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INTRODUCTI9N  
TO THE B AHA'I  
C OMMUNITY

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

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

The Baha'i international community, comprising members of the Baha'i Faith from all over the globe, now numbers some five million souls. They represent 2, 112 ethnic and tribal groups and live in more than 127,000 localities in 190 independent countries and 45 dependent territories or overseas departments. What was once regarded by some as a small, obscure sect was reported by the Encyclopaedia Britannica 1992 Yearbook to be the secondmost widely spread independent religion in the world, after Christianity. Its membership cuts across all boundaries of class and race, governing itself through the establishment of local and national elected bodies known as Spiritual Assemblies. Its international center and the seat of its world-governing council, known as the Universal House of Justice, are located in the Holy Land, in Haifa, Israel.

From what source do the members of the Baha'i Faith draw

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

### Origins

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

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and later executed in July 1850. The horrific treatment of the Babis at the hands of the secular and religious authorities was recorded by a number of Western diplomats, scholars, and travelers, who expressed their admiration for the character and fortitude of the victims of the persecution.

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

Mirza Irfan- 'Ali was one of the leading adherents of the Babi Faith who was arrested and imprisoned during the tumultuous years of the Bab's brief ministry. He was spared from execution but was banished from Persia to Baghdad, Constantinople, Adrianople, and finally the penal colony of Acre in Palestine. Thus, the Persian government, which had secured the support of the rulers of the rival Ottoman empire in suppressing the new movement, expected that His sphere of influence would be severely limited. During His initial imprisonment Mirza Irfan- 'Ali had received the first divine intimations that He was the Promised One of whom the Bab had spoken. He adopted the title Baha'u'llah, which means "the Glory of God," and publicly declared His mission on the eve of His exile from Baghdad, in April 1863.

Baha'u'llah was still nominally a prisoner when He passed away some forty years later in Acre, in May 1892, although the authorities

had gradually loosened their restrictions as they became acquainted with Him and the nature of His teachings. During the long years of His exile Baha'u'llah revealed the equivalent of over one hundred volumes of writings, consisting of the laws and ordinances of His dispensation, letters to the kings and rulers of the East and the West, mystical teachings, and other divinely inspired writings. In His Will and Testament, Baha'u'llah appointed His eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, who adopted the title 'Abdu'l-Baha ("the Servant of Baha"), as His successor and sole authoritative interpreter of His

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teachings. 'Abdu'l-Baha had shared His Father's long exile and imprisonment and was freed only after a new regime was installed by the "Young Turk" movement in 1908. Shortly thereafter, at an advanced age, He embarked on an arduous journey to Europe and America where, from 1911 to 1913, He proclaimed Baha'u'llah's message of universal brotherhood and peace to large audiences, consolidated fledgling Baha'í communities, and warned of the potential catastrophe looming on Europe's darkening horizon. By the outbreak of World War I in 1914, 'Abdu'l-Baha had returned to His home in Haifa, just across the bay from Acre, and devoted Himself to caring for the local people, fending off famine by feeding them from stores of grain He had safeguarded for just such an eventuality. 'Abdu'l-Baha's humanitarian services and His promotion of intercultural harmony were recognized by the British government, which, at the end of the war, conferred upon Him a knighthood, a title He acknowledged, although He declined to use it. He passed away in 1921 and is buried on Mount Carmel in a vault near the spot where He had interred the remains of the Bab some years before.

Among the legacies that 'Abdu'l-Baha bequeathed to history was a series of letters called the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which He had addressed to the Baha'ís of North America during the years of World War I. These fourteen letters directed the recipients to scatter to countries on all continents and share with their populations the teachings of Baha'u'llah- a mandate that led to the global expansion of the Baha'í community.

Another of 'Abdu'l-Baha's legacies was His Will and Testament, which Baha'ís regard as the charter of the administrative order conceived by Baha'u'llah. In this document, 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as His successor, to act as Guardian of the Baha'í Faith and authorized interpreter of its teachings. During the period of his Guardianship, from 1921 to 1957, Shoghi Effendi concentrated his attention on four main areas: the development of the Baha'í World Centre in the environs of Haifa; the translation and interpretation of the Baha'í sacred writings; the rise and consolidation of the institutions of the Baha'í administrative

order; and the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan for the propagation of the Baha'i Faith around the world.

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

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

### Development of the Administrative Order

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

The first step in this development was to encourage the organized, planned expansion of Baha'i communities in places where local and national Baha'i councils, known as Spiritual Assemblies, would eventually be established. The Guardian effected this global expansion of Baha'i communities through a series of international

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plans of varying duration, during which twelve National Spiritual Assemblies were elected.

At the time of Shoghi Effendi's sudden passing in 1957, the Baha'i community was in the middle of a global plan of expansion

and consolidation called the "Ten Year Crusade." During this period, which concluded in 1963- the centenary of Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission in the Garden of Ridwan in Baghdad the goal was to open 132 new countries and major territories to the Faith and expand existing communities in 120 countries and territories that had previously been opened to the Faith. These ambitious targets were actually exceeded by the end of the plan, in spite of the difficulties posed by the Guardian's death.

'Abdu'l-Baha, in His Will and Testament, had authorized the continuation of the Guardianship through the appointment by the Guardian of a successor from among his own sons, should he have them, or other direct descendants of Baha'u'llah. Such a designation was dependent upon the decision of Shoghi Effendi as to whether an individual could be named who met the demanding spiritual qualifications specified by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. Shoghi Effendi had no children and died without designating such a Guardian to follow him. He had, however, taken steps toward the election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Baha'i Faith which was to function, with him, as one of the two authorized successors provided for in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. He had also appointed a number of individual Baha'is to an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship called "Hands of the Cause of God." These individuals had been charged with the duty of protecting the unity of the faith and collaborating with the National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to ensure that the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were won. Upon Shoghi Effendi's passing, these men and women guided the Baha'i community to complete the plan initiated by the Guardian and to hold the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. Conceived by Baha'u'llah Himself, the institution of the Universal House of Justice is established on principles laid down in the Baha'i sacred writings. Its election, by the members of the fifty- six National Spiritual Assemblies that existed in April 1963, clearly demonstrated the principle of unity so central to the Baha'i

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Faith, with the nine members coming from four continents and representing a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds. Based on the authority conferred on it by the Founder of the Faith, the Universal House of Justice stands as the acknowledged central authority in the worldwide Baha'i community and has, during the past thirty-six years, launched six global plans for the advancement of the Faith. From a worldwide population of 408,000 in 1963, the Baha' i community has grown to approximately five million members; the number of National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies has grown from 56 to 179; and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies has increased from 3,555 to some 12,500.

