheritance into seven categories .... " 54 With respect to the decease of a given individual, these categories are children, wife or husband, father, mother, brothers, sisters, and teachers. Baha'u'llah specifies the proportion of a given inheritance that is to be allotted to each category. However, this distribution is obligatory only in the case that the individual dies without writing a will. Moreover, Baha'u'llah has specifically enjoined each individual to make a testament establishing the manner of distribution of that person's accumulated wealth after his or her passing:

A person hath full jurisdiction over his property. If he is

able to discharge the I:Iuququ'lhih, and is free of debt, then all that is recorded in his will, and any declaration or avowal it containeth, shall be acceptable. God, verily, hath permitted

53. Ibid., K 146.

54. Ibid., K 20.

him to deal with that which He hath bestowed upon him in whatever manner he may desire. 55

Of course, it is presumed that, in writing his will, the individual will take into account the general Baha'i principle of avoiding the overconcentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. 56

#### Gender Equality and the Membership of the Universal House of Justice

As is well known, and as already mentioned above in the discussion of marriage and the family, one of the fundamental principles of the Baha'i Faith is the equality of men and women. The Baha'i writings affirm unequivocally that women have historically been dominated and subjugated by men, creating a disastrous imbalance in society. For example, both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha attribute the prevalence of war and bloodshed in human history primarily to the predominance of aggressiveness, which has tended to characterize men, over compassion and common sense, which have been more characteristic of women. If women had been allowed to achieve the same level of education as men, and contribute on an equal basis to civilization, then many historic injustices, such as slavery and child labor, would have been greatly diminished if not avoided altogether. Here is one of the many strong statements in the Baha'i writings concerning these questions:

The world in the past has been ruled by force and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the scales are already shifting, force is losing its weight, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced.<sup>57</sup> á

55. Baha'u'lhih, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, 126.

56. Ibid., 183-184.

57. *Star of the West* 9:7 (13 July 1918), 87.

CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

Not only does this passage acknowledge the imbalances of the past, it asserts that women tend to possess certain qualities to a degree superior to men. Elsewhere, 'Abdu'l-Baha stresses that women possess all intellectual and creative abilities exhibited by men and that any lack of achievement on the part of women is due only to lack of adequate access to education: "If given the same educational opportunities or course of study, [women] would develop the same capacity and abilities [as men]" and this "whether in scientific research, political ability or any other sphere of human activity." 58 Moreover, 'Abdu'l-Baha underlines the necessity for women to enter all arenas of social and public life:

So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt. 59

In the light of these and other strong statements in the Baha'i writings concerning the capacity and role of women, it is surprising, and somewhat puzzling at first, that the Kitab-i-Aqdas restricts the membership of the Universal House of Justice, but not the local and secondary Houses of Justice, to men alone. Indeed, in all other public functions and roles instituted by Baha'u'llah, women and men have equal access. The only exception at any level is membership in the Universal House of Justice. Moreover, there is no indication whatsoever, in any statement of Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha, that exclusion of women from membership on the Universal House of Justice is based on any presumed incapacity of women to serve in this way.

The perception of paradox is reinforced when we recall that, as the supreme institution of Baha'u'llah's world order, the Universal House of Justice is the chief promulgator of all Baha'i principles, including the principle of the equality of men and

58. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 281.

59. *Ibid.*, 135.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

women. Why, one may reasonably ask, has Baha'u'lhih excluded women from membership in the one institution that bears the primary responsibility for promoting the cause of the equality and rights of women?

This feature of Baha'u'lhih's system has long given rise to discussion and speculation. When questioned on this subject, 'Abdu'l-Baha only reiterated his affirmation that this restriction

had nothing to do with the capacities of women and that the reason for their exclusion from membership in the Universal House of Justice would, in time, become absolutely clear to everyone.

### Conclusions

The task of exploring the implications of so profound a work as the Kitab-i-Aqdas is ongoing and progressive. Certainly the present article cannot claim to be more than a modest, initial contribution to this enterprise. Nevertheless, the fundamental outlines of Baha'u'llah's vision of a global planetary order can already be clearly seen. The goal is a unified, universal society, founded on spiritual principles and allowing for both stability and dynamism, global order and individual initiative. This world order has two fundamental components, one personal and spiritual, the other social and structural.

The personal component is based on the direct relationship between each human soul and the God who has created us all. The Kitab-i-Aqdas instructs us in the fundamental parameters of this relationship. Baha'u'llah thereby tells us that the ultimate category of existence, Being Itself, is not an abstract principle but a loving Person who seeks intimate communion with each human being.

This vertical relationship between each individual and God is the necessary source of the love and compassion that must infuse all human relationships. But this great force of love must be properly harnessed if it is to produce a truly progressive and stable society. The Kitab-i-Aqdas therefore institutes appropriate, just social structures, at every level of society, to allow for the free and unhampered flow and diffusion of love. These structures constitute a system of rights and obligations

### CAUSALITY pRINCIPLE

within marriage, the nuclear family, the extended family, and ultimately the whole of society. They involve potent institutions which allow for the implementation, at all levels of society, of decisions taken through consultation. These structures also provide the basis of a stable but dynamic economic system which, while not imposing the umealistic and unhealthy norm of total economic egalitarianism, nevertheless eliminates the extremes of poverty and the gross accumulation of wealth.

Human history has witnessed a wide variety of social systems. Some have crushed individual freedom and initiative either through dictatorship or else an extreme collectivism that attributes little intrinsic value to the individual person. At the other extreme are highly individualistic systems in which interpersonal competition tends to permeate every aspect of society.

Such systems are certainly dynamic but tend to be volatile and unstable.

Social philosophers have often held that there is an intrinsic, logical opposition between the good of the individual and the good of society as a whole. As a consequence of this view, most social systems are seen as a compromise in which some degree of individual self-realization must be sacrificed for the sake of social order.

Baha'u'llah's vision of society challenges this received idea.

In His view, there can be no contradiction between what is truly good for the individual and what is truly good for the collectivity. Indeed,

Baha'u'llah conceives that the very purpose of

society is to create a milieu that optimizes the opportunities for the spiritual growth and development of each of its members. In the Kitab-i-Aqdas we have the balanced conception of a society that is founded on the sacred, intrinsic value of each individual human soul, independently of the role that person may play within society. At the same time, the Kitab-i-Aqdas lays the structural foundations of a stable and progressive social life that favors the maximum degree of self-realization for everyone.

Now that the publication of the full, annotated edition of the Kitab-i-Aqdas is accomplished, the eyes of the Baha'i world are turned towards the institution of the Universal House of Justice whose sacred task it is to oversee the wise, gradual but steady

implementation of the laws and principles of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, which are nothing less than the laws governing the spiritual world, the world of being. But the ultimate responsibility for the implementation of these laws and principles lies not with any institution. Rather it lies with each of us, in whose hearts and minds the intimate communion with our Creator must be diligently pursued. This is an immense responsibility, but also a unique privilege given us by God- that we can participate, to whatever degree we choose, in the building of the mighty spiritual edifice of a world united on the basis of the very law of causality God has inscribed in the innermost recesses of reality.

Ann Boyles surveys the Baha'i community's past and present efforts to understand and practice the principle of equality between men and women .

TOWARDS  
THE GOAL

OF FULL  
PARTNERSHIP:

One Hundred and Fifty Years of the  
Advancement of Women

Between 4 and 15 September 1995, some twenty thousand participants from all parts of the world will converge in Beijing for the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women. They will focus on a number of critical areas of concern: the sharing of power and decision-making; mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; awareness of and commitment to women's rights; poverty; women's access to and participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and the productive process; access to education, health, and employment; violence against women; and the effects on women of continuing national and international armed or other kinds of conflict. The Baha'i community will be represented by an official delegation at the conference itself, while a large representation of Baha'is from all regions of the world will participate in the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum on Women, which is open to everyone and will be held immediately preceding and overlapping the first four days of the conference.

Members of the Baha'i delegation to the Asian and Pacific NGO Symposium on Women in Development, Manila, the Philippines, 16-20 November 1993, held in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Baha'is have participated in the previous three world conferences on women in 1975, 1980, and 1985, and, indeed, the community's delegations are uniquely well-equipped to consult on issues pertaining to the advancement of women. The Baha'i world community has a distinctive approach to the subject, clearly delineated in its sacred writings; it has a century and a half of practical experience in promoting equality of the sexes; and it has a willingness to share its teachings and experience with others struggling to overcome inequality around the world.

Principles Distinctive to the Baha'i Approach to Equality  
Perhaps the most distinctive element of the Baha'i approach to the issue of equality is the conviction that change must be a unifying force, leading towards full partnership of men and women- and beyond this toward the unity of the human family. Baha'i activities focusing on the advancement of women take their direction from passages such as the following: "The world of humanity has two wings-one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly." 1

Baha'is see the need to involve men in recognizing and promoting the issue of equality. What benefits will accrue

1. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu '1-Bahil (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1978), 302; cited in Women: A Compilation, in The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 2 (Australia: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), 362.

## FULL pARTNERSHIP

either to men or to women if only women see the need for equality in their lives? How can the sexes advance harmoniously and unitedly unless both become aware of this essential

principle? For example, in many development projects focusing solely on women the results are not enduring for a number of reasons: women, by themselves, cannot effectively make cultural changes; the attitudes of women (and men) have not been fundamentally altered even where the projects themselves have been successful; women's concerns and women's projects are seen to be unimportant to the society as a whole; or projects have tended to put women in the roles of "consumers" rather than training them to continue effecting change in their communities once the project ends. Often, gender-focused activities for women only have resulted in conflict between men and women and have therefore been seen as detrimental to community life rather than beneficial, since they may polarize the sexes rather than improve relationships between them. Conscious of this, the Baha'i community has increasingly sought to involve both women and men in discussion and activities pertaining to the equality issue.

Obviously the process of change is one that spans years and perhaps generations before effects are readily noticeable, but the Baha'i community knows it is essential to lay the foundation now for future progress- for the flight of the bird of humanity.

If the first distinctive element of the Baha'i approach to the advancement of women is the insistence that the process be a unifying force, it is no surprise that the second is its emphasis on equilibrium and harmony, as evidenced by this recorded utterance of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

The world in the past has been ruled by force, and man has dominated over woman by reason of his more forceful and aggressive qualities both of body and mind. But the balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or,

to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced. 2

Such pronouncements are far from being utopian visions or expressions of pious hope. Laws and ordinances, woven into the fabric of the Baha'i social order, facilitate the integration of women into all aspects of social life, and the Baha'i administrative system promotes practical steps leading to a society where equality will be the norm. For example, while universal education is desirable, if the parents do not have the funds to send all their children to school, they must be guided by the Baha'i teaching that the education of girls takes precedence over the education of boys, because the mother is the first educator of the child and society will not progress as long as mothers remain in a state of ignorance. Within the school system, "daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes." 3 It is obvious that realizing this goal, of unity rather than hegemony in male-female relations, will radically alter the social life of the human family.

The vision of a future society in which women and men enter into a full and equal partnership is, then, set unequivocally before the Baha'i community. While employing the means to achieve the goal demands perseverance, audacity, imagination, and development of consultative skills, the ultimate objective remains clear. And this view of change leading to unity appears to be catching on in circles far wider than the Baha'i community itself, judging from recent statements made at the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York in March 1994. The planning committee for the NGO Forum '95 described the upcoming event in Beijing as a place "to bring together women and men to challenge, create and transform global structures and processes at all levels through the empowerment and celebration of women."4

2. 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in John Esslemont, *Baha'u'llih and the New Era*, 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), 149.

3. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), 175.

4. Cited in *One Country: Newsletter of the Baha'i International Community* 6.1 (April-June 1994), 9.

## FULL PARTNERSHIP

### Principle of Equality: an Historical Overview

The power of the Baha'i teachings to reshape radically the attitudes and lives of the approximately five million men and women around the world who call themselves Baha'is is firmly

and uniquely rooted in what they consider to be divine revelation: the Baha'i Faith is the only major religion in recorded history whose Founder has unequivocally stated the principle of the equality of women and men. Over one hundred years ago, Baha'u'llah wrote: "In this Day the Hand of divine grace hath removed all distinctions. The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane." 5 The revolutionary and revolutionizing power of this statement may be lost on many readers in the late twentieth century, but set in the context of nineteenth century Persia, where women were treated as chattel or as mere reproductive vessels, were held virtually as domestic prisoners, and were not deemed worthy of any formal education that would equip them for any role in greater society--or, indeed, that would adequately prepare them to be educators of their own children- this fundamental spiritual principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah presented an electrifying challenge to all who heard it.

One small incident suffices to illustrate the difficulty posed to Persian society by the idea of equality. The veil was held to be the symbol of a woman's purity; according to the dictates of Persian Islamic society, a man simply did not look at the face of a respectable woman who was not a family member. Thus, when one of the heroines of the Babi Faith<sup>6</sup> appeared unveiled in a gathering of fellow believers, the men were greatly distressed, one so much that he ran off and slit his throat. In Persian society at large, reactions were even more extreme, violent, and abusive. But such limited human responses could not thwart divine

5. Baha'u'lhih, extract from a previously untranslated tablet; cited in *Women*, 358.

6. The Babi Faith, proclaimed in Persia in 1844 by Siyyid 'Ali Mul).ammad, entitled "The Bab" or "The Gate," was the revelation immediately preceding the Baha'i dispensation and was intimately linked to it. The Bab Himself stated that He had come to prepare the way for "Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest," the Promised One of all the religions who would bring unity to the entire world- Baha'u'llah.

revelation: Baha'u'lhlh proclaimed women to be equal, and so humanity began its slow and often painful journey towards the realization of this ideal.

To foster a deeper understanding of the principle both within the Baha'i community and in the general public, Baha'u'llah's son 'Abdu'l-Baha, authorized interpreter of His Father's writings and appointed by Him as Center of His Covenant and the one to whom all Baha'is should turn as the source of authority, expounded this theme of equality. In a tablet to an individual woman He wrote,

Know thou, O handmaid, that in the sight of Baha, women are accounted the same as men, and God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them. 7

:Abdu'l-Baha also elaborated upon this theme in many public talks He gave in Europe and America, where He travelled from 1911 to 1913 after His release from imprisonment in Palestine. Speaking in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, He said,

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

'Abdu'l-Baha made a crucial distinction in these elucidations of His Father's teachings. In asserting that women will be the "counterparts" of men in ability and capacity when they are offered equal opportunities for education, He did not assert that

7. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha, 79-80; cited in Women, 362.

8. 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 182; cited in Women, 365-366.

#### FULL PARTNERSHIP

women are or will be identical to men. Thus, Baha'is understand that equality does not mean identity of function; rather complementarity is its hallmark, according to the Baha'i teachings.

During the period 1921-1957, Shoghi Effendi, who was chosen by 'Abdu'l-Baha to be His appointed successor as interpreter of Baha'i scripture and named Guardian of the Baha'i

Faith in His Will and Testament, encouraged Baha'i communities to grow further into the notion of equality of the sexes,

particularly in their service to Baha'i administrative institutions.

In a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India and Burma, written in 1923, he urged the women of those countries to

endeavour to the best of their ability to acquire a better and more profound knowledge of the Cause, to take a more active and systematic part in the general affairs of the Movement, and prove themselves in every way enlightened, responsible and efficient co-workers to their fellow-men in their common

task for the advancement of the Cause throughout their country. 9

During the period of his leadership, he actively encouraged women as well as men to arise and assist in efforts to establish the Baha'i Faith widely throughout the globe by resettling in foreign countries.

Since its establishment in 1963, the supreme governing body of the Baha'i world community, the Universal House of Justice, has further educated the Baha'i community on the principle of equality, writing of the "mutual and complementary duties" of men and women within the context of the family as well as the "much wider sphere of relationships between men and women" that should be considered "in the context of Baha'i society, not in that of past or present social norms." 10 The Baha'i writings

9. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 December 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma; cited in *Women*, 402.

10. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 28 December 1980, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand; cited in *Family Life*, in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. 1, 414-415.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

clearly give the mother the role of her children's first educator, but the Universal House of Justice also points out:

... this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated:

In the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, women are advancing side by side with the men. There is no area or instance where they will lag behind: they have equal rights with men, and will enter, in the future, into all branches of the administration of society. Such will be their elevation that, in every area of endeavour, they will occupy the highest levels in the human world.

and again:

So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease ... 11

There are no universal, compulsory rules governing how women balance their responsibilities both as mothers and as active members of society outside the home. The Universal House of Justice has stated that this decision must be made by

the individual, saying: "It is for every woman, if and when she becomes a mother, to determine how best she can discharge on the one hand her chief responsibility as a mother and on the other, to the extent possible, to participate in other aspects of the activities of the society of which she forms a part .... " 12 Thus, for the first time in religious history, women have been

11. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 28 December 1980, to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand; cited in *Women*, 392-393. The first cited passage is a revised translation of part of a talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha from *Paris Talks*, 11th ed. (London:

Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1972), 182; the second is from 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 135.

12. From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 22 April 1981 to an individual believer; cited in *Women*, 393.

### FULL PARTNERSHIP

recognized and are treated as mature, responsible human beings, capable of arranging their lives individually to meet the demands placed upon them.

To assist women and men to understand their evolving roles within the family and in the world at large, the Universal House of Justice has, over the past number of years, released compilations of Baha'i writings which group together passages on various subjects. The publication in January 1986 of a compilation of extracts dedicated solely to the subject of women, taken from the writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, constitutes a direct invitation to Baha'is around the world to deepen their knowledge on this subject, to discuss what they learn with others, and to apply it in their daily lives.

It is an indication of humanity's spiritual development that we are capable of recognizing equality as a complex and profound spiritual principle with ramifications in all areas of life, and undoubtedly society will continue to evolve to accommodate such a shift in consciousness. Consider, for example, the effects that heeding the following passage of Baha'u'llah will have on humanity:

Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God ....