Baha'is live in 235 countries and territories around the planet.

Spiritual and Moral Teachings and Baha'i Community Life

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

At this stage of humanity's development, the unity of the human race must be recognized, the equality of women and men must be established, the extremes of wealth and poverty must be eliminated, and the age-old promise of universal peace must be realized.

Likening the development of the human race to that of a child, the

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Baha'i writings say that we have passed through stages analogous to infancy and childhood and are now in the midst of a tumultuous adolescence, on the threshold of maturity. Baha'u'llah taught that humanity is destined to come of age, but the course it takes to achieve that goal is entirely in its own hands.

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

There are no dietary restrictions in the Baha'i Faith, but the consumption of alcohol and the use of narcotic and hallucinogenic

drugs are forbidden, as they affect the mind and interfere with spiritual growth. Baha'u'llah counseled Baha'is to be honest and trustworthy, to render service to humanity with an abundance of deeds rather than mere words, to be chaste in their relationships with others, and to avoid gossip and backbiting. He forbade lying, stealing, adultery, sodomy, and promiscuity. The importance of the family is central to Baha'i community life, as is the moral and spiritual education of children.

Baha'is often gather together in their communities to study the sacred writings of their faith and to pray, but a central feature in Baha'i community life is a meeting called the "Nineteen Day Feast," at which all members join in worship, consult about community affairs, and socialize. Pending the further development of Baha'i communities, these meetings often occur in rented facilities, people's homes, or in the local Baha'i center. The Baha'i writings call for the erection in each community of a beautifully designed House of Worship, set in exquisite gardens and functioning as a spiritual center of activity. A variety of social and humanitarian institutions are also to be established around it. A Baha'i House of Worship

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presently exists on each continent, and sites have been purchased around the world for the construction of many more. They are open to people of all faiths-or those professing no particular faith-for prayer and meditation. Services are nondenominational. There are no sermons, only readings and prayers from the Baha'i writings and scriptures of other world faiths and music by an a capella choir. This preserves for worshippers the sacredness of the experience of hearing and meditating upon the Holy Word without the interference of man-made concepts .

#### Aims, Objectives, and Activities

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

development policies. To coordinate its international efforts in these areas, the Baha' i International Community's United Nations Office and Office of Public Information, as well as Offices of the Environment and for the Advancement of Women, collaborate with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world in various projects and representations at international gatherings. The Baha'i International Community's activities at the United Nations have earned it a reputation as one of the most effective religious NGOs in the UN system. Its national and international representatives have taken active roles in the major world summits and NGO forums sponsored by the United Nations during the past decade.

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

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. 1

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

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

agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race. 2

To make its aims and objectives widely known and to promote

1. Shoghi Effendi , *The World Order of Baha 'u 'llah: Selected Letters*, 2d ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 203.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

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

The Baha'i community has also taken a proactive approach in promulgating its views. The statement on peace issued by the Universal House of Justice in 1985, entitled *The Promise of World Peace*, sparked a worldwide campaign of presentations and public education projects throughout the International Year of Peace and since, aimed at government figures, leaders of thought, and the general population. The centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing in 1992 was commemorated, in part, with the publication of a statement detailing His life, teachings , and mission, designed to increase knowledge of the Baha' i Faith among members of the public. Other events of that signal year included a gathering in the Holy Land in May, involving some three thousand participants from all over the world, and the Baha'i World Congress, held in New York City in November, which brought together some 27,000 Baha'is from all regions of the globe. A statement presenting the Baha'i perspective on social development, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, was disseminated at the World Summit for Social Development in

3. See pp. 151 - 54, 279- 86, and 287- 93 for further information on the continuing persecution of Iran 's Baha'i community.

Copenhagen in March 1995, and later that year a statement entitled Turning Point for All Nations was released as a contribution to discussions on the future of the United Nations that marked the organization's fiftieth anniversary. Most recently, the Baha'i International Community has released Who Is Writing the Future?

Reflections on the Twentieth Century.

The Baha'i community has also been continually engaged in a series of international teaching plans. It has seen rapid expansion in different parts of the world, perhaps most notably in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where national Baha'i communities have been established in recent years following the collapse of long-standing political barriers. New national governing bodies are also being formed elsewhere, as the Universal House of Justice deems communities to have reached a sufficient level of maturity. The existence and growth of the Baha'i community offers irrefutable evidence that humanity, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work together in harmony. While Baha'is are not unaware of the turmoil in the world surrounding them, their view is succinctly depicted in the following words, taken from The Prosperity of Humankind:

A world is passing away and a new one is struggling to be born. The habits, attitudes, and institutions that have accumulated over the centuries are being subjected to tests that are as necessary to human development as they are inescapable. What is required of the peoples of the world is a measure of faith and resolve to match the enormous energies with which the Creator of all things has endowed this spiritual springtime of the race. 4

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

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

WRITINGS

MESSAGES

BAHA'I

SACRED

WRITINGS

From the Writings of Baha' u'llah

This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendors of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We

have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days. This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: "Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the foot-stool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne." The realm of glory exclaimeth: "Would that my life could be sacrificed for thee, for He Who is the Beloved of the All-Merciful hath established His sovereignty upon thee, through the power of His Name that hath been promised unto all things, whether of the past or of the future." This is the Day whereon every sweet smelling thing hath derived its fragrance from the smell of My garment—a garment that hath shed its perfume upon the whole of creation. This is the Day whereon the rushing waters of everlasting life have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful. Haste ye, with your hearts and souls, and quaff your fill, O Concourse of the realms above!

Say: He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it. He it is Who hath laid bare before you the hidden and treasured Gem, were ye to seek it. He it is Who is the one Beloved of all things, whether of the past or of the future. Would that ye might set your hearts and hopes upon Him!

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this worldwide regeneration. This is the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this wronged One to mankind. Wherefore fear ye, O My well-beloved ones? Who is it that can dismay you? A touch of moisture sufficeth to dissolve the hardened clay out of which this perverse generation is molded. The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people . . . Every man of insight will, in this day, readily admit that the counsels which the Pen of this wronged One hath revealed constitute the supreme animating power for the advancement of the world and the exaltation of its peoples. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies—gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of, their wretched worshipers. These idols form the obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the path of perfection. We cherish the hope that the Hand of Divine power may lend its assistance to mankind, and deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.

Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every

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idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiased mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory.

Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it. No sooner, however, had the Day Star of His Revelation manifested itself in the heaven of God's Will, than all, except those whom the Almighty was pleased to guide, were found dumbfounded and heedless.

O thou that hast remembered Me! The most grievous veil hath shut out the peoples of the earth from His glory, and hindered them from hearkening to His call. God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, "the Kingdom is God's," may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples.

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God's good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created Days. How great the felicity that awaiteth the man that forsaketh all he hath in a desire to obtain the things of God! Such a man, We testify, is among God's blessed ones.

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll. With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God. Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth are entirely unworthy of his station. Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be

dumbfounded. Should the greatness of this Day be revealed in its fullness, every man would forsake a myriad lives in his longing to partake, though it be for one moment, of its great glory-how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!

Be ye guided by wisdom in all your doings, and cleave ye tenaciously unto it. Please God ye may all be strengthened to carry out that which is the Will of God, and may be graciously assisted to appreciate the rank conferred upon such of His loved ones as have arisen to serve Him and magnify His name. Upon them be the glory of God, the glory of all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and the glory of the inmates of the most exalted Paradise, the heaven of heavens.

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha

Do ye know in what cycle ye are created and in what age ye exist? This is the age of the Blessed Perfection and this is the time of the Greatest Name! This is the century of the Manifestation, the age of the Sun of all horizons and the beautiful springtime of the Eternal One!

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; bounty is overflowing; mercy universal; rain is descending from the clouds of compassion; the brilliant sun is shining; the full moon adometh the ethereal horizon; the great ocean-tide is flooding every little stream; gifts and favors follow one upon the other and a refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the :fragrant perfume of the blossoms.

If we are not happy and joyous at this season, for what other season shall we wait and for what other time shall we look?

Boundless treasure is in the hand of the King of Kings! Lift the hem of thy garment to receive it.

This is the time for growing; the season for joyous gathering!

Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand; leap and dance with ecstasy in the triumphal procession of the Covenant! Place your confidence in the everlasting bounty, turn to the presence of the

#### B AHA'I S ACRED WRITI NGS

generous God; ask assistance from the kingdom of Abha; seek confirmation from the Supreme World; turn thy vision to the horizon of eternal wealth; and pray for help from the Source of Mercy!

Soon shall ye see the friends attaining their longed-for destination and pitching their tents, while we are but in the first day of our Journey.

Thank divine Providence that thou hast been assisted in service and hast been the cause of the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, so that the darkness of differences among men may be dissipated, and the pavilion of the unity of nations may cast its shadow over all regions. Without such unity, rest and comfort, peace

and universal reconciliation are unachievable. This illumined century needeth and calleth for its fulfillment. In every century a particular and central theme is , in accordance with the requirements of that century, confirmed by God. In this illumined age that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.

Soon will the Western regions become as radiant as the horizons of the East, and the Sun of Truth shine forth with a refulgence that will cause the darkness of error to fade away and vanish. Great is the multitude who will rise up to oppose you, who will oppress you, heap blame upon you, rejoice at your misfortunes, account you people to be shunned, and visit injury upon you; yet shall your heavenly Father confer upon you such spiritual illumination that ye shall become even as the rays of the sun which, as they chase away the sombre clouds, break forth to flood the surface of the earth with light. It is incumbent upon you, whensoever these tests may overtake you, to stand firm, and to be patient and enduring. Instead of repaying like with like, ye should requite opposition with the utmost benevolence and loving-kindness, and on no account attach importance to cruelties and injuries, but rather regard them as the wanton acts of children. For ultimately the radiance of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world of being, and the holy, exalted character of your aims will become unmistakably apparent. Nothing shall remain concealed: the olive oil, though stored within the deepest vault, shall one day bum in brightness from the lamp atop the beacon. The small shall be made great, and the powerless shall be given strength; they that are of tender age shall become the children of the Kingdom, and those that have gone astray shall be guided to their heavenly home.

This period of time is the Promised Age, the assembling of the human race to the Resurrection Day and now is the great Day of Judgement. Soon the whole world, as in springtime, will change its garb. The turning and falling of the autumn leaves is past; the bleakness of the wintertime is over. The new year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers; from the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like the angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad-tidings of the approach of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver. O my spiritual friend! Dost thou know from what airs emanate the notes sung by those birds? They are from the melodies of peace and

reconciliation, of love and unity, of justice and security, of concord and harmony. In a short time this heavenly singing will intoxicate all humanity; the foundations of enmity shall be destroyed; unity and affection shall be witnessed in every assembly; and the splendors of the love of God will shine forth in these great festivals.

Therefore, contemplate what a spirit of life God hath given that the body of the whole earth may attain life everlasting! The Abha Paradise will soon spread a pavilion in the midmost heart of the world, under whose shelter the beloved shall rejoice and the pure hearts shall repose in peace.

In the estimation of historians this radiant century is equivalent to one hundred centuries of the past. If comparison be made with the sum total of all former human achievements, it will be found that the discoveries, scientific advancement and material civilization

### BAHA'IS ACRED WRITINGS

of this present century have equaled, yea far exceeded the progress and outcome of one hundred former centuries. The production of books and compilations of literature alone bears witness that the output of the human mind in this century has been greater and more enlightening than all the past centuries together. It is evident, therefore, that this century is of paramount importance. Reflect upon the miracles of accomplishment which have already characterized it: the discoveries in every realm of human research. Inventions, scientific knowledge, ethical reforms and regulations established for the welfare of humanity, mysteries of nature explored, invisible forces brought into visibility and subjection—a veritable wonderworld of new phenomena and conditions heretofore unknown to man now open to his uses and further investigation. The East and West can communicate instantly. A human being can soar in the skies or speed in submarine depths. The power of steam has linked the continents. Trains cross the deserts and pierce the barriers of mountains; ships find unerring pathways upon the trackless oceans. Day by day discoveries are increasing. What a wonderful century this is! It is an age of universal reformation. Laws and statutes of civil and federal governments are in process of change and transformation. Sciences and arts are being molded anew. Thoughts are metamorphosed. The foundations of human society are changing and strengthening .. it is our duty in this radiant century to investigate the essentials of divine religion, seek the realities underlying the oneness of the world of humanity and discover the source of fellowship and agreement which will unite mankind in the heavenly bond of love. This unity is the radiance of eternity, the divine spirituality, the effulgence of God and the bounty of the Kingdom. We must investigate the divine source of these heavenly bestowals and adhere unto them steadfastly. For if we remain fettered and

restricted by human inventions and dogmas, day by day the world of mankind will be degraded, day by day warfare and strife will increase and satanic forces converge toward the destruction of the human race.