The friends of God must be adorned with the ornament of justice, equity, kindness and love. As they do not allow themselves to be the object of cruelty and transgression, in like manner they should not allow such tyranny to visit the handmaidens of God. 13

From the level of the family, the realm of domestic violence, to that of society, where, for example, sexual harassment, pornography, and forced prostitution plague women in all corners of the world, the effects of acting upon this directive will be dramatic and far-reaching.

13. Baha'u'l-hih, from a previously untranslated tablet; cited in *Women*, 379.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### Women as Peacemakers

Even more dramatic, far-reaching, and profound ramifications of equality are evident when one considers the role of women in establishing world peace. As mothers, 'Abdu'l-Baha has said, women will reach a stage when they are no longer willing to send their sons to war:

In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind .... 14

Furthermore, as participants in "the great arena of laws and politics" women will have effective means to enact laws to ensure they will not be forced to send their children to wage war. But the importance of the emancipation of women goes far beyond the laying down of arms, as the Universal House of Justice points out in a message written to the peoples of the world on the occasion of the United Nations International Year of Peace, saying: "Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge." 15 The abandonment of weapons is certainly necessary and important in the achievement of peace, but without the proper "moral and psychological climate" such an action is ultimately fruitless.

### Outstanding Women

The Baha'i writings offer a dynamic vision of the potentialities of women and the changes they can effect in the world, and the

14. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 108.

15. *The Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1985), 12.

## FULL pARTNERSHIP

history of the Baha'i Faith offers many examples of outstanding women who serve as models or paradigms of this "new womanhood." Two women in particular stand out, one associated with qualities of strength and audacity and the other with tenderness and servitude. The first is Tahirih, the Persian poet and fearless defender of the Babi Faith, for which she eventually suffered a martyr's death, and the second is Bahiyyih K.hanum, the daughter of Baha'u'llah who served her Father selflessly throughout His life, forgoing marriage and the establishment of a family of her own in order to care for Him.

Tahirih was an exceptional woman for her time and place, breaking the bonds that normally enslaved women in nineteenth century Persia. She attained a level of education unusual for women; she composed poems still widely regarded as masterpieces of literature; as one of the original nineteen followers of the Bah, she became a leader of the Babi community and taught her faith fearlessly; she had the temerity to refuse a proposal of the Shah, who was greatly attracted by her beauty, that she become one of his wives; she is reported to have said, shortly before her death, "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women." 16

In addressing her, the Bah wrote: "O Qurratu'l-'Ayn! I recognize in Thee none other except the 'Great Announcement- the Announcement voiced by the Concourse on high.

By this name, I bear witness, they that circle the Throne of Glory have ever known Thee." 17 What is the nature of this "Announcement" personified, according to the Bah, by Tahirih? The answer seems to lie in Shoghi Effendi's reference to her as "the first woman suffrage martyr." 18 Intrepid and outspoken, she did not allow the social dictates of her society to hold her back from reaching her potential. Yet she paid a terrible price for her courageous acts; she was imprisoned for some time by her

16. Cited by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, 3rd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), 75.

17. *The Bab, Selections from the Writings of the Bah* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1976), 72. Qurratu'l-'Ayn means "solace of the eyes" and is a title given Tahirih by her teacher.

18. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 75.

husband, and when she escaped she was forced to leave her children behind, never to see them again. Brief years later, she was again imprisoned, this time by government officials who were disturbed by her success in winning converts to the Faith of the Bah, which they saw as heretical to Islam and a threat to the stability of Persian government and society. A group of soldiers

was sent to end her life by strangulation, and her body was thrown down a well. Yet her final words proved prophetic; they express a certainty about the future- a vision evoking both hope and strength.

Tahirih, "the Great Announcement," ranks as the foremost woman of the Babi revelation, and in the Baha'i dispensation another female figure has been accorded a similar distinction. Bahiyyih K. Hanum, the saintly daughter of Baha'u'llah who was given the title "the Greatest Holy Leaf," was addressed by her Father in the following words: "Verily, We have elevated thee to the rank of one of the most distinguished among thy sex, and granted thee, in My court, a station such as none other woman hath surpassed." 19 Shoghi Effendi, her great-nephew, extolled her as "the outstanding heroine of the Baha'i Dispensation." 20 The qualities of her character that led to this distinction are summed up in the following passage, also written by him:

Whether in the management of the affairs of His Household in which she excelled, or in the social relationships which she so assiduously cultivated in order to shield both Baha'u'l-Hih and 'Abdu'l-Baha, whether in the unfailing attention she paid to the everyday needs of her Father, or in the traits of generosity, of affability and kindness, which she manifested, the Greatest Holy Leaf had by that time abundantly demonstrated her worthiness to rank as one of the noblest figures intimately associated with the life-long work of Baha'u'llah. 21

19. Bahiyyih Khlum: The Greatest Holy Leaf, A Compilation (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), 3.

20. Ibid., 62.

21. Ibid., 34-35.

-----~ -- á ~

## FULL PARTNERSHIP

Shoghi Effendi remarked upon her serenity in the face of the terrible deprivations and degradations of exile and imprisonment, through which she accompanied her Father from the time she was six years old. He pointed to her care for all the members of the holy family and of the pilgrims who came from both East and West. Her physical frailty belied her spiritual strength, which was fully demonstrated at the time of

Bahiyih Khlum,  
daughter of Bahci 'u 'llah

'Abdu'l-Baha.'s passing: Shoghi Effendi, then a young student at Oxford University, was first devastated by the news of his Grandfather's death and was subsequently overwhelmed at the prospect of assuming the leadership of the Baha'i world community, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament. While the young Guardian secluded himself and prepared to take up the burden and responsibility that had been bequeathed to him, his elderly aunt, at that time over seventy years of age, took the reins of the Baha'i community in her hands and directed its affairs until his return. Years later, in an eloquent tribute written at the time of her death, Shoghi Effendi described her as his "chief sustainer," his "most affectionate comforter," "the joy and inspiration of [his] life."<sup>22</sup>

In Bahiyyih K.hanum's own writings, letters written to Baha'is all over the world, her strength of character and of expression is evident. The treacherous actions of some members of her own family taught her all too well the difficulties posed by disloyalty and disunity; thus the following passage, written just after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha at a time of crisis in the Baha'i world, takes on great significance:

All the virtues of humankind are summed up in the one word 'steadfastness', if we but act according to its laws. It

22. Ibid., 31.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

draws to us by a magnet the blessings and bestowals of Heaven, if we but rise up according to the obligations it implies. <sup>23</sup>

Similarly, her writings on service show the focus of her life:

In this Day nothing is so important as service. Did not 'Abdu'l-Baha voluntarily call Himself the 'Servant' of Baha, manifesting also in His life the perfections of servitude to God and man?

We, wishing to follow the commands left by Baha'u'llah, spread and lived by 'Abdu'l-Baha, we can take no greater step toward the Heavenly Kingdom- can give no greater joy to the present beloved Guardian of the Cause Shoghi Effendi- than that of loving service to all mankind. <sup>24</sup>

The examples of Tahiri and Bahiyyih Khanum show vividly how both strength and audacity as well as "the spiritual qualities of love and service" are part of the paradigm of Baha'i womanhood. <sup>25</sup> Since their time, numerous Baha'i women from many different cultural backgrounds have arisen to demonstrate through their actions how these qualities can be combined. One

such woman who served the cause of international peace was Laura Dreyfus-Barney, an American who became a member of the first Baha'i community in Europe around 1900. A leader in promoting the advancement of women in the early years of this century, she focused her attention on mobilizing women for peace and represented the International Council of Women (ICW) in the League of Nations when it was established following World War I. In 1937 she was elected president of ICW's Peace and Arbitration Commission, and following World War II she played an important role in the development of the relationship between the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations. These are only a few highlights of Mme Dreyfus-Earney's many humanitarian activities, undertaken over the

23. Bahiyyih Kh.imum: The Greatest Holy Leaf, A Compilation, 148.

24. Ibid., 224.

25. 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in Baha 'u 'llah and the New Era, 149; Women, 369.

#### FULL pARTNERSHIP

entire span of her adult life and motivated by her deep love for humankind and her vision of the earth as one home for all peoples.

While women are called upon to enter the great arena of laws and politics, they should not sacrifice their qualities of love and service in order to advance. By their actions, and by the actions of a society which supports them, they must change the world so that man no longer dominates and "the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced."<sup>26</sup> When that balance is attained—when feminine qualities are valued and respected, when women's traditional activities such as mothering are seen as a valuable, meritorious contribution to society, when women speak confidently and are accorded respect for their contributions in public life, and when society changes to recognize women's diverse roles and capacities—then peace will be a real possibility in the world. That is the goal towards which Baha'i women and men look with eager anticipation; that is the reason for the long history of Baha'i efforts to advance the cause of women; that is the lesson learned from the examples of Tahirih and Bahiyyih K.hanum, as well as Laura Dreyfus-Barney.

#### Baha'i Efforts to Advance the Cause of Women

As we have seen, the impetus for Baha'i efforts to advance the cause of women comes directly from the spiritual teachings of the Faith's Founder, and thence from the succession of leadership, first appointed and later elected, throughout the Faith's 150-year history. The Baha'i community's commitment

to the issue is well-grounded in divine scripture, and history provides examples of women who embody the ideals outlined in the Faith's sacred writings, but, one may well ask, how has the Baha'i commitment been translated into action on a wider scale, and have activities been carried out in all parts of the world?

In arriving at a clear, broad understanding of the term "advancement of women," it is necessary to consider the many ways this term can be understood in different parts of the world.

26. Ibid.

For example, what does the advancement of women mean in societies where women must still haul water or firewood long distances each day for their households, as they must in rural communities of Cameroon or Bolivia, compared to societies where women executives must deal with the "glass ceiling" that bars promotion to top positions, as seen predominantly in the more "developed" countries? Although these two manifestations of inequality are undeniably different in degree of oppression, with the former condemning women to a life of virtual slavery, the net result in both cases is the same: women are denied the opportunity to "progress" and become "proficient" outside traditionally accepted spheres of activity. Similarly, the effects on men, on families, and ultimately on society, are the same. As the Universal House of Justice pointed out in its message on peace:

The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. 27

Thus, although promotion of the advancement of women may manifest itself at many different levels, serve many different needs, and involve many different activities, the end goal is the same. Through a diversity of approaches, commensurate with the requirements of the societies in which they operate, the Baha'is seek one ultimate goal: the unity of humanity, of which the equality of women is an integral part. As 'Abdu'l-Baha stated: "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs." 28

To hasten the achievement of this "greatness," since the time of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the Baha'i community

27. The Promise of World Peace, 11-12.

28. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 133; Women, 366.

## FULL pARTNERSHIP

around the world has striven to put these teachings and principles into action. As one might expect in the context of an evolving community, its efforts to promote the advancement of women have likewise evolved. Through the years, one can see an increase in the number of activities as well as an increasing diversity in approaches. Some of these projects include efforts to improve the basic literacy of women through establishment of schools, whether simple tutorial schools or more formal educational institutions; training in income-generating skills; education about health care and hygiene; skill-building in community development; conferences on women's issues; environmental involvement; administrative training; publications for and by women; and international collaboration between women in the Baha'i community. A brief survey of some of these efforts follows.

### Literacy Training and the Education of Women

Perhaps the first concrete expression of the Baha'i community's commitment to the advancement of women was the establishment of a number of girls' schools in Persia (now Iran) at the turn of the century. Writing to one group which had asked for advice concerning the establishment of schools for children of both sexes in their community, 'Abdu'l-Baha said:

The school for girls taketh precedence over the school for boys, for it is incumbent upon the girls of this glorious era to be fully versed in the various branches of knowledge, in sciences and the arts and all the wonders of this pre-eminent time, that they may then educate their children and train them from their earliest days in the ways of perfection. If, as she ought, the mother possesseth the learning and accomplishments of humankind, her children, like unto angels, will be fostered in all excellence, in right conduct and beauty. Therefore the School for Girls that hath been established in that place must be made the object of the deep concern and high endeavours of the friends. 9

29. 'Abdu'l-Baha, cited in A Compilation on Baha'i Education, in The Compilation of Compilations, vol. 1, 284.

The pre-eminent girls' school established in Persia at this time was the Tarbiyat School in Tehran. Funded through the cooperation of members of the Persian and American Baha'i communities, the Tarbiyat Girls' School began operating in 1911. The involvement of American Baha'is in the endeavor meant that the methods used and subjects taught were

considered progressive-even radical-by traditional Persian standards. Girls at Tarbiyat had recess and gymnastics more than fifteen years before government schools allowed physical education for girls, as Holly Hanson Vick points out in her article about early Baha'i social and economic development projects in Iran.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, in the Tarbiyat School girls were allowed to dance, sing, and pray aloud, and 'Abdu'l-Baha repeatedly stressed in tablets to the school's organizers that there should be no difference between the curriculum offered to boys and that offered to girls. To support the mothers of the children in the school, monthly conferences were held for women, where different topics designed to interest and inform them were covered in plays, talks, and demonstrations. Between three and four hundred women attended these events.<sup>31</sup> The result of all this activity was a remarkable degree of progress among the Persian Baha'i women. As Hanson Vick points out, the girls' schools established throughout Persia in these very early years of the development of the Baha'i community trained "the first generation of professional women in Iranian society, and the example set by Baha'i women had an impact on the whole society."<sup>32</sup> These early Baha'i efforts also had a dramatic effect on the literacy rate among Persian Baha'i women. Hanson Vick states, "In 1973 it was announced that the Baha'is had achieved a literacy rate of 100 percent among women under the age of 40, despite the national literacy rate of 15 percent."<sup>33</sup>

30. Holly Hanson Vick, "Shining Example in Cradle of Faith," *US. Baha'i News* 675 (June 1987), 9.

31. Genevieve L. Coy, "Educating the Women of Persia," *Star of the West* 17:2 (May 1926), 50-55; cited in Hanson Vick, 9-10.

32. Hanson Vick, 10.

33. Hanson Vick, 10. See also "A Current Survey of Baha'i Activities," *The Baha'i World*, vol. 15 (1969-1973) (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1976), 248.

## FULL PARTNERSHIP

From their early beginnings in Persia, Baha'i projects designed to foster the development of women have set a high standard that the community has striven to surpass as it gains experience and expertise. And indeed, there has been consistent progress, both quantitative and qualitative, in the efforts it has undertaken on behalf of women.

Since those first efforts, numerous Baha'i schools have begun to operate around the world. Most of them are co-educational, but the particular need to educate girls, as outlined in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, has not been neglected. A case in point is the recent establishment of a girls' school in Africa. In

January 1993, seeing a need for educational opportunities among the young women of Zambia, Baha'is opened the Banani International Secondary School for Girls. Only 20 percent of girls in Zambia receive basic education, and to correct this situation the Banani School, built entirely by the Baha'i community, accepts only girls. Currently consisting of six classrooms, a 120-bed dormitory, and a dining hall, the school concentrates on providing practical training in science and agriculture. Upon graduation, students receive the International General Certificate of Secondary Education. 34

The Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women in Indore is another educational facility addressing the particular needs of a population-this time the women of rural India. The institute offers programs relating to literacy, health care, hygiene, and income-generating skills, with the overall focus of improving the education and status of women, the poorest members of society; in rural India. Inaugurated on 24 February 1983, its development was swift; within two years it had developed resources and programs and was functioning regularly, offering one three-week course per month. Originally funded entirely by Baha'is, the institute's success has prompted the Indian government, the Canadian High Commission, and numerous individuals to offer their assistance with grants and

34. See *The Baha'i World 1992-93: An International Record* (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1993), 141.

donations of various materials. The institute has also begun to reach out to the wider community: in June 1986, for example, the Government of India's Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology asked the institute to conduct a workshop on socio-economic development of tribal women and appropriate technology. Such requests are becoming more frequent as the fame and prestige of the institute grows throughout the region.

In a society where females are generally considered valuable only for reproduction and manual work, where there is a 90 percent illiteracy rate among women, and where the mortality rate for females is very high due to the neglect of girl babies and grown women, there is a great need to change established attitudes. The institute's explicit goal is to improve the lives of rural Indian women by training them in crafts, literacy, health, and hygiene. In keeping with Baha'i principles, the program integrates the spiritual and the practical, with the object not only of making an immediate material difference in the women's lives but also of changing attitudes about women among participants and their families. The spiritual component of education is seen as central to the

process, for only through a transformation of heart and mind can meaningful change take place.

The program, accommodating up to thirty women for each residential course, fosters independence and raises consciousness about the current and historical role of women in

Indian society. Programs focus on Baha'i principles, encouraging participants, whether Baha'is or not, to develop their spiritual identities and encourage similar development in their children once they return home.

Through the years, the institute has evolved and become more diversified, with sub-centres opening in nearby villages. In each of these locations fifteen women who have already gone through the program at Indore receive a further six months of training in literacy and weaving. Their training is paid for by the government during the program, following which the government also provides, at 75 percent subsidy, handlooms for the women to use in their homes. The institute has received

#### FULL PARTNERSHIP

large orders for clothing produced by its students and graduates, and the government has agreed to supply worksheds for the women's training.

The institute is becoming well-known as a center for the concrete application of Baha'i principles in service to humanity. A telling example of the changes in attitudes it has effected involves women from two untouchable tribes that normally never eat together, intermarry, or even meet. Members from both tribes were chosen to participate in the institute and thus were expected to live and work together during their stay at Indore. Initially prejudiced against each other through years of social conditioning, at the institute they overcame the taboos of the caste system to live and work together once they understood the Baha'i principle of the oneness of humanity.