O ye handmaids of the Lord! In this century- the century of the Almighty Lord- the Day-Star of the Realms above, the Light of

Truth, shineth in its meridian splendor and its rays illuminate all regions. For this is the age of the Ancient Beauty, the day of the revelation of the might and power of the Most Great Name- may my life be offered up as a sacrifice for His loved ones.

In the ages to come, though the Cause of God may rise and grow a hundredfold and the shade of the Sadratu'l-Muntaha 1 shelter all mankind, yet this present century shall stand unrivaled, for it hath witnessed the breaking of that Morn and the rising of that Sun.

This century is, verily, the source of His Light and the dayspring of His Revelation. Future ages and generations shall behold the diffusion of its radiance and the manifestations of its signs.

Wherefore, exert yourselves, haply ye may obtain your full share and portion of His bestowals.

1. One of the titles of Baha' u' llah, literal ly meaning "the tree beyond which there is no passing."

#### FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSEoF JUSTICE

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

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

1. Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah Revealed aft er the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 68.

take action accordingly." 2 In His Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha

affirmed it to be "incumbent" upon members of the Universal House of Justice to "deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book," concluding that "Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself." 3 Consequently, since the Universal House of Justice was first elected in 1963, the Baha'i community has turned to it with respect and trust, regarding obedience to its decisions as obedience to the will of God. Since its establishment, the Universal House of Justice has carried on a voluminous correspondence with individuals, institutions, the Baha'i community as a whole, and other organizations. By this means it provides clarification and elucidation of issues relating to the development of the Baha'i community, guidance concerning the gradual application of Baha'u'llah's laws, encouragement to believers to arise and promulgate their Faith, and directives concerning the further development of the Baha'i administrative system.

Ric,ivan 155 B.E. Message

The Ric,ivan 155 B.E. message (April 1998) of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the world reviewed the community's accomplishments at the midpoint of the Four Year Plan, analyzed this moment in history, and focused on what is necessary in order for the Baha'i community to move ahead.

Highlighted accomplishments included the following: a strengthened faith, spiritual identity and commitment to service seen in

Baha'is who have participated in training institute courses around the world; the maturation of the institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly, now elected only on the first day of Ric,ivan by local communities around the world; new confidence and an increase in the methodical approach to teaching among Baha'is throughout the world; rapid progress on the construction projects on Mount Carmel in Haifa; the establishment in May 1998 of three new

2. Cited in Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963- 1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 85.

3. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971 ), p. 20.

National Spiritual Assemblies-in Sabah, Sarawak and Slovakiaand the re-establishment of the National Spiritual Assembly in Liberia. 4

The House of Justice noted that the "widespread desolation of the human spirit," so prevalent at this moment in history, has prompted masses of people to search for spiritual truth. At the same time, "a growing sense of an irresistible movement towards global unity and peace" is evident in developments such as the United Nations' increasing involvement-backed by powerful governments-in urgent world problems, and world leaders' recognition of the

interconnectedness of their countries in areas such as trade and finance. Thus, the House of Justice points out, the Major Plan of God, while "associated with turbulence and calamity," is nevertheless "inexorably driving humanity towards unity and maturity."

Given this confluence of factors, Baha'is find themselves, at the midpoint of the Four Year Plan, in a dynamic situation. To capitalize on it and bring about significant and sustained growth and development of their community, they must not only rely on faith, prayer, and divine assistance, but be realistic and systematic in their approach. In pursuing the systematic development of human resources that can maintain a balance of continuous expansion and consolidation of the community, the House of Justice points out that training institutes are invaluable.

In the last analysis, however, teaching the Baha'i Faith is the sacred duty of each member, in fulfillment of which he or she is directly responsible to Baha'u'llah. Thus, the individual occupies an "irreplaceable role in the advancement of the Cause" and must consciously decide what, how, where, and when to contribute to the Plan. The House of Justice further urges individuals to acquire the habit of reflection upon actions they have taken, which "lends meaning and fulfillment" to their lives. This is the moment, the House of Justice states, for all Baha'is "to be consciously involved in a vast historic process, the like of which has not ever before been experienced by any people," and in which the Baha'i community has an "inescapable responsibility."

4. See pp . 53- 58 for further information on the establishment of these National Spiritual Assemblies.

#### The Eighth International Baha'i Convention

On the occasion of the Eighth International Baha' i Convention, held in Haifa, Israel, in April 1998, the Universal House of Justice addressed two letters to the delegates. The first, dated 23 April 1998, welcomed them and drew their attention to the "extraordinary conjunction of Baha'i Holy Days" occurring during the gatheringthe Birthdays of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah falling, according to the lunar calendar, on 28 and 29 April (the latter coinciding with the Ninth Day of Ri<;ivan) . The House of Justice further highlighted the opportunity given to delegates to visit the Baha' i holy places, preparing them to take up the "sacred responsibility of electing the Universal House of Justice" and engage in consultations on "vital issues" of concern to the Baha'i community.

At this Convention, while consultation would not be limited to specific topics and delegates were urged to "open [their] minds and hearts" on the topics that seemed to them to be most vital, the House of Justice also asked them to remain conscious of the central aim of the Four Year Plan: namely, advancing the process of entry by troops. In this regard, the House of Justice noted, analysis

of circumstances leading to and maintaining that process would be especially useful, as would evaluations of different programs and methods adopted by permanent training institutes and suggestions regarding effective ways of mobilizing individuals, communities, and institutions in teaching the Baha'i Faith.

In sum, Convention consultations should help delegates "deepen [their] understanding of the aim and processes of the Plan, and acquire ideas and perspectives that will reinforce the ability of [their] National Spiritual Assembly to play its full part in the collective enterprise which is preparing the Cause of God to meet the challenges of a new century."

At the conclusion of the International Convention, on 2 May, the House of Justice addressed a second letter to the delegates, commenting particularly on how their conduct reflected "a degree of love and unity rare for so variegated a gathering of humanity" and seeing in the "clarity, cogency and discipline" of the consultations "indications of an accelerated process of maturation ... that must in the fullness of time play a major role in guiding the destiny of nations." Identifying the Convention as "the defining moment for

#### THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

the Four Year Plan"-a turning point at which "the full range of its aim and possibilities" were realized-the House of Justice expressed the hope that the unity experienced at the Convention would permeate all Baha'i institutions in every country. Thus it would be evident that "in contrast to the contentious attitudes of the world, the unity of the Baha'i community is an outer reflection of that inner reality that motivates the divinely ordained institution charged with directing and coordinating the community's affairs."

On 3 May, the Universal House of Justice sent a brief message to all National Spiritual Assemblies, announcing the results of the election carried out at the International Convention, in the following words: "NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE 'ALI NAKHJAVANI, PETER KHAN, ADIB TAHERZADEH, GLENFORD MITCHELL, IAN SEMPLE, HOOPER DUNBAR, FARZAM ARBAB, DOUGLAS MARTIN, HUSHMAND FATHEAZAM." 5

Counsellors' Conference and the International Teaching Centre Immediately following the International Convention, the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors from around the world held a conference in the Holy Land, and on 3 May 1998 the Universal House of Justice addressed a letter to that gathering. The

House of Justice noted the "dramatic advance in maturity" evident in the prosecution of the Plan and stated, "Your work has brought honor to your institution and immense joy to our hearts."

Reviewing the Counsellors' activities since their previous conference in December 1995, at which the Four Year Plan and its objectives were announced, the House of Justice noted how their

"selfless, inspiring and intelligent contributions" had prepared the Baha'i world to develop detailed national plans and praised the ways in which they and the members of their Auxiliary Boards had promoted systematic and focused action on the Plan's goals. Now the energies generated and skills developed through training institute programs must be used to meet the needs of the Plan, and the Counsellors' experience must be "examined and correlated" to foster further progress throughout the world and in the institutional capacity of the Counsellors themselves.

5. For a full report on the Eighth International Baha'i Convention, see pp. 39-47.

Shortly after the conference, on 13 May, an electronic mail message announced the appointment of the Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre for the five years beginning 23 May 1998 and thanked the outgoing members for their "distinguished self-sacrificing labors."

On 2 July, a letter from the House of Justice to all National Assemblies reported that the newly appointed Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre, Hands of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Ru]iyyih Khanum and 'Ali-Akbar Furutan, and members of the Universal House of Justice had met to pray at the Shrine of Baha'u'llah on 13 June, followed by a week of "intense consultation" about the work ahead. The International Teaching Centre-the twenty-fifth anniversary of which was noted-was described as a "cardinal institution" that has "exercised increased responsibility in relation to the protection of the Faith," has "stimulated pioneering and travel-teaching, as well as the production and distribution of literature and audiovisual aids," and has "imparted a fundamental impetus to the establishment and sound functioning of training institutes."

#### Other Letters

In its efforts to educate and raise the Baha'i community's consciousness on particular issues, the Universal House of Justice this year distributed several important documents to National Spiritual Assemblies, including one entitled "Training Institutes" and compilations on "The Importance of the Arts in Promoting the Faith" and "Aspects of Traditional African Culture"; the latter was intended to assist Baha'is in Africa to understand how to deal with certain traditional practices in light of the Baha'i teachings. In February 1999, the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice released a statement prepared by the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information entitled *Who Is Writing the Future?*, which reflects on the twentieth century through the lens of Baha'u'llah's teachings and looks ahead to the challenges humanity faces as it enters a new century.<sup>7</sup>

6. See pp. 49- 52 for further information about the Counsellors' conference and the appointment of the International Teaching Centre.

7. For the full text of this statement, see pp. 255---68 .

A letter dated 29 March 1999 to National Spiritual Assemblies around the world announced the establishment of a Chair of Baha'i Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, following a brief signing ceremony at the Baha'i World Centre. The House of Justice remarked that this "concluded discussions initiated by the University nearly a year ago" and cited the University's recognition of "the importance of the field and of the need to provide an institutional basis for the continuation and development of this work on both the teaching and research levels." As a historical note, the House recalled that in 1925 Shoghi Effendi had written a letter "of warm encouragement" to the University's founders upon the establishment of the institution. 8

8. For further information about the establishment of the Baha'i Chair at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem , see p. 74.

## EVENTS

1998-99

The Eighth International Bahri 'i Convention, held to elect the Universal House of Justice, took place in the spring of 1998 in Haifa, Israel.

## EIGHTH

### INTERNATIONAL

#### BAHA'f cONVENTION

Between 29 April and 2 May 1998, Baha'i representatives from 161 countries gathered in Haifa, Israel, to elect the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Baha'i Faith. The Eighth International Baha'i Convention was marked by focused consultation, universal participation, and warm fellowship among the delegates, whose task was to elect the members of the institution that will continue to guide the Baha'i world in the work of building a global community. Held every five years since the establishment of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, the International Baha'i Convention is an integral component of the process that safeguards the unity and strength of the worldwide Baha'i community.

'Abdu'l-Baha first specified how the Universal House of Justice was to be established, writing, "At whatever time the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice." This process begins at the grassroots of the Baha'i community, when

## THE BAHAI WORLD

Bahais establish governing councils called Local Spiritual Assemblies. Local communities of each country, in turn, elect delegates who vote for the members of their national Baha'i governing body, the National Spiritual Assembly. The members of the world's National Spiritual Assemblies constitute the electorate of the Universal House of Justice. Local and National Spiritual Assembly elections occur annually, while the election of the Universal House of Justice takes place every five years, when members of the National Spiritual Assemblies serve as delegates to the International Convention. Believers in local Baha'i communities throughout the world thus contribute to the process that ultimately results in the election of the head of their Faith.

The first International Baha'i Convention, in 1963, was attended by representatives of 56 National Spiritual Assemblies; the Eighth Convention involved 175, each comprising nine members. The full membership of many National Assemblies journeyed from nearly every territory on earth to come to Convention, some at great personal sacrifice. In all, 986 delegates representing 161 Assemblies were able to come to Haifa; others mailed their ballots.