Numerous other educational programs operate for women around the world, including literacy classes in locations as diverse as Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, India, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Zaire, and Zambia. In France, the Baha'i community has sponsored literacy classes for Turkish-speaking women, in cooperation with non-government agencies, and the United States has also offered literacy classes for new immigrants. In many cases, Baha'is do not view the acquiring of literacy skills as an end in itself. The Guaymi Cultural Center in Panama, for example, has placed the advancement of women at the forefront of its activities and has redesigned literacy materials around this and similarly progressive moral principles, rather than focusing solely on topics such as food production and land ownership. The idea behind this approach is that such

elements of moral education, which form the foundation for cooperation among individuals and unity in the community, will ultimately have a far more lasting effect on the quality of life in participants' communities than the simple acquisition of skills. Often literacy classes are combined with skills training, as in the Gabon project, where women are also taught sewing, cooking, and child care. Sometimes focus rests more on the acquisition of income-generating skills; some Indian projects teach participants to sew and to make a variety of crafts, and also promote topics such as appropriate technology and sustainable agriculture. Such skill-intensive training can result in unexpected benefits; for example, a sewing, home crafts, and food-making project in Papua New Guinea has blossomed into a catering project that has garnered much praise from government officials. "Skills training" may also deal with the basic concepts of preparing young women for adult life, and so in several countries, the Baha'i community is sponsoring development courses specifically for teenage girls. Projects can also aim at empowering women through validating the skills they already possess: in Finland a project has been organized to encourage local Same women to appreciate and preserve the handicrafts of their culture.

#### Health Care

In addition to promoting the advancement of women through basic education and skills training, the Baha'i community has been active from the early years of the twentieth century in the field of health care, when the pioneering efforts of a number of American Baha'i women who settled in Tehran resulted in a primary health care project and the holding of classes for mothers. Although they were unable to establish the nursing school they had envisioned, their years of selfless service to the community in Iran provided the Baha'is in that country with a potent example of the capacity of women. 35

Health care has been a central component of many different undertakings throughout the Baha'i world ever since that time.

In India, students at the Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women at Indore are taught how to establish and maintain a simple kitchen garden to improve their families' nutrition. They are also educated about hygiene and trained to generate awareness in their communities concerning personal and home hygiene, sanitation, child care, immunization, nutrition, and first aid. As a result of its services to women, and in particular its contribution to the eradication of guinea worm caused by contaminated water in 302 villages in central India, the institute was given a "Global 500 Award" in 1992 by the United Nations Environment Program for outstanding environmental

achievement.

35. See Hanson Vick, 11.

## FULL pARTNERSHIP

In Africa, the Baha'i women have also addressed the issue of nutrition. In Imo State, Nigeria, women have introduced a social and economic development project promoting the use of soya bean products to provide much-needed proteins for families who cannot afford to include animal milk, eggs, or meat in their daily diet. An institute to teach the method of making soya milk was organized in November 1990 for men and women in the area and was attended by over one hundred people.

Primary health education training programs in countries such as Zambia have also met with success.

The national Baha'i Women's Committee in Malaysia has launched a five-year program to assist women, especially those in squatter camps and rural areas, to become more self-reliant and to develop more of their potential. Here again, an important feature in the program is two health projects, resulting in improved cleanliness and personal hygiene of the communities involved. In the more remote and conservative villages, project facilitators have found that once the women overcome their initial reticence they begin to question the validity of many local myths, fallacies, and superstitions concerning health in light of what they have learned in the project.

Environmental issues bear no small relation to those of health, and in Uganda, the Baha'i women in the Mbale district have become involved in the Ugandan tree planting movement and have subsequently been given a plot of five hectares in the Namanve forest to grow trees. Commended for their activities by the Regional Forest Officer, they are showing their commitment to environmental preservation, not only for themselves but for their children and generations to come.

### "Traditional Media as Change Agent" Project

In keeping with both the broad base of Baha'i efforts to advance the status of women and the evolutionary nature of activities undertaken throughout the past years, in October 1991 the Baha'i community embarked upon an imaginative and ambitious development project on three far-flung sites: Cameroon, Bolivia, and Malaysia. Entitled "Traditional Media as Change Agent" and funded through the Baha'i International Community by the United Nations Development Fund for

Women (UNIFEM), the project has sought to use traditional media of song, dance, and drama to promote social and economic well-being by uplifting the status of women.

Many development projects focus on implementing new

technology or teaching project-specific skills to a particular population, but the Baha'i-UNIFEM endeavor adopts a different approach, emphasizing communication itself. Since messages presented through traditional media are taken very seriously in the target communities, project originators felt that such effective channels could be used to generate discussion about the roles of women and men.

The underlying assumption of the project is that change in the status of women will not occur until attitudes change, and attitudes change only when hearts are transformed. Such an approach recognizes the importance of the spiritual dimension to the partnership between men and women, raising the issue to a level of principle far beyond that of many gender-based discussions.

To promote an atmosphere of trust, where meaningful, constructive dialogue between the sexes can occur without alienating confrontations, the project trains people in the art of "consultation," the non-adversarial, non-threatening method of discussion and decision-making used in Baha'i communities around the world. Following from this, the basic method of the project is simple, often using the membership of already existing, functioning Baha'i administrative bodies, called Local

Participants in the  
"Traditional Media  
as Change Agent"  
project in Cameroon  
list the tasks men and  
women perform in  
their village.

#### FULL pARTNERSHIP

Spiritual Assemblies, as core groups of volunteers trained to facilitate consultation, conduct participatory surveys, and lead focus groups, with the object of identifying community needs, assessing them, keeping records, and organizing further activities.

The consultative process, a fundamental Baha'i approach to problem-solving, forms the basis for fostering community change in a positive atmosphere. In one exercise designed to help project participants analyze gender roles in their village, men and women are asked to list daily tasks; invariably, men's lists are scarcely half as long as women's. From here, the group makes use of Baha'i consultation with the understanding that the moral principle of equality is to be the basis for discussion; this enables the group to undertake an informed and enlightened grassroots-level analysis of the situation, draw its own

conclusions from its own findings, and translate those conclusions into non-threatening, locally appropriate media presentations, which are then presented to the larger community at gatherings. And what conclusions have been drawn in the different locations? Not surprisingly, in all three project sites, consultation and analysis have revealed a commonality of concerns: women's illiteracy, men's mismanagement of family money, and the unfair burden of work on women. Participants, feeling a sense of "ownership" of the issues because they have been involved in the process of identification and examination, have responded positively to the challenge of raising the status of women.

In Eastern Province, Cameroon, for example, where the project has operated in seven villages, the results by the end of the first two-year phase were heartening: men were joining the women to work in the fields, consulting more about family finances, and allowing women to take a greater part in community decision-making. A 1992 survey indicated that men were making all financial decisions alone, while a 1993 survey showed that more than 80 percent of such decisions were being made after consultation between husbands and wives. The survey also indicated that the number of girls being sent to school in one of the villages increased by 82 percent since

the start of the project. Project participants themselves testify to the effect their experience has had on them. One female farmer and mother of six put it this way:

At the beginning, the project did not mean anything to me. Later on I discovered the advantages of the project. Now I see that my husband, who was not helping me before the project, has now changed. We work together at home and in the field. My husband helps me more now with the housework that before he thought was the sole duty of woman. He carries the baby, cleans the dishes and clothes. I also learned the importance of children's education and that it is first my responsibility and now I try to take better care of them. I got those ideas through songs because through the songs I listened carefully to what was being said. 36

A male participant also testified to the change occurring in his community as a result of the UNIFEM project:

Here in the village men and women were not used to working together but through the project I was surprised to see that they are working hand in hand. I personally have witnessed a change in my way of life. Concerning the equality of man and woman I see also that there is a change in the attitude of men. Now they consult with their wives.

And I do the same. Before the project it was very difficult to know what women do with their money, but now my wife consults with me. I also work with my wife in the same farm, and I help with cleaning the house, for example; things I have never done before. 37

Similarly, in the eight participating villages of the southern central province of Chuquisaca, Bolivia, women say they are now participating more in community decision-making, are more willing to express desire for education, and are receiving more help from men with daily chores. The first woman ever elected to the local political council was recently voted into office, and shortly after her election the council passed a

36. Cited in *One Country* 5:3 (October-December 1993), 9.

37. *Ibid.*

### FULL pARTNERSHIP

resolution urging greater attention to the concerns of women. Finally, in Malaysia, where the project has included two villages and an urban area, reports indicate that in one of the remote villages community decision-making has resulted in a new vegetable garden, new latrines, and adult literacy classes designed for women but open to men.

While the projects have been organized by Baha'i communities, the Baha'i population ranges from less than 1 percent to about 10 percent in project locations; thus, in order to make any real difference in attitude, projects must seek to effect change within the entire population of areas involved. In bringing about such transformation, the traditional media have been instrumental.

Within the Baha'i community itself there have been some noticeable effects. For example, in all three project sites, more women are being elected to Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies since the beginning of the project. And the project has inspired other Baha'i communities: at the national level, Nigeria and Brazil have launched their own projects, while other local Malaysian Baha'i communities, impressed by what they have seen in the project areas, have also started similar programs.

With this kind of response, the Baha'i International Community hopes to continue the project and expand the number of sites.

#### Conferences, Seminars, and Workshops

While the UNIFEM-funded project and numerous other Baha'i efforts to promote women's well-being and advancement have focused directly on basic grassroots issues, a wide variety of activities exists around the world. In many cases, the Baha'i community has encouraged women to move beyond the sphere of their homes and to address the larger concerns of the society

in which they live. Conferences, seminars, and workshops furthering discussion of the equality of the sexes are useful means for accomplishing this goal.

All over the world, from Chad to New Zealand to Alaska to the Netherlands, conferences and meetings of various sizes seem to be the forums most widely used by Baha'is for exploring the issue of equality. Organized at local, regional, and national levels, such gatherings have resulted in the establishment of broad networks

of groups, often crossing international boundaries around the globe. Their focus has been wide-ranging, dealing with issues such as sexual abuse, family violence, aboriginal women's concerns, mothering, careers, and other topics, but always turning to the Baha'i teachings as their point of reference.

One of the largest Baha'i-sponsored conferences held to highlight the equality of women occurred in September 1989 when the North American Association for Baha'i Studies' fourteenth annual conference, held in Irvine, California, was entitled "Full Partnership" and focused on the equality of the sexes. For three days over eight hundred conference attendees took part in sessions on "Universals of Equality," "Women and Equality," and "Jvlen and Equality"; they heard papers in plenary sessions, took part in small-group workshops, and were treated to a variety of artistic presentations, including drama, music, and dance. Several noted scholars in women's studies were invited to present papers at the conference, and a lively exchange of views took place.

A Pacific women's conference, entitled "Empowering Women to Achieve" took place at the University of Hawaii in 1992. Sponsored by national and local Baha'i governing bodies, it attracted the participation of 140 women from nineteen islands and countries bordering the Pacific basin. The purpose was to offer them information, education, and new technologies that would strengthen their leadership skills and educational foundations.

In recent years New Zealand has organized a number of national "huis" (conferences, in Maori) focusing on the encouragement of women.

Additionally, both the New Zealand and the Australian National Spiritual Assemblies have taken an important step to empower women by establishing Offices for the Advancement of Women to liaise with government and nongovernmental organizations concerned with the rights, status, and well-being of women. Australia has also appointed a national committee for the advancement of women, the terms of reference for which "focus on the need to develop the skills of women so that they are more actively engaged in teaching the

FULL pARTNERSHIP

[Baha'i Faith] and the need to promote greater understanding and support of the equality of men and women within the community." 38 It plans to develop systematic training programs and will establish regional groups to assess particular needs and carry out various activities.

A large women's conference for European Baha'i women was held in 1989 in the Netherlands, followed some two years later by another women's conference in Barcelona. From these two events a number of significant developments have occurred. The first is the establishment in 1992 of the European Task Force for Women, which has taken the lead in promoting small conferences for women throughout Europe on the themes of encouragement, transformation, and service. In a statement of its vision for women, the task force, in collaboration with the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, an appointed arm of the Baha'i administration, urged the European Baha'i women to "become a source of inspiration for all who are in their company" by becoming, among other things, distinguished examples of Baha'i life and leaders in all fields of service in the Baha'i community, confident teachers of the Baha'i Faith, nourishers of growth and development in the Baha'i community, a force for change in society, and establishers of universal peace. To achieve this vision in practical terms, the task force's goal is to train a number of women from each country in the continent, who will then return home and train others to conduct discussion groups at the local level. In this way, the Baha'i women throughout the entire continent will be united in their focus on the issue. To encourage the development of the next generation, they are also sponsoring young women's weekends where girls come together to study the Baha'i teachings regarding women, to learn about the lives of Baha'i heroines, to talk about issues of concern to them, and to socialize with other Baha'i girls their own age.

On an international level, different Baha'i professional associations have focused on the issue of equality in their activities.

38. Australian Baha YBulletin, July 1994, 1.

For example, in 1993-94 the Baha'i Justice Society chose to highlight the advancement of women as a particular principle of justice and encouraged members to initiate projects, write papers, and attend conferences which would particularly further the cause of women's advancement. The information highway has also facilitated an international exchange of ideas among women and men on the issue of equality, and in the spring of 1994, a Baha'i women's discussion group was formed at the instigation of a number of women who wished to have a special forum on the Internet.

Baha'i women have founded international organizations to study women's issues, to establish cooperative and collaborative relationships, and to promote an exchange of ideas, scholars, and research. Research on the status of women in society is one of the topics proposed for study by the Baha'i Chair at Indore University in India. At the Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women, Indore, research work on women's issues has been carried out side by side with the running of the institute. Baha'i women in Japan have begun publishing a scholarly periodical entitled Fujin Journal, for and about women in support of their efforts to promote the advancement of their sex. In Singapore, the Baha'i Women's Committee collaborated with the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations to produce a comprehensive survey of the women's movement, released in 1993 and entitled *Voices and Choices: The Women's Movement in Singapore*. One of the two most prominently featured women in the publication is Shirin Fozdar, a Baha'i who founded the Singapore Council of Women in 1952, was a spokesperson for the Singapore Women's Committee in the 1950s and 1960s, and is regarded as a pioneering proponent of women's rights in Asia.

#### Women as Leaders and Administrators

The encouragement of women was a topic of consultation at the 1993 Baha'i International Convention, where delegates reiterated the importance of women's leadership roles within the Baha'i community and urged that this issue be addressed. Subsequently, an evening session of the Counsellors' conference following the Convention focused on women and involved

#### FULL PARTNERSHIP

members of the senior elected and appointed institutions that serve the Faith throughout the world.

Such events are a strong indication that within the Baha'i community's administrative order, action is being taken with regard to women's development as administrators. A further indication of the encouragement of women in this area is the fact that, at the specific direction of the institutions of the Faith, more and more women are assuming greater roles in the Baha'i administrative system. This is, in large part, due to the particular encouragement of the Universal House of Justice. In 1975, for example, the Universal House of Justice called upon eighty National Spiritual Assemblies to organize Baha'i activities for women "which will stimulate and promote the full and equal participation of women in all aspects of Baha'i community life, so that through their accomplishments the friends will demonstrate the distinction of the Cause of God in this field of human endeavour." 39 The degree to which this guidance has been put into practice to this point varies according to the

development of the social milieu in which the Baha'i community is operating, but nevertheless strides are being made. In Australia, for example, the Australian National Women's Committee stated in its annual report for 1993-94 that throughout the country female membership on Local Spiritual Assemblies was 48.5 percent nationally, and 20 percent of the chairpersons' roles are occupied by women. 40 Similar figures exist for most developed countries, but in many developing countries the percentages are much lower, and these demand attention. Overall, while the percentage of women serving as national administrators in Baha'i communities around the world is respectable, with some 28 percent female participation on National Spiritual Assemblies, 41 there is a strong impetus, originating from the Universal House of Justice, for the principle of equality to imbue life in the Baha'i community so

39. From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 15 May 1975; in *Women*, 403.

40. See the Australian Baha'i Bulletin, June 1994.

41. Figure for 1992-93, compiled 13 October 1993 by the Statistics Department, Baha'i World Centre.

thoroughly that more capable women will be trained and then recognized for their capacity to serve on elected and appointed bodies.

#### Baha'is at the United Nations

One of the great developments with regard to the advancement of women is increasing collaboration between Baha'i communities and other agencies. Perhaps the longest-standing and certainly one of the most productive such associations has been with the United Nations. In 1945 Baha'i representatives were present at the historic San Francisco conference which gave birth to the United Nations, and the Baha'i International Community was first registered as an international non-governmental organization in 1948. In the years since, the Baha'is have been granted consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and have been active in working through the UN system to improve the status of women. The Baha'i International Community has contributed to the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, has cooperated with other NGOs working for the advancement of women, and has made numerous statements on various aspects of equality to United Nations bodies. The Baha'i International Community has been especially effective in raising the issue of the importance of the girl-child at the level of the United Nations-one of the first agencies to do so in this international forum.

During the United Nations Decade for Women, 1975-1985, the Baha'i International Community developed a solid reputation for its work promoting the advancement of women. Officially accredited Baha'i representatives participated in the first, mid-decade, and end-of-decade conferences in Mexico City, Copenhagen, and Nairobi, and Baha'is were also active in planning parallel activities for NGOs at these meetings, having established ongoing working relationships with major likeminded organizations such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP (the United Nations Development Program), and UNFPA (the United Nations Fund for Population Activities).

The Baha'i International Community has also forged some unique links among different kinds of organizations in its work.