The sacrifices made by many members in order to participate was a source of inspiration to their fellow attendees. ""--~

Armen Khachatryan, Delegates from all over the world, in Haifa to elect the Universal House of Justice, gathered in front of for example, was the the Pilgrim House near the Shrine of the Bab. only member of the

Armenian National Spiritual Assembly able to come to Israel.

Traveling via several different countries and methods of transportation, it took him more than two weeks to arrive. Edna

Banda from Zambia, the only female member of her National Assembly, was able to represent her country through the lastminute financial support of her fellow Africans. Jesus Coba, of Cuba, was another lone representative. "This is a miracle of God,"

## EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL BAHAI CONVENTION

During the Convention, delegates and invited guests from around the world were able to meet, consult, and visit the Baha'i holy places.

he said. "It was a miracle that I could even leave my country and come to participate in this Convention."

Five days were set aside prior to the Convention for delegates

to visit the Baha'i shrines and holy places in and around Acre and Haifa. To prepare spiritually for the important task lying ahead of them, delegates prayed and meditated in the resting places of the Bab and Baha'u'llah and were able to see the history of their Faith preserved in the houses occupied by Baha'u'llah, His prison cell, the gardens He frequented in His later years, and relics preserved in the International Baha'i Archives. Tours of the unfinished terraced gardens and the Centre for the Study of the Texts were also included in their program.

Throughout the Convention, delegates seized the opportunity to consult closely with their fellow Baha'is from around the world. During the main sessions, two microphones were placed in the main hall for delegates to report on events in their countries and raise issues of concern with the entire assembly. Simultaneous translation was provided via radio headphones

Some were able to learn that problems and challenges facing them at home had been overcome elsewhere in the world, or could offer so-

During one of the Convention's main sessions that could be impressions, a delegate from India shared his mented in other countries.

community's experience in implementing One of the distinguishing features of the Eighth International Convention was the dramatic increase in participation by indigenous believers, enabling National Spiritual Assemblies of large Baha'i communities to learn from the experiences of their newly-established counterparts, particularly regarding the Baha'i community's ongoing effort to systematically develop its human resources. Indigenous participation was evident not only in the membership of many National Assemblies, but also in frequent contributions of these delegates to the formal consultative sessions and meetings of the Convention. Many delegates represented

## EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL BAHAI CONVENTION

Delegates-many from newly established National Spiritual Assemblies- listen during one of the Convention's main sessions.

newly formed National Assemblies. The National Spiritual Assemblies of Armenia, Georgia, Belarus, Eritrea, Sicily, Sao Tome and Principe, Slovenia and Croatia, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Moldova have all been established

since the last International Convention, making this the first Convention in which representatives from these countries were able to participate. Counsellor Lee Lee Ludher of Asia commented, "I'm so glad to see the diversity, the number of women that have come to Convention, and the number of young people. I think it is great to see the maturity of the new National Assemblies."

The Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information produced a video called Creating a Culture of Growth specially for the Convention, which chronicled the way eight Baha'i communities around the world are expanding and developing the spiritual and material resources of their populations. It was shown to the delegates on the Convention's second day.

#### The Election

As an electoral institution, the International Baha'i Convention is an example of democracy at the global level. Delegates, who are freed from the hindrances of campaigning and electioneering, elect the members of the Universal House of Justice by secret ballot. No one is nominated. Male Baha'is aged twenty-one or over are eligible to be elected. The Baha'i writings state that delegates should vote for the nine men who they feel have the requisite experience,

spiritual insight, and capacity to serve on the House of Justice. 1

The Eighth International Baha'i Convention began on 29 April 1998 with an opening address by Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Rili:llyih Khanum.

She began by praising the delegates for their achievements, noted the state of the Baha'i community, and exhorted them to "begin to enroll humanity under the banner

Amatu 'l-Baha of Baha'u'llah." Later during the Convention proceedings, Hands of the Cause of God Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Furutan and Dr. Ruf;iyih Khanum 'Ali-Mulfammad Varga ~á- . I

•«

also addressed the Convention. Mr. Fumtan spoke of the importance of educating children, ~

and Dr. Varga spoke of the institution of I:Iuququ'llah.

A bouquet of ninety- Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Fur.utan five red roses, sent to the Convention from the still-circumscribed Baha'i community of Iran, was placed at the

front of the stage for the duration of the proceedings, serving as a reminder of the persecution still endured by those living in the birthplace of the Baha'i Faith. In a letter accompanying the bouquet, the Baha'is of Dr. 'Ali-Muf;ammad Varqa Iran, "though deprived for a third successive occasion, through God's great wisdom, from participating in the International Convention," sent their "deepest heartfelt greetings and felicitations" to the assembly. "Though physically distant, yet in the world of spirit," they wrote, they were "united and at one with that sacred gathering." A brief counterpoint to the poignancy

1. While women serve in every other arena of Baha'i administration, Baha'u'llah ordained membership of the Universal House of Justice to be restricted to men. The reason for the restriction, 'Abdu'l-Baha stated, will later become "as manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon."

#### EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL BAHÁ'Í CONVENTION

of their letter was occasioned by a letter of greetings and encouragement sent from His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II, the Head of State of Western Samoa who accepted the Baha'i Faith more than two decades ago, which was read to the assembly. His daughter, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Samoa, attended the Convention as a delegate. The election itself was ushered in by prayer; ballots were distributed, and delegates sat in a silent, reverent attitude to

reflect on the names they would write on their ballots. When the voting had been completed, all delegates walked to the stage, in alphabetical order according to their country of origin, and deposited their ballots in a lockbox. The procession made a powerful display of the diversity of the human family as the delegates appeared in the variety of their native costumes.

Baha'is from the Central African Republic cast their ballots during the Convention.

As the results of the election were announced, the

members of the  
Universal House of  
Justice, elected to  
serve for the next  
five years, gathered  
\_ on the main stage.  
-----"

Penelope Walker, chief teller for the Convention and a delegate from the Nepalese National Assembly, announced the election statistics and results the next day. Farzam Arbab, Hooper Dunbar, Hushmand Fatheazam, Peter Khan, Douglas Martin, Glenford Mitchell, 'Ali Nakbjavaru, Ian Semple, and Adib Taherzadeh were elected to serve as members of the Universal House of Justice from

Ridvan  
. 1998 to Ridvan  
. 2003.

On 2 May, 1998, the Universal House of Justice sent a message to the assembled delegates. "We hail," the body said, "with uplifted hearts, what you have done here. For through your participation in a uniquely conceived electoral process, you have fortified the crown of that world-embracing administrative structure of which your Assemblies are the indispensable pillars. But what has impressed us even more deeply is that the manner of your conduct has reflected a degree of love and unity rare for so variegated a gathering of humanity as you represent."

No fewer than four Baha'i holy days fell during this International Convention. The anniversary of the The First Lady of the Seychelles, birth of the Bab fell the day before Mrs. Sarah Rene, attended the Convention began, on 28 April, and Convention as a delegate.

#### E IGI-ITH I NTER NATIONAL BAHAF c ONVE NTIO N

the anniversary of the birth of Baha'u 'llah was celebrated on 29 April. 2 The ninth day of Ridvan, 3 on 29 April, also fell during the Convention, and three days later- on the final day of the Convention-the twelfth day of Ridvan was celebrated. It seemed appropriate that such a notable advancement in the affairs of the worldwide Baha'i community as was demonstrated during the Convention should be mirrored by such a concentration of sacred anniversaries; the final International Baha'i Convention of the twentieth century-a century 'Abdu'l-Baha called "the century of light"-will be remembered as a celebration not only of the strength and unity of the Baha'i community, but also of the noble

history of its Founders.

2. In the Holy Land, the twin holy days commemorating the birthdays of Baha' u' llah and the Bab are celebrated according the lunar calendar, which moves forward eleven days a year relative to the Gregorian calendar.

3. The Rikivvan festival is the name given to the twelve days Baha'u ' llah spent

in Baghdad just before His exile to Adrianople, the first time Baha' u' llah publicly announced His prophetic mission. The first, ninth, and twelfth days of the Rikivvan festival are celebrated as Baha' i holy days.

This article reports on the Conference of Bahri 'i Counsellors held 3- 6 May 1998 in Haifa, Israel, following the Eighth International Baha 'i Convention.

#### CONFERENCE of BAHAI COUNSELLORS

Since Rikivvan 1996 the Baha'i world community has been engaged in a comprehensive process unlike any it had previously undertaken-the systematization of the approach taken to the development of its human resources. The process began with a single letter. On 26 December 1995, the Universal House of Justice addressed the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors gathered at a special conference in the Holy Land, informing them of the imminent inauguration of the Four Year Plan and outlining the goals that the Baha'i world would be pursuing for the final four years of the twentieth century. "The development of human resources on a large scale," the House of Justice said, "requires that the establishment of institutes be viewed in a new light." The time had come for the Baha'i world to extend its planning work into the field of community education.

The Plan, as called for by the Universal House of Justice, has as its primary goals the training of Baha'is to manifest more completely the teachings of Baha'u'llah in their daily lives, to create vibrant, unified Baha'i communities "characterized by tolerance and love and guided by a strong sense of purpose and collective will,"

and to stimulate the maturation of Baha'i institutions, whose purpose is to further these processes of growth with wise, loving guidance. On 3 May 1998, under the aegis of the International Teaching Centre, seventy-six members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors gathered again in the Holy Land to evaluate the progress of the goals outlined in the December 1995 letter and to consult on ways of consolidating and expanding the victories achieved in the first two years of the Four Year Plan. Held immediately

following the Eighth International Baha'i Convention, 1 the six-day-long conference was an opportunity for the Counsellors to engage in intensive consultation with their fellow Counsellors in the field, members of the Universal House of Justice, and the International Counsellors serving at the World Centre, and to visit the Shrines and holy places at the Baha'i World Centre. The members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors serve as vital channels of stimulation and advice to the rank and file of the Baha'i community. They offer encouragement to individual Baha'is and communities, consult and collaborate regularly with National Spiritual Assemblies on matters related to community development, and act as representatives of the Universal House of Justice at inaugural National Conventions and other special occasions. Counsellors are in a unique position to identify trends and opportunities, assess often quickly changing conditions, and share their observations with National Spiritual Assemblies and the Baha'i World Centre. Living and serving all over the world, they come from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, as do the Baha'i communities they serve. Their effectiveness is further enhanced by the fact that one third of all Counsellors are women. The International Teaching Centre, based at the Baha'i World Centre, coordinates the activities of the Continental Counsellors and serves as the liaison between the Counsellors and the Universal House of Justice.

In a 3 May 1998 letter addressed to the Counsellors' conference, the Universal House of Justice praised the "ardor and effectiveness" of the Counsellors' response to the Four Year Plan, citing the proceedings of the Eighth International Baha'i Convention and the

1. See pp. 39-47 of this volume for an account of the Eighth International Baha'i Convention.

#### C O N F E R E N C E O F B A H A ' I C O U N S E L L O R S

"clarity and vigor with which the National Spiritual Assemblies are addressing the tasks of the Plan" as proof of a dramatic advance in the capacity of the Baha'i world community to undertake systematic planning and action. The House of Justice also advised that the Baha'is must "take advantage of the momentum thus achieved," noting that every measure must be taken to ensure that training is undertaken by the Baha'i community on a scale commensurate to its expanding needs .

Consultation at the Counsellors' conference centered around the work of Auxiliary Board members and their assistants , how the relationship between the International Teaching Centre and Counsellors in the field could be profitably developed, and the defense of the Baha'i community from those inimical to it. A significant amount of time was spent analyzing different training methods and curricula used in Baha'i communities and correlating lessons

learned in one part of the world to those in another.

Attention was also given to administrative details related to the Counsellors' jurisdiction and functioning . One of the emphases of the Four Year Plan is on systematic planning that, in the words of the House of Justice, goes " beyond the mere enumeration of goals to include an analysis of approaches to be adopted and lines of action to be followed." The Counsellors' conference was an opportunity to evaluate the success of various approaches of systematization used around the world and to consider how the capacities and needs of different regions affected these goals . Consultation during the conference was greatly aided by a document on training institutes-dated 8 April 1998, given to all Counsellors and delegates to the Eighth International Convention, and prepared under the auspices of the Universal House of Justice- which deals specifically with questions of regional planning and systematization in the institute process.

Hands of the Cause of God Amatu ' l-Baha Rlli:llyyih Khanum, Mr. 'Ali-Akbar Furutan, and Dr. 'Ali-Mu}:larnmad Varqa- themselves members of the International Teaching Centre- attended the conference and contributed to its proceedings. Dr. Varqa, as Trustee of the institution of J::luququ'llcih, was particularly interested in hearing about the Baha'i community's evolving response to the law of J::luququ'llah and the development of its administration.