#### FULL pARTNERSHIP

It currently serves as convener of Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden for Women, a coalition of representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, and intergovernmental organizations. Seeking to highlight concerns of African women farmers, the main producers of food for domestic use in Africa, the coalition is unusual for its unique combination of members. To assist in coordinating the proliferating number of activities for women around the globe and to foster future developments in international forums, the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women officially opened on 26 May 1993, in New York City. Its establishment had been announced on 10 December 1992, in a letter from the Universal House of Justice, which identified the agency's primary role as providing "a visible instrument for the practical application of one of the cardinal principles of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.." Designed to "promote the principles of the Faith through its interaction with international entities concerned with matters

Display at the opening of the Office for the Advancement of Women in New York City, 26May 1993, features outstanding Baha'i women, including Laura Dreyfos-Barney.

affecting the rights, status and well-being of women," the office also works within the Baha'i community throughout the world, identifying "programs and projects in which the involvement of the community can encourage efforts towards the realization of the equality of men and women. " 42

Looking towards the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the director of the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women serves as the chairperson of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York. In this capacity, the director is also a member of the global NGO Facilitating Committee which is organizing the

NGO Forum on Women '95. Baha'i representatives have been active in the NGO preparatory conferences leading up to Beijing, including the Asia/Pacific Symposium of Non-Governmental Organizations on Women in Development, held in Manila in November 1993, and the NGO Forums that were held at the time of the Regional United Nations Preparatory Conferences for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Official delegations of Baha'is represented the Baha'i International Community at the five regional UN conferences.

During the International Year of the Family, 1994, Baha'i communities have been active around the world, promoting the family and particularly stressing the importance of the role of the mother in the education of the next generation. A Baha'i delegation of twenty-three from some thirteen countries attended the international conference in Malta in December, and both individual Baha'is and the Baha'i International Community were awarded "testimonials" by the United Nations in appreciation of their work in speaking out and working on issues relating to the family and the United Nations' year in honor of it. In promoting the "new culture of partnership" identified by the conference as one of its foci, the Baha'i International Community sponsored a workshop entitled "Breaking the Equality Barrier: Emerging Roles of Men and Women in the Family." Aside from participating in such major events, Baha'i communities all around the world have held hundreds of events

42. The Universal House of Justice, from a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 10 December 1992.

#### FULL pARTNERSHIP

in honor of the Year of the Family, many of them in collaboration with other like-minded organizations. The ability of the global Baha'i community to focus unitedly on such issues is one of the unique advantages of its administrative structure and a result of the undivided vision of its community.

#### Challenges Facing the Baha'i Community

##### Regarding the Issue of Equality

Although the Baha'i community can rightly point to its longstanding commitment to the issue of equality, dating from the time of Baha'u'llah, a number of challenges must be met if it is to continue to be in the vanguard of promoting this issue at all levels in human society. At the local level, there is a need for more programs aimed at promoting the equality of women, especially in developing countries, to put into practical terms the paradigm outlined in the Baha'i sacred writings. Projects such as those described above are exciting, but the number of such efforts needs to increase greatly. In concert with the necessary

increase in the number of projects and their venues is a need for further development of qualitative assessment methods to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of work accomplished. Fortunately, the Baha'i community has the tools to continue improving its skills in these areas, with Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies in almost eighteen thousand localities around the world forming a broadly based grassroots system of developmental support and united in their commitment to this central principle of their Faith.

The "Traditional Media as Change Agent" project has shown how the Baha'i community can actively address one of the main concerns resulting from development projects aimed at raising the status of women—the need to address male labor patterns. This is particularly important in communities where women have undergone training to become more self-sufficient and now have skills to work and contribute to the maintenance of the home. Once women become trained to pursue income-generating work, of what real benefit will this be to them if, in addition to this new work, they are still solely responsible for the work at home that has traditionally been their lot? Thus,

involving men in the practical and active encouragement of women as they begin to assume their new roles in society is key to effecting real change.

In the "developed" world, the paradigm shift to equality of the sexes may not be as dramatically evident as in other parts of the planet, but the changes, while perhaps more subtle, are crucial to any significant permanent improvement in the status of women. How are husbands and fathers in Baha'i families actively supporting the advancement of women? How are they addressing the issue of labor patterns in homes where women are making attempts to "enter the great arena of laws and politics"? Are Baha'i women encouraged to adopt leadership roles? Because principle is something that must be internalized before it can truly be lived, and internalization requires conscious knowledge, volition to change, and ultimately action, an ongoing discussion and promotion of the issue of equality and the encouragement of women is crucial in Baha'i communities all over the world.

In order to ground discussions in a unifying framework and to develop an appreciation of the concept of "equality" at a level beyond the superficial, the Baha'i community must advance further in its concentrated study and understanding of the materials available on the subject. It must learn to use the sacred writings as the measure of behavior, since those writings are divine in nature and regarded as authoritative by all who have embraced the Baha'i Faith. While secular theories and stances

may be useful to consider, the Baha'i teachings are the balance in which Baha'is measure "the sayings and doings of men." As Baha'u'llah cautions in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Most Holy Book:

Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it. 43

43. Baha'u'l-Haqq, The Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), K 99.

### FULL PARTNERSHIP

In order to "weigh" this important principle and conduct constructive, focused discussion on it, development of consultative skills is necessary. Equality is a topic that carries much explosive emotional weight in today's society, and combative confrontational exchanges have been the norm at many levels. Indeed, media in many parts of the world thrive on depicting "the battle of the sexes." In Baha'i consultation, however, discussants learn how to be both "frank" and "loving," a difficult but rewarding combination of qualities that can ultimately lead to new levels of understanding and thus greater progress for the human family.

Finally, both women and men must adopt a new understanding of the concept of service, so important in the new paradigm of human behavior presented in the Baha'i writings. Women, who historically have been the "servants" of society through its development and who now often reject that role, must begin to see the value of service and the station of servitude. The example of Bahiyyih Khanum plays an important part in such rethinking, and the example of Tahiri adds the quality of audacity which needs to be developed in concert with the humility of servitude—a delicate and challenging balance! Likewise, men, who have in many societies traditionally taken the role of master or superior, must also begin to rethink the station of servitude, looking at the example of Abdu'l-Baha and learning not to exploit women's desire to serve, but rather to encourage her audacity—also a challenging role!

### Conclusion

The Baha'i view of human history and of humanity's progress is, as has already been noted, essentially optimistic, with its perspective of "an ever-advancing civilization."<sup>44</sup> For this reason, Baha'is see their community life as a workshop rather

than as a perfect model; they make efforts according to the teachings of their Faith and have confidence that in the future others will build upon the lessons learned from these early activities.

44. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), 215.

Baha'is possess more than an inspired vision of the future; their Prophet-Founder Baha'u'llah has given them the practical, universal tools with which to build a new world order. Whether in Bombay or Moscow or Caracas, or any other community in which Baha'is reside and the Baha'i administrative order has taken root, the vision remains constant, as do the means to shape it into reality.

Baha'is believe that human society is advancing now, as it has always advanced, through the influence of the Prophets or Manifestations of God, who appear at various stages in our development. They educate us and train us both spiritually and socially, leading us to the next level of our development. This is what Baha'u'llah has done, what Muhammad and Jesus have done, and what Krishna and the Buddha and Abraham and Moses have done. The religions are not in conflict with each other; on the contrary, they build upon each other to help humanity move forward. This concept is known to Baha'is as "progressive revelation."

At this stage, the Manifestation of God, Baha'u'llah, has decreed that women and men must at last be treated equally. It is not merely a good idea; it is a prerequisite for human growth and development-and perhaps even survival. When this fundamental spiritual principle is fully acted out on the world stage, the effects on humanity as a whole will be far-reaching and glorious. 'Abdu'l-Baha described it thus: "When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed."<sup>45</sup> Baha'is around the world all hold this common vision of humanity's future, no matter how imperfect their current efforts. In this "ever-advancing civilization," women and men are "two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other." <sup>46</sup> With this ideal before their eyes, Baha'i men and women can learn the new steps necessary for them to move forward hand in hand, in a divinely choreographed dance of harmony. They can

45. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 174-175; *Women*, 376.

46. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, 122; *Women*, 379.

## FULL pARTNERSHIP

strengthen the wings of the bird of humanity and experience its glory as it takes flight.

This is the vision for which Tahiri died-and for which Bahiyih K.hanum lived. This is the vision that has led the Baha'is into remote villages in Africa, India, Australasia, and all over the globe, to promote dialogue, understanding, and unified action. This is the vision that led them to Mexico City in 1975, to Copenhagen in 1980, and to Nairobi in 1985. It will lead them to Beijing in 1995, and beyond that towards a future society where the objectives identified by the Fourth World Conference on Women, of equality, peace, justice, inclusiveness, and full participation of all, will be not merely words but a way of life for the entire human race.

The following statement is based on a submission by the Baha' Community of Canada to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in November 1993.

A Baha'i Perspective  
on Issues of Concern to the  
~ORLD)S

P ~BORIGINAL  
EOPLES

The suffering of human beings during the twentieth century has nowhere been more acutely felt than in the lives, families, and communities of the world's aboriginal or indigenous peoples. To right the wrongs experienced by aboriginal peoples is a daunting challenge. The experience of the Baha'i international community, however, provides a measure of hope that humanity can find solutions to the difficulties that have brought such intense suffering and can embark on a process of healing and social development. The solidarity of all the world's peoples will be both a consequence of that process and its most crucial enabling factor.

Generating the will to engage in this process of healing requires a fundamental change in our understanding of human society. Such a change begins with an appreciation of spiritual principles, including the fundamental truth of our age that humanity is one. Such an appreciation engenders a shift in consciousness that helps us identify other key features of the transformational process necessary if we are to reconstitute

society to extend and deepen justice and increase social unity.

Issues deserving attention in this transformational process include self-determination and local community governance, the

nature of social and economic development, the significance of healing, the equality of women and men, the central place of the family, the need for rapid evolution of legislation so that diversity of culture and unity of all peoples become the touchstones of human progress and civilization, and the crucial role of education.

### Spiritual Principles

The Baha'i community has had over one hundred years of experience applying spiritual principles to challenges of community development. During a period of rapid increase in numbers the world over, the Baha'i community has seen a particularly keen response among indigenous peoples; it is in no small part because of their adherence to the message of the Baha'i Faith that recent demographic surveys indicate it to be the second most widely spread religion on the planet. While Baha'is live in virtually every country and count members from almost every background imaginable, a disproportionate number of the Faith's approximately five million followers are indigenous peoples.

That fact provides ample evidence of the appeal that universal spiritual principles hold for aboriginal peoples. The appeal begins with the Baha'i conception of human nature as transcendent and moral standards as the primary laws through which society can advance. It includes a vision of social and economic development that sees human society itself as spiritual and progressive. Throughout all centuries and all cultures human civilization has drawn breath from the divine impulse periodically manifested in the words and actions of prophets and spiritual leaders and reflected both in nature and in human talents and capacities. The sacred is universal and not restricted to one particular culture or tradition, nor to one time period. Far from being empty ideals, spiritual principles are essential foundation stones of healthy communities, and when they are not respected, social breakdown ensues.

### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

When social programs or legislation lack a basis in explicitly articulated principles, they also lack vision and coherence, and the motivation and collective resolve to accomplish desired objectives falter. "Concrete" or "direct" solutions often amount to superficial programs that may provide jobs for social workers, teachers, or civil servants but produce few lasting results in the attitudes and practices of a people. Only by addressing the spiritual conditions of communities can profound and lasting social change occur.

It is significant that when aboriginal cultures approach the

discussion of social problems, leaders and members of the community refer frequently to the Creator and to the human spirit. Yet social, economic, and political theories and practices of the West during the past two to three hundred years have been driven by an excessive and socially corrosive materialism that has, in turn, driven approaches to governance and economic and social development. Failure to appreciate the implications of the gap between these two approaches to social reality explains much of the injustice and misunderstanding between aboriginal peoples and the peoples of dominant cultures.

Ingenuity and free inquiry, industrial productivity, and material success have made many positive contributions to human civilization. There is, however, no greater barrier to progress in achieving social justice and the well-being of aboriginal peoples than an ideology of materialism that lacks consistent and viable moral principles. Baha'is are convinced that to effect genuine changes in attitudes and policy and to devise enduring solutions, it is timely to adopt an orientation and approach fundamentally different from the methods generated by the failed assumptions of secularism and materialism.

The sense of superiority inherent in any culture of materialism lies at the heart of the unhappy relationship between aboriginal peoples and the rest of society. Fundamental to genuine spirituality is the recognition of the equality of all human beings, that all are created by the same God, that all have rights before God. Material wealth or might, secular rank or status, do not guarantee moral worth. Only on the basis of a universal spiritual orientation can we begin to re-establish the

sense of self-worth, dignity, and nobility that materialism and secularism have eroded. Only with the mutual respect engendered by spiritual values of human nobility and compassion can relationships be healed. Only through such values can injustice and disrespect, prejudice and discrimination, denial and neglect be eliminated.

Aboriginal peoples have been among the most intensely affected victims of the dominant social forces operating in ignorance, or in systematic neglect, of spiritual principles pivotal to human happiness and the common weal. The social catastrophe that has resulted from several centuries of social experimentation with secular approaches to the governance and conduct of human affairs, including communism and industrial capitalism, gives the surest evidence of the futility of pursuing political and economic plans that are merely the latest version of that same philosophy of social change. Those methods have been pragmatic, not principled; short-term, not visionary. They have been and are still reactive, pushed this way and that by

special interests because society has not tried to identify its general interests as an organic whole.

A new set of assumptions and orientations in which the sacred or spiritual replaces the secular as the basis for social, economic, and political action can, Baha'is assert, genuinely penetrate and heal society. The generation of policies and legislation that put in place processes of social transformation can only come out of a recognition of the real nature of the human being and human society.

The survival among many aboriginal peoples of an evident religious inclination and transcendent aspiration must be supported and encouraged at official as well as informal levels in whatever programs and policies are developed by nations and international bodies. The existence in many aboriginal communities of strong systems of religious belief and practice represent important resources for social development that must not be overlooked as this century nears its close.

#### The Oneness of Humanity

Baha'is understand many of the complex problems of society to be inevitable features of an historical process that Baha'u'lhih

#### THE ORIGINAL PEOPLES

foresaw would come to dominate the twentieth century. His vision of the eventual integration of humankind and the emergence of a global society in which unity in diversity would be the principal characteristic has been confirmed by the events of this century-accelerating as we near its close. Many of our most acute problems can be resolved if we become conscious of this historical process and respond in ways that take proper account of the oneness of humanity-the principle of social organization for the age now dawning in human history. Failure to understand and make the necessary adjustments in how human affairs are administered on this planet only intensifies the degree of suffering that reaches into the communities of virtually every country and region on earth.

Baha'is view the current phase of rapidly changing world conditions in a hopeful way, aware of the anguish created by current chaotic social dislocations but seeing them as part of a long-term process of adjustment, the pain of which can best be alleviated if we become conscious of its nature and direction.

The current period of human history is one of those axial periods understood best perhaps in the phrase "the coming of age of humanity." The period of relative isolation of various peoples of the world has ended. We have now collectively entered a new world where boundaries, if they exist at all any more, are no longer impenetrable. The interdependence of humanity with all

its diversity of cultures, nations, and peoples will continue to increase. Exclusive sovereignties are no longer possible. The culmination of this process will be some form of an integrated world economy and political structure in which all of us will feel as much a part of world society as we feel a part of our own community. This is not a hope or a wish. It is a reality apparent in current trends. If we understand this process and act consciously, we will be in a much better position than if we remain unaware of its implications. In that regard, it is important to understand nationalism as a stage of history on the way to a more mature set of human relations on this planet. Nationalism and its cultural variants may be viewed as features important to humanity's adolescence but far less important to its maturity than an overriding consciousness of its essential oneness.

The present wave of nationalism is the culmination of a process born in the nineteenth century. It aggressively asserts the dominance and frequently the uniformity of the nation-state, and it also gives rise to immoderate, often extreme, ethnic and cultural affirmation. It checks the necessary development of local government and blocks the establishment of international institutions and practices.

Baha'is see the principle of the oneness of humanity as the pivotal social, economic, and political tenet of our age. However, it is a principle of unity in diversity, where unity is seen to be essential if the diversity of all peoples and cultures is to flourish in place of the dominance of any particular one. In this conception, the enhancement of diversity is itself a direct measure of unity, and genuine unity is promoted as differences-whether of culture, race, temperament, education, or other categories-are recognized and embraced. Unity does not result from conformism or uniformity-both, it is useful to note, consequences of materialism and nationalism.

If the future of the human race is to witness an increase in justice, humankind will have to establish institutions of governance that respect this principle of unity in diversity and that honor and protect cultural diversity. Such institutions will need to come under the umbrella of a federal system operating at the level of the entire planet in ways that protect cultures, guarantee sufficient levels of autonomy and independence for different peoples, and enhance unity and harmony among all sectors of society.

Achieving a federal system of this kind must also take into account the rapidity and unpredictability of the historical and social processes currently at work so that newly conceived social and political arrangements are as flexible as possible. If

properly understood, just as unity and diversity presuppose each other, unity and flexibility are also mutually sustaining prerequisites.

What is striking in the Baha'i experience around the world is that aboriginal peoples have a keen desire to encounter and enter into just and equitable relationships with other peoples. In the Baha'i emphasis on unity in diversity, aboriginal peoples find an

### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

ideal that matches their own aspirations. Their drive towards self-determination and self-reliance reflects their desire to enter directly into relationships with other peoples without the filter of a dominant culture or government that makes their participation in the global village indirect and secondary.

Unity among the aboriginal peoples and unity with all other peoples of the planet are both vital if justice and social wellbeing are to be assured. The extent to which new governmental arrangements and structures increase unity at all levels is the surest measure of their viability and usefulness over the longer term. Unity must be considered at the outset of deliberations and planning; it is the only foundation on which problems can be solved.

#### Self-Determination and the Local Community

Perhaps the most powerful motivation behind the interest in self-determination is the desire of aboriginal peoples-indeed of all peoples-to have greater local control over their lives and communities, the lack of which is often more dramatic for aboriginal peoples than for society generally. The kind of society Baha'is see emerging from contemporary social upheaval is one in which local government will have a far greater role than it does today. That all members should have a say in how they are governed is a principle that today surely very few would deny, and the most effective level at which such widespread participation can be realized is local, not national. A sense of local community, local control, and local development is absolutely vital, and the level of government closest to day-today life must have at its disposal an adequate share of the material resources that the earth provides.

The extent to which Baha'is value the importance of local levels of governance is seen in the historical development of the administration of the Baha'i community. Rather than establishing international and national administrative levels at the outset of its growth as a global community under the leadership of the head of the Baha'i Faith at the time, Shoghi Effendi, Baha'is adopted as early as the 1920s the strategy of first concentrating on the development of strong local executive

bodies, adding national administrative agencies when enough local institutions were established. In 1963 these agencies were strong enough to support the first election of an international executive, in a democratic process that embraced all adult Baha'is throughout the world.

While the right to self-determination of all peoples is most effectively carried forward at the local level, such local development-and the enhancement of the autonomy enjoyed by distinctive, diverse cultures implied by that development requires a more global context if parochial and narrow hegemonies are to be avoided. International and worldwide institutions of governance, both legislative and executive, must be established to insure harmonious and cooperative relationships among all the nations and all the distinct cultures and peoples of the world.

Laws and constitutions can be developed based on universal spiritual principles to which all peoples can assent. Thus, a global framework can be established while the actual form and processes by which local governments operate remain a challenge of interpretation and application of universal principles, of concrete decisions based on conditions and cultural predilections particular to distinct localities and peoples.

The actual process of making local, community decisions and of organizing and developing a community is one of the most important aspects of self-government. To promote widespread participation and to overcome factionalism and divisiveness, the Baha'i community uses a process called "consultation." Applied in the Baha'i community over many decades and in many cultures and settings, the consultative process guides the manner in which community-wide discussion is pursued and the way in which decision-making bodies resolve disputes and plan strategies of community development.

This principle is central to the functioning of the Baha'i community. Baha'u'llah declared that, together, consultation and compassion form the "law" of the age of humanity's maturity. Among the principles that guide Baha'i consultation are the following:

- The prohibition of factionalism or partisanship;

#### \_MORIGINAL pEOPLES

- The provision of opportunities for all to participate in the consultative process that leads to decision-making;
- The encouragement of all to speak freely according to their own consciences;
- The responsibility for all participating to exercise courtesy and moderation in the expression of their views;
- The moral obligation to be detached from one's own contribution so that the

group or collective itself can come to own that contribution;

- The primacy of the interests of the group or community over individual interests, even though individual freedom of expression is absolutely safeguarded;
- A clear distinction between this broad form of consultation and the deliberations of a democratically elected body or governing council that takes the responsibility for decisions;
- The requirement that, once a decision is taken, both the majority favoring it and those originally opposed respect, support, and carry out the decision in unity. Such unanimous and community-wide support ensures decisions are not subverted and sabotaged. Only through such support can a decision be properly evaluated and changed if genuine deficiencies in the decision itself are detected;
- The obligation of all decision-making bodies to evaluate continually their work and pursue ongoing consultation with the wider community to assess and, if necessary, revise their decisions; and
- The value of unity. Other essential values-such as freedom of expression, honesty and courage in stating one's own views, moderation of expression, courtesy and listening to different views-are critical to community development and progress, but unity is the most important value of all.

Most of the world's current political institutions were conceived for the needs of an earlier and very different age.

Little wonder that throughout the world we see movements and attempts to incorporate a less adversarial and more consultative mode of governing. Whether these be supplementary systems of

ad hoc arrangements, parliamentary committees, commissions and citizen consultations, they all bear witness to the desire to overhaul in dramatic ways the relationship between governments and peoples and the manner in which civic life and political deliberation proceeds. Baha'is are convinced that governance and the administration of human affairs should be carried on through the principle of consultation in which all peoples have a say in how decisions affect them.

### Economic Development

Economic questions, as much as social and political questions, have a direct relationship to spiritual conditions and values existing in the local community and in the wider society. It is especially important to consider the matter of economic development in the light of principles that are essential to the well-being and advancement of a people.

The effects of material deprivation are most acutely felt at the local level, and Baha'u'llah's admonition to eliminate existing extremes of wealth and poverty is most readily appreciated there. The social devastation to which current extremes contribute is painfully visible throughout the world, within both the poorer and the wealthier countries. Tragically, many aboriginal communities are among those that most vividly illustrate the consequences of the lack of justice and moderation inherent in existing economic practices and patterns.

Economic development challenges entrepreneurs, workers, farmers, local government councils, and labor representatives to learn new ways to cooperate, using the opportunities and resources particular to each local community and region, without overlooking existing aboriginal interests and traditional land-based skills. Paths of economic development are diverse, depending on the nature of resources and opportunities available to each locality and region. The resources of consultation outlined above, complemented by the renewal of those centuries-old virtues of honesty, trustworthiness, courage, and a spirit of service to the community, must combine to create locally tested economic ventures. At the same time it must

#### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

be emphasized that, just as with the development of local governance, economic self-determination requires a global economic framework that allows for local communities' survival and economic productivity. An international economy requires universally acceptable laws and a system in which both communities and individuals are protected from being sacrificed to popular concepts of increasing material efficiency and consumption without limit or moderation.

Furthermore, as self-determination within a global and national framework is an important feature of community development, so too must the individual right to gainful employment be accepted as universal. Viewing unemployment as an unavoidable feature of an economic system amounts to an unacceptable admission of human impotency. Employment is a God-given right and responsibility. In Baha'u'llah's words: "It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation .... We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God.... " Baha'u'llah also identifies economic security as a God-given responsibility of any society: "Know ye that the poor are the trust of God in your midst .... Ye will most certainly be called upon to answer for His trust. ... " Our governing institutions, acting on our behalf, must redirect social and economic resources in order to ensure that no peoples are deprived of either employment opportunities or

basic living needs.

Finally, since international forces play such a considerable and increasing role in the economy, it is surely time to be far bolder and more creative in the development of new arrangements of governance at the international level. The international economy, environmental resources, and land-base on which all economic activity ultimately depends call for much stronger institutions of international governance with levels of sovereignty appropriate to a new global society and economy. The voices of all peoples must be allowed some reasonable say in the direction such agencies might take the world economy. The aboriginal peoples, as distinctive cultures, might well take the lead in identifying more publicly and on the international stage those principles or objectives appropriate to a new economy based on sustainable development. Such work needs to complement efforts at self-government and economic development if the latter are to have any chance of success.

#### The Need for Healing

Aboriginal leaders and spokespersons repeat frequently the crucial importance of addressing the healing of families and communities with resources dedicated to this stage in the overall process of aboriginal development. Without such healing other developmental processes of governance, economic development, and education will not succeed. Current social ills rob aboriginal communities of the opportunities their youth should have in order to grow and provide leadership, and dedication to a process of healing is essential.

Among the several important issues that bear on the matter of healing, our own experiences and convictions prompt us to highlight the equality of women and men and the central place of the family as two of the most pressing areas of concern. The importance of legal and political evolution to redress inadequacies and injustice of past laws is also essential.

#### The Equality of Women and Men

Whatever new arrangements and new directions are taken in the world, the principle of the equality of women and men requires explicit recognition. The moral authority of Baha'u'llah's teachings on this point makes it clear that God makes no distinction between the worth of the soul of a woman or a man. Gender does not decide value in the spiritual world. As we come out of an era of history in which emphasis on physical strength or material considerations impeded women's full participation in society, the full emancipation of women remains a significant challenge. All peoples, whatever their culture or tradition, must give their unequivocal support for the principle of the equality of women and men.

As women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor, the moral and psychological climate will change throughout all societies, facilitating the generation of

ORIGINAL PEOPLES

suitable social and political arrangements. All of us, men and women alike, share the responsibility to act with courage, fairness, and humility to make this principle a reality.

Not merely will society in a general way become healthier, but the economy and political life of society will improve once women gain their rightful place alongside men. Such issues as the provision of social, economic, and political measures to enhance the lives of children and the family, and measures for safer, less violent communities, will become more central on our various agendas. If we continue to neglect or marginalize the principle of full and absolute equality of women and men, mothers and children will continue to suffer disproportionately. There is a direct relationship between the predominance of men in positions of social, economic, and political leadership and the lack of support given mothers during those critical years when they give birth, nurse their children, and first educate the very young. This inattention of fathers and of a patriarchal society and lack of support for the best possible conditions for mothers, children, and the family, have contributed to social disintegration. So, too, the absence of women in leadership roles throughout all levels of society has prevented progress towards a more peaceful and productive economy and civil life. Indeed, the two conditions are directly linked.

The Family

A great deal more of society's financial resources and time on the local, national, and international agenda must be given to supporting the family, that fundamental building block of society in which children are born, nurtured, and raised.

The health of the family forms the basis of the health of a people, of a nation, and ultimately of the world itself, and to prosper it must have greater support from all social institutions.

The family and society need education and laws that will support parenting instead of allowing competition for the resources of time and energy that should be devoted to it.

The family unit has been a cherished and prized element in the community and social life of aboriginal peoples around the world, and the more dominant cultures might wisely look to the reverence and regard aboriginal peoples give to it.

The education and training of children occurs best through united and healthy families. Children's rights are most effectively protected if the family itself becomes much more

central in the programs of all levels of governments and in whatever new institutions and arrangements are made over the coming years in aboriginal governance and national and international governance. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated.

#### Affirmative Action

"If any discrimination is at all to be tolerated, it should be a discrimination not against, but rather in favor of the minority, be it racial or otherwise." This is a Baha'i principle that the community's administrative practice tries to uphold. Justice demands such a principle, often translated as "affirmative action." Without it, social change will be too slow and the privileges of members of dominant and majority peoples will continue to eclipse the rights of those from minority or oppressed sectors of society.

Programs of affirmative action are temporary measures to balance the ills that contemporary society and a history of injustice have produced. If action is not taken, our economic and social well-being will be among the first elements of society to suffer and deteriorate, for tomorrow's economy, like that of the past, benefits most if all its members are healthy, well educated, and contributing to the wealth and productivity of all.

#### The Evolution of Law, Legislation, and Political Structures

Baha'is believe that the material world is a reflection of the spiritual world, and that laws and political structures must evolve commensurate with the ever-evolving needs of the human species. Genuine social transformation occurs through changes in the spiritual conditions of society. However, this also implies that social reality is in constant evolution. Thus, the rapid evolution in our laws and administrative structures is as necessary as the creation of new spiritual understandings and conditions.

It is apparent that the entire world, including the aboriginal peoples in many lands, is now at a new stage of maturity

#### ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

requiring new forms of government and social and economic participation that are universal and inclusive. Baha'is view efforts to incorporate protection of fundamental and collective human rights into the legal and constitutional frameworks of different countries as major contributions to the progress of human civilization.

The legitimacy of collective rights-that the well-being of an entire community may at times require specific attention and legal safeguards-must receive wider discussion and exposure in public education programs. Whatever the merits of a liberal

philosophy, it has consistently overlooked the organic nature of human society and the necessity, even for the ultimate wellbeing of the individual, to protect the rights and unity of the entire community.

We believe, as Baha'is, that with sufficient consultation, collective and individual rights are not contradictory but complementary. That they remain apart only means that people have not talked together long enough or with enough humility, moderation, courtesy, and courage. Society as a whole and collective segments within it need protection as much as individuals do. From the Baha'i perspective, the unity of society is the best measure of justice and the surest indicator of how effectively rights are enacted in legislation. In this context, it seems particularly critical to realize that the identification of universal principles on which laws can be constructed will promote a unity of law that allows for a diversity of interpretation and application of policies and decisions at the local level.

Furthermore, the process of developing legislation is itself an important community-building process and one in which the legitimate representatives of peoples, nations, and countries must engage with unceasing energy and commitment. Such detailed work requires the best that government and legal experts can manage. All segments of society must then be educated to support the rule of law and encourage the government at each level. Without such respect for law and support for our leaders, even the wisest law, the most effective administrative practice, and the most inspired leadership cannot

bring well-being to a society. The world talks much about having leaders listen to the people, but there is a great deal to learn about encouraging and supporting leaders in their difficult work.

### Education

As important as legislation and government are, the most important way in which the relationships among aboriginal peoples and the rest of society can be transformed is through education. Since education preeminent provides the means through which identity and self-esteem can be secured and protected and by which healing and justice can be promoted, it is incumbent on society to concentrate its resources and attention on this issue which, in very broad terms, includes processes and populations outside as well as inside current education systems. Greater investment in education is needed, both in aboriginal communities and in the schools attended by children and young people from all other segments of society, with the principle of unity in diversity serving as a core concept in school curricula and educational programs, whether those programs focus on

race unity, morality and religion, history, or literature. In this way, unity in diversity will become central in the consciousness of young people.

It is noteworthy that the Baha'i community of Iran, now numbering some 350,000, endured more than a century of persecution and human rights abuses while reaching literacy levels of 90 percent in three generations (compared to 40 percent for the rest of Iranian society). That community produced many of Iran's most educated leaders in technical, social, and professional fields, an achievement due to the underlying emphasis on unity. This reliance on universal principles also allowed the Iranian Baha'i community to achieve the success it did before it was once again set upon in 1979 by those segments of Iranian society intent on returning the country to an age of ignorance and darkness. Throughout the world, more than a thousand Baha'i social and economic development projects demonstrate

ORIGINAL PEOPLES

again and again the practicality and power of unity as a preeminently important social value.

Much reflection and consultation focusing on unity as a core theme and on spiritual and moral values as principal elements in educational programs is required to generate specific recommendations. However, it may be worthwhile to consider an

example of how the principle of unity can generate new ideas.

Education in human suffering and sacrifice is not limited to any one culture on this planet. A fuller relationship between members of different cultures and communities that have survived tragedy on a wide scale can help them understand and transcend their own particular histories. Indeed, as all the cultures of the world become unified the shared burden of history's many tragedies and injustices may well fall into a pattern of mutual understanding and finally allow for the kind of redemption that permits genuine healing.

Whatever creative programs are devised, they would do well to pay heed to the principle of oneness and unity in which all cultures are respected and none are considered superior. We should set aside a mindset that seems determined to combat every existing evil of society instead of building curricula and programs with an emphasis on positive goals. For instance, let there be programs on race unity instead of anti-racism, on personal and social development instead of drug abuse prevention, on universal spiritual and religious teachings instead of expelling religious education from the schools because of a few extremist or fundamentalist elements. Too often the current approach isolates social problems and then turns to the school to redress them, one by one, instead of conceiving of school

programs with a focus on themes of unity and integration, inclusion, health, and development. We must create curricula in which subject matter is not cut up and parcelled out but built on an educational approach that seeks out relationships between people, subject areas, and different sectors of life; that seeks unity in diversity; and that instills a value of service to the broader good of society as the point around which young people develop their identities.

Whatever educational programs are conceived, it must be explicitly acknowledged in any proposed solutions that knowledge is essential in order to motivate the necessary development of will and resolve required for action. If longstanding social patterns are to change, people's knowledge needs to be increased, for only through understanding is human will and energy set in motion. If they do nothing to increase knowledge, laws and new structures of government will accomplish little.

### Conclusion

A great deal of work must be done to right wrongs, to create justice, and to educate a new generation. Baha'is know that instant solutions are not possible. The Baha'i community is itself still small, albeit rapidly growing. But it is committed to working towards the creation of justice and unity, healing and well-being. Baha'is firmly believe that, in the course of time and in conditions of prosperity and well-being, the aboriginal peoples of our planet will make even greater contributions to the happiness, the progress, and the spiritual illumination of the entire human family than they have already made through their suffering and sacrifice. That belief in the capacity and character of the aboriginal peoples lies enshrined in the sacred writings of the Baha'i Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha, eldest son of Baha'u'llah, called attention to the importance of the aboriginal peoples when He wrote to the Americas from Palestine during World War I:

You must attach great importance to the Indians, the original inhabitants of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula .... When the Muhammadan Light shone forth in their midst, they became so enkindled that they shed illumination upon the world. Likewise, should these Indians be educated and properly guided, there can be no doubt that through the Divine teachings they will become so enlightened that the whole earth will be illumined.

The following statement was submitted by the Baha'i International Community to the first session of the United Nations

Commission on Sustainable Development,  
New York, 14-25 June 1993.

WoRLD

CITIZENSHIP:

A Global Ethic for. Sustainable Development

In the spirit of Agenda 21, as ((a dynamic programme" destined to ((evolve over time in the light of changing needs and circumstances, "1 the Baha'i International Community offers the following proposal: To inspire the peoples of the world to champion sustainable development, the education programs and public awareness campaigns called for in Agenda 21 should foster the concept of WORLD CITIZENSHIP.

The Vision of World Citizenship

The greatest challenge facing the world community as it mobilizes to implement Agenda 21 is to release the enormous financial, technical, human, and moral resources required for sustainable development. These resources will be freed up only as the peoples of the world develop a profound sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the wellbeing of the entire human family.

This sense of responsibility can only emerge from the acceptance of the oneness of humanity and will only be sustained by a unifying vision of a peaceful, prosperous world

1. Agenda 21, chapter 1.6.

society. Without such a global ethic, people will be unable to become active, constructive participants in the worldwide process of sustainable development. 2

While Agenda 21 provides an indispensable framework of scientific knowledge and technical know-how for the implementation of sustainable development, it does not inspire personal commitment to a global ethic. This is not to say that ethics and values were ignored during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) process. The call for unifying values was heard throughout this process from Heads of State to UN officials to representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individual citizens. In particular, the concepts of "our common humanity," "world citizenship" and "unity in diversity" were invoked to serve as the ethical undergirding for Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration. 3

The world community has, thus, already come to a basic accord on the need for a global ethic to vitalize Agenda 21. We suggest that the term world citizenship be adopted to encompass the constellation of principles, values, attitudes, and behaviors that the peoples of the world must embrace if sustainable

development is to be realized.

2. One of the most often-repeated themes of Agenda 21 is the vital importance of "broad public participation in decision-making"; "commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups"; "real social partnership"; and "new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people."

3. The call for a global ethic was raised often during the UNCED process, with particular intensity at the Earth Summit and Global Forum, from Heads of State to UN officials to NGO representatives; through official UNCED documents, NGO treaties, workshops, books, and artistic presentations. The following are just a few examples:

- speeches to the Earth Summit by the President of Brazil; the President of France; the Prime Minister of Ireland; the Prime Minister of Japan; the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the President of the United Mexican States; the Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco; the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; the Prime Minister of Turkey; the Prime Minister of Tuvalu; the Secretary of State of the Holy See; and the Secretary-General of UNCED;

## WORLD CITIZENSHIP

World citizenship begins with an acceptance of the oneness of the human family and the interconnectedness of the nations of "the earth, our home."<sup>4</sup> While it encourages a sane and legitimate patriotism, it also insists upon a wider loyalty, a love of humanity as a whole. It does not, however, imply abandonment of legitimate loyalties, the suppression of cultural diversity, the abolition of national autonomy, nor the imposition of uniformity. Its hallmark is "unity in diversity." World citizenship encompasses the principles of social and economic justice, both within and between nations; non-adversarial decision making at all levels of society; equality of the sexes; racial, ethnic, national, and religious harmony; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. Other facets of world citizenship—all of which promote human honor and dignity, understanding, amity, cooperation, trustworthiness,

- NGO Treaties prepared at the Global Forum including The Youth Treaty; The Earth Charter; The Rio de Janeiro Declaration; The Peoples Earth Declaration; The Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility; and The Treaty of Ethical Commitments;
- Global Forum activities, including the Evening Series in the Park, reflecting "the cultural diversity of the Human Family"; and the Peace Monument, whose inscription reads, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens";
- Statements and publications by governments, UN Agencies and NGOs to the various Preparatory Committee sessions and other UNCED-related events including The Universal Code of Environmental Conduct (NGO/Media Symposium,

October 1990); In Our Hands: Women and Children First (Report of the UNCED/UNICEF/UNFPA Symposium, May 1991); The Earth Charter (US Citizens Network on UNCED, July 1991); One Earth Community (The Working Group of Religious Communities on UNCED, August 1991); Caring for the Earth (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, October 1991); An Earth Charter (International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth, 1991); Agenda Ya Wananchi (Roots of the Future, December 1991); An Environmental Ethic or Earth Charter (UNEP-UK National Committee, February 1992); Principles on General Rights and Obligations (General Assembly document, A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.28, 9 March 1992); Earth Charter, Japan (Peoples Forum, Japan, 1992); Earth Repair Charter (Earth Repair Foundation, 1992); and Our Country, The Planet (Sir Shridath Ramphal, 1992).

4. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Preamble.

compassion and a desire to serve--can be deduced from those already mentioned. A few of these principles have been articulated in Agenda 21--most, however, are noticeably lacking. Moreover, no overall conceptual framework is provided under which they can be harmonized and promulgated.

Fostering world citizenship is a practical strategy for promoting sustainable development. So long as disunity, antagonism, and provincialism characterize the social, political, and economic relations within and among the family of nations, a global, sustainable pattern of development can not be established. Over a century ago Baha'u'l-Hikmah warned, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." Only upon a foundation of genuine unity, harmony, and understanding among the diverse peoples and nations of the world, can a sustainable global society be erected.

We, therefore, recommend that world citizenship be taught in every school and that the oneness of humanity--the principle underlying world citizenship--be constantly asserted in every nation.

The concept of world citizenship is not new to the world community. It is both implicit and explicit in a host of UN documents, charters, and agreements, including the opening words of the UN Charter itself: "We the peoples of the United Nations ... " It is already being promoted around the world across all cultures by diverse NGOs, academics, citizens' groups, entertainers, educational programs, artists, and media.

These efforts are significant but need to be greatly increased.

A carefully planned and orchestrated, long-term campaign to foster world citizenship, involving all sectors of society--local, national, and international--needs to be put into place.

It must be pursued with all the vigor, moral courage, and

5. For example, see Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, principles 5, 8, 20, 25; and Agenda 21, chapters 1, 2, 3, 23,24 and 36.

6. See Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, principle 25.

## WORLD CITIZENSHIP

conviction that the United Nations, its member states and all willing partners can muster.

### The Promotion of World Citizenship

The following proposal for a campaign to promote world citizenship<sup>7</sup> fits naturally into the framework for reorienting education, public awareness, and training toward sustainable development, which is presented in chapter 36 of Agenda 21.

#### Education

Education-formal, non-formal, and informal-is indisputably the most effective way to shape values, attitudes, behaviors and skills that will equip the peoples of the world to act in the longterm interests of the planet and humanity as a whole. <sup>8</sup> The United Nations, governments, and educational agencies should seek to make the principle of world citizenship part of the standard education of every child.

The details of educational programs and activities incorporating this principle will vary a great deal within and among nations. However, if world citizenship is to be understood as a universal principle, all programs must have certain aspects in common. Based on the principle of the oneness of the human race, they should cultivate tolerance and brotherhood, nurturing an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious, and social systems and strengthening

7. Within the context of the principle of world citizenship, this program should be "carried out by the various actors according to the different situations, capacities and priorities of the countries and regions" (Agenda 21, chapter 1.6.).

8. Agenda 21, chapter 36.3. affirms that "Education ... should be recognized as a process by which human beings and societies can reach their fullest potential. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of the people to address environment and development issues .... Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes ... It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making. To be effective ... education ... should deal with the dynamics of

both the physical/biological and socio-economic environment and human (which may include spiritual) development."

those traditions that contribute to a sustainable, world civilization. They

should teach the principle of "unity in diversity" as the key to strength and wealth both for nations and for the world community. They should foster an ethic of service to the common good and convey an understanding of both the rights and the responsibilities of world citizenship. These programs and activities should build on the country's positive efforts and highlight its tangible successes, including models of racial, religious, national, and ethnic unity. They should emphasize the importance of the UN in promoting global cooperation and understanding; its universal goals, objectives and programs; its immediate relevance to the peoples and nations of the world; and the role that it must increasingly assume in our evercontracting world. Before undertaking a campaign to promote world citizenship, a common understanding of the concept will need to be developed and agreed upon. The Commission on Sustainable Development might set up a special committee or working group to begin developing guidelines for world citizenship and proposals for incorporating this principle into existing formal and non-formal educational programs. Alternatively, the Commission might seek the assistance of the High Level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development or the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. The UN Secretariat might even choose to set up a World Citizenship Unit, similar to the erstwhile Peace Studies Unit, to develop these guidelines and coordinate the system-wide implementation of world citizenship education. Whatever path is chosen, this task must be given high priority.

World citizenship could be incorporated easily into all of the activities suggested in chapter 36.5. of Agenda 21 for reorienting education toward sustainable development. A few examples illustrate:

- National advisory bodies/round tables (36.5.c) should facilitate the incorporation of world citizenship into educational programs within the country.

#### WORLD CITIZENSHIP

- Pre-service and in-service training programs for all teachers, administrators, educational planners, and nonformal educators (36.5.d) should include the principle of world citizenship in their programs.
- Educational materials on sustainable development produced by UN agencies should encourage world citizenship (36.5.g), as should educational materials about the United Nations.
- Agenda 21 calls for "the development of an international network" to support global efforts to educate for sustainable development (36.5.k). This network could both encourage

UN agencies and member NGOs to create materials based on the guidelines for world citizenship, and provide the means for sharing them.

- Governments and educational authorities have already been called upon to "eliminate gender stereotyping in curricula" as a means to promote sustainable development (36.5.m).

We would recommend that, in the spirit of world citizenship, stereotyping based on religion, culture, race, class, nationality, and ethnicity also be eliminated.

#### Public Awareness

People need to think of themselves as world citizens and understand their personal responsibility to promote sustainable development. 9 Campaigns to raise public awareness of the challenges of world citizenship must make use of the full range of media and the arts, including television, video, film, radio, electronic networks, books, magazines, posters, flyers, theater, and music. These campaigns should enlist the advertising and entertainment industries, the media-both traditional and nontraditional-the entire UN system, all member states, NGOs, and popular personalities. They should reach out to the home, the work place, public areas, and schools. The guidelines for

9. Agenda 21, chapter 36.9 calls attention to the importance of promoting "broad public awareness as an essential part of a global education effort to strengthen attitudes, values and actions which are compatible with sustainable development."

World citizenship called for above should be appropriate for use by such public awareness campaigns and should serve as basic reference for all media programming.

World citizenship could be included in the activities presented in chapter 36.10. of Agenda 21 for increasing public awareness and sensitivity about sustainable development. The following examples illustrate:

- National and international advisory boards (36.10.a) could encourage the various media to adopt the guidelines for world citizenship. The media have done much to raise public awareness of global interdependence and the enormous challenges facing the world community. They have also highlighted the seemingly insurmountable differences that divide us.

The media have a responsibility to help people understand that diversity need not be a source of conflict; rather, diversity can and must now serve as a resource for sustainable development.

They can do so by focusing on the constructive, unifying, and cooperative undertakings that prove humanity's capacity to work together to meet the

enormous challenges facing it.

- In promoting "a cooperative relationship with the media" (36.10.e), the United Nations must boldly define its own identity and the promise it holds for the world community. The United Nations was established on high ideals and with a vision of a peaceful, progressive world. By providing a framework for communication and cooperation, and by initiating innumerable, constructive projects, it has added significantly to the understanding, hope and goodwill in the world. Yet its accomplishments are little known to the generality of mankind.

Using the concept of world citizenship as an integrating theme, the United Nations should publicize its ideals, activities, and goals, so that people come to understand the unique and vital role the UN plays in the world and, therefore, in their lives. Similarly, the UN should promote world citizenship in all its public activities, including

## WORLD CITIZENSHIP

celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and tours of UN headquarters. Every UN document that deals with sustainable development should also include this principle-beginning with the preamble of the proposed Earth Charter. World citizenship must become the single most important point of ethical reference in all UN activities.

- The services of the advertising industry (36.10.e) should be enlisted to promote world citizenship. Campaigns could be organized around such themes as:
  - We the Peoples of the United Nations: Celebrating Unity in Diversity
  - One Planet, One People
  - In All Our Diversity, We Are One Family
  - Our Common Future: Unity in Diversity
- Contests should be held and awards presented for promoting world citizenship (36.10.e).
- While heightening public awareness "regarding the impacts of violence in society" (36.1 0.1), the media can generate commitment to world citizenship by highlighting examples of constructive, unifying undertakings that show the power of unity and common vision.

Each country should be encouraged to earmark resources for promoting world citizenship. Consideration should also be given to including among the proposed "indicators of sustainable development" (40.6.) the promotion of this principle. Countries could, for example, be encouraged to report

efforts to foster tolerance and appreciation of other cultures, equality of the sexes, and the concept of one human family through curricula, entertainment, and the media.

#### The Challenge Of World Citizenship

In conclusion, world citizenship is a concept as challenging and dynamic as the opportunities facing the world community. We, the peoples and nations of the world, would be wise to embrace courageously its underlying principles and be guided by them in

all aspects of our lives—from our personal and community relations to our national and international affairs; from our schools, work places, and media to our legal, social, and political institutions. We, therefore, urge the Commission to encourage the entire UN system to incorporate the principle of world citizenship into the full range of its programs and activities.

The Baha'i International Community, which for over a century has been fostering world citizenship, would be pleased to assist the Commission, governments, NGOs, and others to further develop the concepts contained in this document; to provide practical models of racial, religious, national, and ethnic unity for sustainable development; and to take part in consultations on this crucial issue. As a global community encompassing the diversity of humanity and sharing a common vision, the Baha'i International Community will continue to promote sustainable development by encouraging people to see themselves as citizens of one world, the builders of a just and prosperous world civilization.

The following statement by the Baha'i International Community was first distributed at the World NGO Forum launching the United Nations International Year of the Family, Malta, November 1993.

THEFAMILY  
IN~  
~wORLD  
CoMMUNITY

Like the world as a whole, the family is in transition. In every culture, families are disintegrating, fragmenting under pressure of economic and political upheavals and weakening in the face of moral and spiritual confusion.

The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. 1

Baha'is see these disturbances as signs of humanity's struggle toward a new age in its collective development, an age of maturity. The family, as the most basic unit of society, must in this process be remolded and revitalized according to the same principles that are reshaping civilization as a whole.

The central principle for this new day is the oneness of humanity. "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security,"

1. All quotations are from the Baha'i writings.

Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, asserted over a century ago, "are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." Acceptance of the interrelatedness and interdependence of all people implies the renewal of every social institution on the planet, including the family.

### Unity in the Family

If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual.

The Baha'i approach to family unity combines elements of traditional wisdom with progressive principles and practical tools. Adherence to these teachings offers a bulwark against the forces of disintegration and a framework for the creation of strong, healthy, unified families.

The foundation and precondition for a Baha'i family is the loving relationship of husband and wife. Marriage, a divine creation, is intended to unite a couple "both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other." A man and woman, having freely chosen one another and having obtained the consent of their parents, marry, according to Baha'i law, in the presence of witnesses designated by the elected governing council of the community, the Local Spiritual Assembly. With the words "We will all, verily, abide by the will of God," recited by both bride and groom, the two commit themselves to God and, thereby, to one another.

One purpose of marriage is the creation of a new generation who will love God and serve humanity. The task of the family is, therefore, to establish a loving, respectful and harmonious relationship among parents and children.

Harmony and cooperation in the family, as in the world, are maintained in the balance of rights and responsibilities. All family members "have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole," which "vary from member to member because of their natural relationships."

Children, for instance, have the duty to obey their parents.

They also have the corresponding right to be cared for, educated

-----

and protected. Mothers, as bearers and first educators of children, are primarily, but not exclusively, responsible for their spiritual education and the creation of a loving, nurturing home. Fathers bear primary, but again not exclusive, responsibility for the financial well-being of the family and for the formal education of the children.

The personal moral standards promoted by the Baha'i teachings condemn many of the agents that contribute to the break-up of families. Alcohol is forbidden to Baha'is, as are mind-altering drugs. No form of violence or abuse within the family is ever to be tolerated. According to the Baha'i sacred writings:

The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed.

Although strongly discouraged by Baha'u'llah, divorce is permitted on the grounds of antipathy between husband and wife. It may be granted only after a year of waiting during which a couple lives separately and makes every attempt to reconcile their differences. Protected against hasty decisions and rash emotions, many couples are able to rebuild their marriages during this year of reflection. If, however, reconciliation proves impossible, the couple may divorce.

#### The Equality of the Sexes

The principle of the equality of men and women is transforming relationships within Baha'i marriages. Because they are equal partners, a status embodied in their identical wedding vows, neither husband nor wife may dominate. Decision-making is to be shared.

Always,

the atmosphere within a family as within the community as a whole should express ... not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation.

The Baha'i principles of consultation are tools for discussing openly, honestly and tactfully any problem which arises within the family. The goal is to allow "the truth to be revealed" in a way which will solve the problem to the benefit of all. When used by a couple or a family, consultation is a powerful means for maintaining unity.

Recognition of equality and the use of consultation allow a husband and wife flexibility to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. Although men and women have complementary capacities and functions in certain areas, roles are not rigidly defined and may be adjusted, when necessary, to meet

the needs of each family member and the family as a whole. While women are encouraged to pursue their careers, it is in a manner that does not conflict with their role as mothers. And fathers are not exempt from household duties and child-rearing. When relations within the family are conducted with due regard for justice, it will be an important factor in bringing about peace in the world. When women are denied equality and respect in the family, men and boys develop harmful attitudes and habits which they carry into the workplace, into political life, and ultimately into international relations. As more and more children grow up in families where the rights of all members are respected and problems are solved with the benefit of consultation, prospects for peace in the world improve.

#### Education and the Family

Although the child receives formal education at school, it is at home that character is developed and moral and spiritual attitudes are formed. Therefore, "all the virtues must be taught the family." Patience, loyalty, trustworthiness, justice, honesty such virtues as these constitute the building blocks of character.

The virtues named by all sacred traditions as the common elements of spirituality are the reflection of the divinity in each person.

While nurturing the highest qualities and values in each member of the family, parents must also provide for the integrated development of all their children's capacities-spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical. Therefore, girls and boys are to be formally educated according to the same basic curriculum. Should limited resources force a choice, daughters, as the potential trainers of the next generation, are to be granted a "prior right to education over sons."

#### The Family and the Community

The Baha'i Faith has over 17,000 organized local communities in more than 200 independent countries and territories. These communities act in some ways like extended families.

Baha'is come from all nations, ethnic groups, cultures, professions and classes. Although the Baha'i wedding ceremonies vary widely from culture to culture, the marriage laws and vows are universal and apply whether the partners are Baha'is or not. Baha'is around the world are finding that the principles and laws which give a distinctive shape to Baha'i family life are conducive to love and unity.

#### Conclusion

As the foregoing principles are gradually put into practice around the world, families are being created which are able to play a part in building a unified world society. For the link

between the family, the nation, and a world civilization destined to come in time is inescapable:

Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity.

The following statements were submitted  
by the Baha'i International  
Community to the United Nations  
World Conference on Human Rights,  
Vienna, Austria, 14-25 June 1993.

## AGENDA

### ITEM9

General debate on the progress made in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on the identification of obstacles to further progress in this area, and ways in which they can be overcome.

The community of nations has come a long way in the forty-five years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard for all people and nations. Clearly, however, it has a long way to go before the commitments inherent in the Declaration and related instruments are translated into a universal respect for human rights. Acutely aware that many obstacles hinder us from converting resolution into realization, the Baha'i International Community would like to address three obstacles that we believe particularly need close attention.

It is perhaps a truism to say that the exercise of unfettered national sovereignty is a major obstacle to the safeguarding of the human rights of all peoples, but the point deserves to be made at the outset of any discussion on the subject. Despite the establishment of international standards for human rights, many nations cling to the view that respect for those rights should be granted or withheld at the discretion of national governments. This attitude ignores the operation of forces that are drawing the world together and paving the way for the establishment of a new order based on the recognition that what happens to one member of the human family happens to us all.

A second obstacle is the lack of adequate mechanisms to enforce adherence to the provisions of the conventions.

International human rights standards are not legally binding on all governments, and compliance, even by those states that have ratified specific conventions, is voluntary. An urgent priority of the international community, therefore, is to press for the

universal ratification of the existing covenants and conventions. Alongside this process of ratification must go the strengthening of the role of the various committees established to monitor implementation, such as the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In addition, international criminal jurisdiction for crimes against humanity and for flagrant violations of internationally recognized human rights should also be invested in a permanent body.

The third obstacle to humanity's progress in this important field of development is the general lack of awareness of human rights, particularly among those entrusted with administering justice at the local level. The discussion of human rights needs to be moved from the area of legal and political policy-making to the local community, where the lives of individuals will be touched and lasting changes can be made. Educating those who administer justice about the basic human rights set forth in the Declaration is just the beginning. All citizens need not only to learn about their own rights but to develop respect for the rights of humanity in general.

It seems to us self-evident that the mobilization of effort

I

needed to overcome all three of the obstacles discussed in the foregoing must come from a recognition that humanity constitutes a single people. In the view of the Baha'i International Community the organic oneness of humanity is a fundamental social and spiritual truth of our age. Indeed, the conviction that we are all citizens of one earth, together with a commitment to the well-being and happiness of all mankind, is the foundation for the realization of the ideals expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "The earth," Baha'u'llah said over a century ago, "is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

## AGENDA

### ITEM 10

Consideration of the relationship between development, democracy and the universal enjoyment of all human rights, keeping in view the interrelationship and indivisibility of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights.

For Baha'is, the most fundamental of human rights is the right of each individual to investigate reality for himself or herself, and to benefit from the results of this exploration. That such a right exists is to us self-evident from the fact that the human consciousness is endowed with the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic capacities needed to undertake such an effort.

Most of the world's people would no doubt express in religious terms their agreement with this postulate. Throughout human history the conviction that each person has not only the right but the responsibility to "know and worship God," by whatever terminology they may have described this ultimate reality, has been inculcated by the world's great religions, arguably the most important force in the civilizing of human nature.

The central issue, however, is not a theological one. The historical record is relevant here because the religious forms are the ones through which the greater part of humanity have so far principally exercised the right to investigate reality. However hedged about that investigation no doubt was, because of the intellectual and social limitations of earlier ages, the right itself represents no new and untested hypothesis, but has lain at the foundation of what we call culture.

In exercising this right and responsibility, each individual will call, to varying degrees, on the range of capacities that characterize human nature. The development and exertion of physical well-being, experimentation with aesthetic and intellectual capacities, and the struggle to cultivate moral and spiritual

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

insight are, therefore, aspects of the practice of this inalienable feature of human life. Any or all of these capacities are engaged as human consciousness begins to explore the inner and external worlds that provide its frame of reference and constitute its field of activity.

In undertaking this search, a search that is for all practical purposes synonymous with the living of a life that can be said to be truly human, every individual needs the assurance that the exercise of the faculties referred to will enjoy access to whatever benefits, protections, and opportunities can reasonably be provided by the society in which he or she lives. These benefits include, as our draft agenda reminds us, not only civil and political rights, but also rights in the area of economic, social, and cultural life.

The session's agenda also points out, however, that this system of rights is one and indivisible. Without economic rights, the exercise of civil or social rights is severely attenuated. Without cultural rights, an individual or community will have the greatest difficulty in exercising political or economic rights to a degree that meets the essential requirements of their respective situations.

Since humanity is so diverse, true development can best be assessed by people themselves, acting individually and as communities, in terms of the overall improvement in their

quality of life. So long as such determinations do not infringe on the rights of others, the United Nations human rights system has a clear obligation to foster a climate of opinion and to elaborate a system of controls that will make this possible. In contributing to the discussion of this subject, the Baha'i International Community feels an obligation to share with this important session of the World Conference on Human Rights its conviction that the entire range of human rights under discussion derives its integrity from the right of every human being on earth to explore reality to the fullest extent of the resources available to such an effort. It is, we believe, this irreducible principle that gives the appeal for human rights both its integrity and imperative.

## AGENDA

### ITEM 11

Consideration of contemporary trends in and new challenges to the full realization of all human rights of women and men, including those of persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

The Baha'i International Community welcomes the opportunity to speak to agenda item 11 at this historic World Conference. We hope that comprehensive consideration of the human rights of women will continue at all future gatherings for the advancement of human rights, and we support the resolution adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its 1993 session urging that women's rights and concerns be considered under all substantive items of the provisional agenda for the World Conference on Human Rights.

The persistence and growth of violence directed against women, both personal and institutional, is largely attributable to the traditional exclusion of women from processes of development and decision-making. A profound adjustment in humanity's collective outlook is needed, guided by the consideration of universal values and spiritual principles. Legislation is needed which lends practical expression to the equality of the sexes by dealing with the particular injustices which women face.

Domestic violence is a fact of life for many women throughout the world, regardless of race, class, or educational background. In many societies traditional beliefs that women are a burden make them easy targets of anger. In other situations, men's frustration is vented on women and children when economies shrink and collapse. In all parts of the world, violence against women persists because it goes unpunished. Beliefs and practices that contribute to the oppression of women must be reexamined in the light of justice. When properly understood, the principle of the fundamental equality

of men and women will eventually transform all social relations, allowing each person to develop his or her unique gifts and talents. The utilization of everyone's strengths will foster the maturation of society. As the principle of equality gains acceptance, the challenge of transmitting it to the next generation must be undertaken by parents, schools, governments and NGOs.

The family is the basic unit of society: all of its members should be educated according to spiritual principles. The rights of all need to be safeguarded and children trained to respect themselves and others. According to the Baha'i writings, "The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed." Education in spiritual values is necessary not only to protect women but, indeed, to foster respect for all people, so that human honor and dignity may be preserved and a global ethos may evolve in which all human rights are upheld. The Baha'i International Community is convinced that nothing short of an infusion of spiritual values can effect the transformation of individuals and institutions that will ensure respect for the human rights of all people.

The Baha'i community, through local and national administrative councils in more than 165 countries, is working in a variety of ways to change the status and perception of women. One noteworthy example is a collaboration between UNIFEM and Baha'i communities in Bolivia, Cameroon, and Malaysia aimed at improving the status of rural women by using traditional media, such as music and dance, to stimulate village-wide discussion of women's roles. Our community's experiences and the teachings of Baha'u'llah make us confident that our world is destined to move beyond the present condition to one in which all members of the human family enjoy equally the full realization of their human rights.

## INFORMATION

REsOURcEs

OBITUARIES

Houshmand Anvari

-Gertrude Blum

See pp. 147-150.

On 5 June 1993 in the Solomon

Islands. Born Gertrude Gewertz on

9 December 1909 in New York City,

Stanley T. Bagley

she accepted the Baha'i Faith at the

On 15 April 1993 in the United

age of 19. Mrs. Blum and her

States. Born in Bertrand, Missouri,

husband, Alvin, were named Knights

USA on 2 February 1912, Stanley

of Baha'u'llah for being the first

Bagley accepted the Baha'i Faith in

Baha'is to settle in the Solomons in

1935. For nearly six decades he and his wife, Florence, devotedly spread the teachings and served on various administrative bodies in Belgium, France, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and the United States. Mr. Bagley was named a Knight of Baha'u'llah for his services opening Sicily to the Faith. Australia and New Zealand, the first Regional Spiritual Assembly of the South Pacific, and the first National Shamam Bakhshandegi Assembly of the South West Pacific Ocean. See pp. 147-150.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Virginia Breaks remained steadfast despite hardship, On 8 December 1993 in the Western including two years' incarceration Caroline Islands. Virginia Breaks for his beliefs in the late 1950s. In was born 9 November 1906 in the course of his work as a teacher of Crawfordsville, Indiana, USA, and the blind and visually-impaired, he wrote fifty-one textbooks. enrolled in the Baha'i Faith in 1947. She pioneered to Chuuk, Eastern Caroline Islands, in 1953, a service Dorothy Ferraby for which she was named a Knight of On 22 March 1994 in England. Born Baha'u'llah. Her master's degree in in London in 1904, Dorothy public health statistics from the Uni- (Cansdale) Ferraby's services to the versity of California at Berkeley Baha'i Faith extended over more than fifty years, including memthe Caroline Islands by securing a bership on the National Spiritual job as a vital statistician and medical Assembly of the British Isles and the records librarian. She remained in first Auxiliary Board in Europe. She the Caroline Islands for forty years, played a vital role in the Africa serving as an Auxiliary Board campaign launched by Shoghi member for twenty. Effendi, served the Baha'i World Centre with her husband, Hand of the \_Cause of God John Ferraby, during Leonard Chiposi \_Cause of God John Ferraby, during the period 1957-1963, and in 1968 On 10 October 1993 in Zimbabwe. began seventeen years of service as a Mr. Chiposi, born in Salisbury (now member of the Continental Board of Harare), Zimbabwe on 8 September 1928, declared his Faith in 1956, Counsellors in Europe. becoming one of the earliest indigenous believers in that country. He

Marzieh Gail

served on the National Spiritual Assembly of South Central Africa, formed in 1964, and then on the National Spiritual Assembly of Zimbabwe from 1970 to 1993. scholar Ali-Kuli Khan and American

VukEchtner

On 20 January 1994 in Czechoslovakia. Vuk Echtner, born 10 July 1905 southern Bohemia, was one of the first to embrace the Baha'i Faith in Czechoslovakia. He served the Cause for half a century, translating Baha'i literature into Czech and proclaiming the Faith in conjunction with his work as an Esperantist. He

## OBITUARIES

into English and authoring several books on the Baha'i Faith and historical subjects. She also spent ten Lavenham, Manitoba, Canada, on years in Europe with her husband, 15 May 1906, Edythe MacArthur Harold, helping to form Local enrolled as a Baha'i in 1944. She was Spiritual Assemblies and serving named a Knight of Baha'u'llah in on the National Spiritual Assembly 1953 for introducing the Faith to of Austria.

Canada's Queen Charlotte Islands.

In 1954, she pioneered to South

Emily General

first

In November 1993 in Canada.

Emily General was a distinguished leader, historian, and teacher of the Six Nations people. She embraced the Baha'i Faith in 1961. A member

of the Turtle Clan of the Mohawks, she taught the history of the

Six Nations to students from all over Canada and the United States.

In March 1994 in Brazil. One of the

On 16 October 1993 in the United States. Child of the first marriage between Persian and American Baha'is, Marzieh Gail was the daughter of Persian diplomat and

Florence Breed. She graduated

"With Great Distinction" and Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University and earned her master's degree from the University of California at Berkeley. She was the first woman to work on the staff of a Tehran newspaper. Mrs. Gail is best known for translating original Baha'i writings from Persian and Arabic

Edythe MacArthur

In April 1994 in Canada. Born in

Africa, where she served on the

Local Spiritual Assembly of Cape

Town, and then she returned to Canada, where her services include helping to form five Local

Assemblies and teaching the Faith

in numerous new localities.

Olavo Novaes

The Emily C. General School was first native Brazilians to arise to named in her honor by the people of . fulfill international pioneering goals, her Reserve. Mrs. General's strong Mr. Novaes settled in Colombia in commitment to the Faith contribthe early 1960s and was elected uted greatly to the respect with to the National Spiritual Assembly which its message was received of that country. He later pioneered to among Native C\_anadians. the upper Amazon region where he spread the Baha'i teachings until F eryloun Khazrai his death at the age of 69.

On 14 February 1994 in France.

Mr. Khazrai was born into a Baha'i Johannes Palu family on 20 March 1914 in

On 26 June 1993 in Estonia. Born in Sabzevar, Iran. He received a

Moisakiila, Estonia, on 27 May

technical education in Belgium and 1913, Mr. Palu was exiled to Siberia

worked in business in Italy before for fifteen years by the commeting the Guardian of the Baha'i munist regime. Active Esperantists,

Faith during his pilgrimage to Mr. Palu and his wife Raia became the Holy Land. He subsequently the first Estonians to accept the Faith

pioneered to Romania where he met in that region in 1968. Mr. Palu transhis wife, Arecla, and served for lated Baha 'u 'llah and the New Era

thirteen years. He was named a from Esperanto into Estonian, and in

Knight of Baha'u'llah for his 1990 he was elected to the first services to this country. Spiritual Assembly of Tallinn.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

RiazRazavi

See pp. 147-150.

and Uruguay, the National Spiritual Assembly of Colombia, and the

Mr. Saliyanto National Spiritual Assembly of

On 14 November 1993 in Indo- Bolivia.

nesia. Mr. Saliyanto was born

10 December 1941 in a small village

in East Java. After accepting the Vivian Wesson

Baha'i Faith in 1961, he began more than thirty years of service which included travelling to remote villages to inspire and encourage fellow Baha'is, serving on the National Spiritual Assembly from 1967 to

1974, and participating in a number of international Baha'i conferences. country,

she settled in Liberia where she started a literacy school and helped May Martha Seepe establish a Baha'i Center and the first

In August 1993 in South Africa. Mrs. Seepe, who declared her Faith in 1955, was the first member of South Africa's Coloured community to become a Baha'i. Speaking English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Zulu, and Xhosa, May travelled with her Valerie Wilson

husband, Max, to seven countries of southern Africa and throughout her own country to teach the Baha'i Faith. She served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Johannesburg therefor more than thirty years until her

death at the age of 75. Liberia, where she settled in answer to a call by the Guardian. A graduate

Ellen Catherine Sims of the School of Physiotherapy of Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, On 24 August 1993 in Paraguay. Born Ellen Lincoln in Hurley, Wisconsin, USA, on 14 March 1906, Mrs. Sims embraced the Faith in 1938, a few months before her husband, Stuart, enrolled. Her fifty-five years of service to the Cause included pioneering to Paraguay, Colombia, and Bolivia. She was a member and officer of the Regional

On 12 January 1994 in the United States. Born 12 March 1895 in Texarkana, Texas, USA, she accepted the Baha'i Faith in 1921. Mrs. Wesson was named a Knight of Baha'u'llah for bringing the Faith

to French Togo land (now Togo) in 1954. Unable to stay in that

Local Spiritual Assembly. She also helped to establish Baha'i administrative bodies in Sierra Leone between 1977 and 1982.

On 1 October 1993 in the United States. Valerie Wilson was born 7 September 1919 in the United States and became one of the first African-American professional artists. She placed her skills at

service of the people of Monrovia,

of the School of Physiotherapy of Children's Hospital in Los Angeles, she introduced physiotherapy to the Monrovia Hospital, treated numerous patients, and organized nutrition classes for women. She served on the Regional National Spiritual Assembly for North and West Africa and helped to establish the National Spiritual Assembly of Liberia.

## STATISTICS

### General Statistics

Worldwide Baha'i population

More than 5 million

Countries/dependent territories where Baha'i Faith is established	188 countries/ 45 territories
Continental Counsellors	72
Auxiliary Board members serving throughout the world	
National/Regional Spiritual Assemblies	165
Local Spiritual Assemblies	17,974
Localities where Baha'is reside	116,421
Tribes, races and ethnic groups represented in the Baha'i community	
Languages into which Baha'u'llah's writings have been translated	
Baha'i Publishing Trusts	30

All statistics as of May 1993

Geographic distribution of Local Spiritual Assemblies by continent

~Africa 5523

Americas 4881

Europe 832

Australasia 908

Growth in the number of localities where Baha'is reside

120000

100000

80000

60000

40000

20000

0

1Q~4 1QAo 1Qfi5 1970 1Q7fi 1QRO 1QRfi 1QO

1. Between 1986 and 1988, a numerical decrease of 6,100 localities occurred in India alone due to revised civil areas of jurisdiction; similar changes took place in other countries.

## STATISTICS

Growth in the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies

Social and Economic Development 2

Baha'i radio stations

6

Academic: 178

Baha'i schools	
Tutorial: 488	
Baha'i literacy programs	186
Baha'i conservation/ environment projects	
Baha'i agricultural projects	21
Baha'i health projects	56
Baha'i women and youth projects	52
Other Baha'i development projects	311

Total number of Baha'i social and  
1,350  
economic development projects in 1992

2. The figures for social and economic development are as of April 1992, the end of the Six Year Plan.

Geographic distribution of social and economic  
development projects by continent

Europe 30

#### DIRECTORY

Asociacion de Estudios Baha'is	Association for Baha'i Studies,
Casilla 3731	Central, South and East Africa
Santiago 1	P.O. Box 47562
Chile	Nairobi
Kenya	
Association for Baha'i Studies 1	
34 Copernicus Street	Association for Baha'i Studies,
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7K4	English-Speaking Europe
Canada	27 Rutland Gate
London SW7 1PD	
Association for Baha'i Studies,	United Kingdom
Australia	
c/o The National Spiritual Assembly	Association for Baha'i Studies,
of the Baha'is of Australia	Spain
P.O. Box 285	C/Pep Ventura 57
Mona Vale	1 C 00810 Pere de Ribes
New South Wales 2103	Barcelona
Australia	Spain

1. For further information on other Associations for Baha'i Studies around the world, contact this office.

Association for Baha'i Studies,	Baha'i International Community
West Africa	Haifa Offices:
P.O. Box 2029	• Secretariat
Lagos	• Office of Public Information

Nigeria P.O. Box 155  
31-00 1 Haifa  
Association Medicale Baha'ie Israel  
45 rue Pergolese  
F-75116 Paris Baha'i International Community  
France New York Offices

- United Nations Office

Bahaa Esperanto-Ligo (BEL) • Office for the Advancement of  
P.O. Box 500133 Women  
D-60391 Frankfurt • Office of the Environment  
Germany • Office of the Administrator-  
General

Baha'i Association for the Arts  
866 United Nations Plaza  
Dintel20  
Suite 120  
7333 MC Apeldoorn  
New York, NY 10017  
Netherlands  
USA  
Baha'i Business and Economic  
Baha'i International Community  
Association  
Geneva Office:  
P.O.Box40

- United Nations Office

Shawnigan Lake  
Route des Morillons 15  
British Columbia VOR 2WO  
CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex  
Canada  
Geneva  
Baha'i Business and Professional Switzerland  
Association  
Baha'i International Community  
P.O. Box 737  
Paris Office:  
Willoughby

- Office of Public Information

New South Wales 2068  
45 rue Pergolese  
Australia  
F-75116 Paris  
Baha'i Health Agency France  
c/o the National Spiritual  
Baha'i International Health  
Assembly of the Baha'is of the

Agency  
United Kingdom  
P.O. Box 510  
27 Rutland Gate  
Westmount, Quebec H3Z 2T6  
London SW7 1PD  
Canada  
United Kingdom

#### DIRECTORY

Baha'i Justice Society                      Hong Kong Baha'i Professional  
400 Renaissance Center                      Society  
34th Floor                                      c/o Hankow Centre 11/F  
Detroit, MI 48243                              Middle Road  
USA    TST, Kowloon  
Hong Kong

Baha'i Medical Association of  
Canada                                      International Association of Baha'i  
Box 143, RR#2                                      Publishers and Distributors  
Dugald, Manitoba ROE OKO                      Riouwstraat 27  
Canada                                      2585 GR The Hague  
Netherlands

Baha'i Office of the Environment  
for Taiwan                                      Landegg Academy  
149-13 Hsin Sheng                              CH-9405 Wienacht/AR  
South Road Section 1                              Switzerland  
Taipei 10626  
Taiwan ROC                                      Mottahedeh Development  
Services

Comite de l' Association Europeen              866 United Nations Plaza  
Francophone pour les Etudes              Suite 119  
Baha'ies                                      New York, NY 10017-1811  
c/o The National Spiritual Assembly      USA  
of the Baha'is of Switzerland

Dufourstrasse 13                              World Community Foundation  
CH-3005Bem                                      315 West 70th St.  
Switzerland                                      Suite 9B  
New York, NY 10023

European Baha'i Business Forum              USA  
Secretariat  
35 avenue Jean-Jaures  
73000 Chambery  
France                                      Baha'i Publishing Trusts

European Baha'i Youth Council              ARGENTINA  
53 Ravenscroft Avenue                      Editorial Baha'i Indolatinoamericana  
Wembley                                      Otamendi 215

Middlesex HA9 9TE United Kingdom	1405 Buenos Aires, C.F. Argentina
Health for Humanity 467 Jackson Street Glencoe, IL 60022 USA Australia	AUSTRALIA Baha'i Publications Australia P.O. Box285 Mona Vale NSW 2103
BELGIUM Maison d'Editions Baha'ies 205 rue du Trone B-1 050 Brussels Belgium	ITALY Casa Editrice Baha'i Via Filippo Turati, 9 I-00040 Ariccia (Rome) Italy
BRAZIL Editora Baha'i Brasil Rua Conego Eugenio Leite, 350 05414 Sao Paulo SP- Brazil Japan	JAPAN Baha'i Publishing Trust 7-2-13 Shinjuku Shinjuku-ku Tokyo 160
COTE D 'IVOIRE Maison d'Editions Baha'ies 08 B.P. 879 Abidjan 08 Cote d 'Ivoire Kenya	KENYA Baha'i Publishing Agency P.O. Box 47562 Nairobi
FIJI ISLANDS Baha'i Publishing Trust P.O. Box 2007 Government Buildings Suva Fiji Islands	KOREA Baha'i Publishing Trust C.P.O. Box 991 Seoul 100-609 Korea
GERMANY Baha'i-Verlag Eppsteiner Strasse 89 D-65719 Hofheim Germany Setapak	LEBANON2 MALAYSIA Baha'i Publishing Trust 4 Lorong Titiwangsa 5 53200 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia
HONG KONG Baha'i Publishing Trust C-6, 11th Floor, Hankow Centre Tsim Sha Tsui Kowloon Hong Kong 2585 GR The Hague	NETHERLANDS Stichting Baha'i Literatuur Riouwstraat 27 Netherlands
INDIA Baha'i Publishing Trust	

P.O. Box 19  
New Delhi 110 001  
India  
Lagos  
Nigeria

NIGERIA  
Baha'i Publishing Trust  
P.O. Box 2029

2. Address communications to Baha'i World Centre, P.O. Box 155,  
31-001, Haifa, Israel.

#### DIRECTORY

#### NORWAY

Baha'i Forlag  
Drammensveien 110 A  
N-0273 Oslo  
Norway

#### SPAIN

Editorial Baha'i de Espana  
Castellet 17 ES-08222 Terrassa  
Barcelona  
Spain

#### PAKISTAN

Baha'i Publishing Trust  
P.O. Box 7420  
Karachi-7 4400  
Pakistan

#### SWEDEN

Baha'i Forlaget AB  
Box468  
S-194 04 Upplands Vasby  
Sweden

#### PHILIPPINES

Baha'i Publishing Trust  
1070 A. Roxas,  
comer Bautista Street  
Singalong Subdivision  
Manila  
Philippines

#### TAIWAN

Baha'i Publishing Trust  
#149-13 Hsin Sheng S. Road  
Section 1  
Taipei  
Taiwan  
ROC

#### POLAND

Baha'i Publishing Trust  
ul. Kazimierza Wielkiego 3/12  
P0-30-074 Krakow  
Poland

#### UGANDA

. Baha'i Publishing Trust  
P.O. Box 2662  
Kampala  
Uganda

#### PORTUGAL

Editora Baha'i de Portugal  
Avenida Ventura Terra, No. 1  
1600 Lisbon  
Portugal  
England

#### UNITED KINGDOM

Baha'i Publishing Trust  
6 Mount Pleasant  
Oakham  
Leicestershire LE 15 6HU

#### ROMANIA

Casa de Editura ~i Tipografia  
Baha'i  
C.P. 996 O.P. 13  
R0-3400 Cluj-Napoca  
Romania

UNITED STATES  
Baha'i Publishing Trust  
415 Linden Avenue  
Wilmette, IL 60091  
USA

#### RUSSIA

Unity Baha'i Publishing Trust  
Konnogvardayski Boulevard, #21  
St. Petersburg 190098  
Russia

-- - - - - á

Selected NEW  
PUBLICATIONS

The Arc of Ascent: The Purpose of Physical Reality II

John S. Hatcher. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 386 pp.

In a sequel to *The Purpose of Physical Reality: The Kingdom of Names*, Professor of English Literature John S. Hatcher employs philosophy, theology, psychology, history, and literature to demonstrate how the social order revealed in Baha'i scripture provides the workshop by which the collective social advancement of civilization will work in concert with the individual's attempt to fulfill his or her inherent purpose .

.Asiyih Khanum, *The Most Exalted Leaf* entitled N avvab

Baharieh Ma' ani. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 96 pp.

This biographical essay about the wife of Baha'u'llah and mother of 'Abdu'l-Baha sheds light on one of the central female figures in the history of the Baha'i Faith, who shared her Husband's long years of exiles and privations.

*The Bab: The Herald of the Day of Days*

H. M. Balyuzi. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 272 pp.

Reprinted in honor of the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of the Bah.

*The Challenge of Baha'u'lhih*

Gary L. Matthews. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 284 pp.

The author explores a number of avenues of inquiry into the claim of Baha'u'lhih that He is the Messenger of God for this age and that His teachings hold the key to a peaceful world.

*The Chinese Religion and the Baha'i Faith*

Phyllis Ghim Lian Chew. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 244 pp.

A study of the development of the Chinese Religion and its roots in Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, comparing its spiritual and social teachings with those of the Baha'i Faith.

*Distinctive Aspects of Baha'i Education: Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Baha'i Education*

Edited by Hooshang Nikjoo and Stephen Vickers. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993. 196 pp.

This collection of papers by educationalists, teachers, and parents from Europe and North America explores the importance of spiritual principles in the development of moral character and the release of

human potential. -

### Fires in Many Hearts

Doris McKay, with Paul Vreeland. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1993. 338 pp.

An intimate glimpse into the life of a dedicated Baha'i teacher and the development of the Baha'i Faith in America, this autobiography traces the services of Doris McKay and her husband, Willard, which began in 1925.

Friendship and Love: Jewels from the Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha  
'Abdu'l-Baha. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994. 48 pp. each.  
Quotations from 'Abdu'l-Baha on each topic are accompanied by photographs.

From Vision to Victory: Thirty Years of the Universal House of Justice .

Eunice Braun. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 148 pp.

Eunice Braun traces thirty years of Baha'i development throughout the world since the first election in 1963 of the Universal House of Justice.

### NJW pUBLICATIONS

Hidden Bounties: Memories of Pioneering on the Magdalen Archipelago

Larry Rowdon. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1994. 142 pp. Introduction by Roger White.

The story of a Canadian couple and their daughter who resettled in the Magdalen Islands from 1954 to 1969 to share the Baha'i Faith with the people of that archipelago.

Light After Death: A Comparison of the Near Death Experience and the Teachings of the Baha'i Faith on Life After Death  
Alan Bryson. India: Sterling Publishers Private, Ltd., 1993. 84 pp.

Mirror of the Divine: Art in the Baha'i World Community

Ludwig Tuman. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 336 pp.

This book considers the purpose of art and the ways in which the arts contribute to the well-being of humanity.

Olya's Story: A Survivor's Dramatic Account of the Persecution of the Bah a 'is in Revolutionary Iran

Olya Roohizadegan. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993. 236 pp.

A detailed eyewitness account of the situation of members of the Baha'i community in Iran following the Islamic Revolution in 1979 which chronicles the experiences of one woman who was arrested and imprisoned for her belief.

On the Shoulders of Giants

Craig Loehle. Oxford: George Ronald, 1994. 202 pp.

Drawing on the works of both Baha'u'llah and Sir Isaac Newton and

using his background in mathematical ecology, Dr. Craig Loehle explores how a genuine partnership between religion and science can illuminate humanity's approaches to issues such as racism, the environment, and human development .

#### The Psychology of Spirituality

Hossain B. Danesh. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1994. 272 pp.

Psychiatrist Hossain Danesh examines modern psychology through the lens provided by his understanding of the Baha'i spiritual teachings.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

##### The Quest

Gail Radley, with illustrations by Margaret Bremner. Manotick, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 1993. 64 pp.

A storybook for children ages 10 to 16 that describes the journey of the fictional character Lona as she traverses the seven valleys described in Baha'u'l-hih's mystical work by that name.

##### Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress, second edition

Richard W. Thomas. Ottawa: Association for Baha'i Studies, 1993.

Preface by John H. Stanfield II. 202 pp.

A professor in the Department of History and the Urban Affairs Program at Michigan State University, Richard Thomas has integrated materials from his areas of research interest, the black urban community, race relations, and interracial cooperation, into a cogent examination of race relations as a central issue in developing an understanding of American history and social structure.

##### Robe of Light: The Persian Years of the Supreme Prophet

Baha'u'l-hih, 1817-1853

David S. Ruhe. Oxford: George Ronald, 1993. 230 pp.

The first volume of Dr. David Ruhe's study of the life of Baha'u'llah deals with the years stretching from His birth to His banishment to Iraq, including the period when He was incarcerated in the underground prison in Tehran and became aware of His station as the Manifestation of God for this age.

##### The Vision of Shoghi Effendi: Proceedings of the Association for Baha'i Studies 9th Annual Conference

Association for Baha'i Studies. Ottawa: Association for Baha'i Studies, 1993. 234 pp.

This volume contains reminiscences about the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith and essays on various aspects of his ministry.

#### 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 BAHU'ULLAH

##### The Kitab-i-Aqdas

"The Most Holy Book," Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic in 1873, the volume's first authorized English translation was released in 1993.

##### The Kitab-i-iqan

"The Book of Certitude" was written prior to 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

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 Baha'u'llah's sacred writings translated and compiled by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to convey the spirit of Baha'u'llah's life and teachings.

#### WRITINGS OF THE BAB

##### Selections from the Writings of the Bab

The first compilation of the Bab's writings to be translated into English.

#### SELECTED WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

##### Paris Talks

Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to a wide variety of audiences in Paris in 1911-1912, explaining the basic principles of the Baha'i Faith.

##### The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rulers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and rise of civilization and elucidating the spiritual character of true civilization.

##### Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha

A compilation of selected letters from 'Abdu'l-Baha's extensive correspondence on a wide variety of topics, including the purpose of life, the nature of love, and the development of

character.

#### Some Answered Questions

A translation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's answers to a series of questions posed to Him during interviews with Laura Clifford Barney between 1904 and 1906. The topics covered include the influence of the Prophets in the evolution of humanity, the Baha'i perspective on Christian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

#### BAHA'I READING LIST

##### SELECTED WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

###### God Passes By

A detailed history of the first one hundred years of the Baha'i Faith.

###### The Promised Day Is Come

A commentary on Baha'u'llah's letters to the kings and rulers of the world.

###### World Order of Baha'u'lhih

An exposition on the relation between the Baha'i community and the entire process of social evolution under the dispensation of Baha'u'llah, in the form of a series of letters from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'is of the West between 1929 and 1936.

#### INTRODUCTORY WORKS

##### Baha'u'llah

Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, 1991.

A brief statement detailing Baha'u'llah's life and work issued on the occasion of the centenary of His passing.

##### Baha'u'llah and the New Era

John Esslemont. 5th rev. papered. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990.

The first comprehensive account of the Baha'i Faith, written in 1923 and updated for subsequent editions.

##### The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion

William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985.

Textbook providing an overview of Baha'i history, teachings, administrative structures, and community life.

##### All Things Made New

John Ferraby. 2nd rev. ed. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987.

A comprehensive outline of the Baha'i Faith.

Most of the books listed above have been printed by various Baha'i Publishing Trusts and are available in book shops, 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 purpose of propagation and protection of the Faith under the guidance of the Head of that Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum: 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 Ruhiyyih Khanum Rabbani. (Amatu'l-Baha is a title meaning "Handmaiden of Baha'u'llah.") She served as the Guardian's secretary during his lifetime and was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in 1952. She is the most prominent dignitary of the Baha'i community.

Arc: An arc cut into Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel; along this pathway 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.

Bah, the: The title, meaning "Gate," assumed by Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, the Prophet-Founder of the Babi Faith and the Forerunner of Baha'u'llah. Born 20 October 1819, the Bah 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 Bah 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 Bah 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.

**Baha'u'lhih:** Title assumed by Mirza J: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. Baha'u'llah's writings are considered by Baha'is to be direct revelation from God.

**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 the Hands of the Cause of God, particularly its appointed functions of protection and propagation. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, there was no way for additional Hands of the Cause to be appointed. The duties of the Counsellors include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, advising and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Faith in their areas. Counsellors are appointed for terms of five years.

**Convention:** A gathering called at a regional, national, or international level for consultation on matters affecting the welfare of the Baha'i community and for the purpose, respectively, of electing delegates to a National Convention, electing the members of a National Spiritual Assembly, or electing the members of the Universal House of Justice.

**German Templar Colony:** Group of houses with red-tiled roofs at the foot of Mount Carmel that once housed members of the Society of the Temple, founded in Germany in the mid-1800s. Templers foregathered in Haifa in 1863 to await the second coming of Christ.

Hands of the Cause of God: Individuals appointed first by Baha'u'llah, and others named later by Shoghi Effendi, who were charged with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi there is no further possibility for appointing 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

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

Continental Boards of Counsellors and in 1973 established the International Teaching Centre which coordinates their work.

Holy Days: Eleven days commemorating significant Baha'i anniversaries, on nine of which work is suspended.

~uququ'lhih: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn" (at present, the Universal House of Justice) of 19 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 all the surviving Hands of the Cause and also nine Counsellors appointed by the Universal House of Justice. The seat of the International Teaching Centre is located at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, Israel.

Knight of Baha'u'lhih: Title initially given by Shoghi Effendi to those Baha'is who arose to open new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached those remaining unopened territories at a later date.

Local Spiritual Assembly: The local administrative body in the Baha'i Faith, ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The nine members are directly elected by secret ballot each year at Ri<;ivan from among the adult believers in a community.

Monument Gardens: Beautifully landscaped gardens at the heart of the Arc on Mount Carmel where befitting monuments have been erected over the graves of the daughter, wife, and youngest son of Baha'u'llah, and also the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

## GLOSSARY

**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 Bah 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 Riçivan 1993, there were 165 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.

**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.

**Ri"van:** Arabic for "Paradise." The twelve-day festival (from 21 April through 2 May) commemorating Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission to His companions in 1863 in the Garden of Riçivan 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 Bah's mortal remains, located on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel, and a sacred site to Baha'is.

**Tablet:** Divinely revealed scripture. In Baha'i scripture, the term is used to denote writings revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

**Universal House of Justice:** Head of the Baha'i Faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, supreme administrative body ordained

by Baqa'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The Universal House of Justice ' is elected every five years by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies who gather at an International Convention. The House of Justice was elected for the first time in 1963 and occupied its permanent Seat on Mount Carmel in 1983.

Adapted from A Basic Baha'i Dictionary, Wendi Mornen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989).

— The Baha'i World: Volume 22 (1993-1994) (Used by permission of the curator)