In the December 1995 letter to the Counsellors announcing the Four Year Plan, the House of Justice called upon the Continental Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies to deepen their consultative relationship, especially in the organization and operation of training institutes. Training institutes are to be agencies of National Spiritual Assemblies, but their planning and operation will benefit from the advice of the Continental Counsellors and cooperation with Auxiliary Board members, who, through their intimate relationship with local and regional communities, are in a unique position to assist in the development of institutes. The fact that more than 344 training institutes have already been established and more than 70,000 Baha'is have completed institute courses provides ample testimony to the strengthened relationship between Counsellors and National Spiritual Assemblies and the organizing power of the institute boards .

International Baha'i Conventions also mark the time that the Universal House of Justice renews the membership of the International Teaching Centre .

Ten days after the start of the Counsellors ' conference , the ' House of Justice announced that Mr. Kiser Barnes, Mr. Rolf von

Czekus , Mr. Hartmut Grossmann, Mrs. Violette Haake, Dr. Firaydoun Javaheri, Mrs . Laretta King, Mrs. Joan Lincoln, Dr. Payman Mohajer, and Dr. Penelope Walker would constitute the Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre for the next five years, and thanked outgoing members Mr. Newly appointed members of the Shapoor Monadjem, Mr. Donald International Teaching Centre with Rogers, Mr. Fred Schechter, Mrs. Hands of the Cause Amatu 'l-Bahá. - Ruhyyih Khánum and 'A li-Akbar Kimiko Schwerin, and Mrs. Joy Furtan . Stevenson for their services.

New  
NATIONAL  
SPIRITUAL  
ASSEMBLIES

In the spring of 1998, the Baha'i communities of Slovakia, Sabah, and Sarawak gathered to participate in their communities' first national Baha'i Conventions. In Africa, the Baha'is of Liberia held their first national Convention in seven years, postponed due to the protracted civil war in that country. At these annual gatherings Baha'i communities elect the governing councils responsible for supervising and organizing their affairs at the national level. The establishment of these National Spiritual Assemblies brings the total number of these institutions, as of Rid van 1998, to 179. 'Abdu'l-Baha began the process of Baha'i administration building more than seventy-five years ago, when He first called for the establishment of "secondary Houses of Justice," whose members act as the electors of the Universal House of Justice and which function as the national governing institutions of the Faith in their respective countries. In 1923, Shoghi Effendi began to establish secondary Houses of Justice in communities which were sufficiently developed, and temporarily designated them "National Spiritual Assemblies." Now the Universal House of Justice decides when a Baha'i community is ready to establish its own National Assembly.

Through their close association and communication with the Baha'i World Centre, National Spiritual Assemblies provide the link binding national communities to the House of Justice. As bodies charged with directing, coordinating, and unifying the affairs of the Faith throughout their respective jurisdictions, they have the flexibility to adapt to changing native conditions, designing plans and imparting guidance appropriate to the needs and strengths of their Baha'i population. The National Assembly is also the official representative of its community in relation to its national government and to other national Baha'i communities; it

plans and coordinates national teaching programs, sponsors and guides national institute programs, approves and supervises national level social and economic development projects, disseminates and supervises the translation of Baha'i literature into local languages, and is the trustee of national Baha'i funds and properties.

The establishment of a National Spiritual Assembly is a signal point in the growth of a Baha'i community, one that casts a wide net of spiritual and administrative benefits.

#### Liberia

Africa's first independent black republic, Liberia saw its first Baha'i settlers arrive in the early 1950s. Julius Edwards from Jamaica pioneered to Liberia and Guinea for over twenty-three years, contributing significantly to the development of the Liberian Baha'i community. In 1954, the country's Baha'is were brought under the jurisdiction of the newly established National Spiritual Assembly of North-West Africa, an evolutionary step which no doubt helped influence the Liberian government to grant legal recognition, in the 1950s, of Baha'i holy days and marriages and, in 1957, to the Local Spiritual Assemblies of Monrovia and Bomi Hills. President William V. S. Tubman of Liberia in 1962 visited the Baha'i World Centre, becoming the first foreign Head of State to do so. 1

In 1971 the Monrovia Baha'is hosted the first Baha'i Continental Conference of Africa, which was attended by Hands of the

1. President Ben Zvi of Israel had previously visited the Baha'i World Centre in 1954.

#### NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Rul-iyyih Khanum and Rahmatullah Muhajir. Monrovia hosted another significant gathering, the West African Baha'i Women's Conference, in 1978. By 1975 the Baha'i communities of Liberia and Guinea had developed sufficiently to require their own Regional Spiritual Assembly, which operated until 1982. That year witnessed the election of Liberia's own National Spiritual Assembly, which existed until the civil war of 1991-1998 forced the suspension of its operations. Even in the midst of that conflict, however, Liberian Baha'is continued to establish Local Spiritual Assemblies and hold Baha'i activities within their refugee camps. The first Baha'i radio station in the eastern hemisphere, which began broadcasting from Monrovia in 1986 and contributed to the nascent process of Baha'i social and economic development in Western Africa, was destroyed during the war.

After an enforced seven-year hiatus, the Liberian Baha'i community gathered for its twenty-seventh national Baha'i Convention, which was held 23- 24 May 1998 in an atmosphere of joyous celebration at the Radio Baha'i building in Monrovia. The sixteen

delegates who were able to attend elected the National Assembly on 23 May. Counsellor Beatrice Asare, who represented the Universal House of Justice at the Convention, praised the spirit animating the delegates, who "until recently were embroiled in tribal conflicts" and were "now dancing together in a spirit of love and unity under the umbrella of Baha'u'llah." The following day the Convention attendees consulted on the Ric;Ivan message from the Universal House of Justice. The Convention was preceded by a two-day training institute on topics such as the role of the individual in the Baha'i community, Baha'i history and administration, and prayer.

Slovakia

When Czechoslovakia achieved independence in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet Union, the rapid expansion of the country's Baha'i community moved the Universal House of Justice to call for the establishment of a National Spiritual Assembly. Two years later, when Czechoslovakia split into the ethnically distinct Czech and Slovak Republics, the National Assembly became a Regional Spiritual Assembly, with its jurisdiction unchanged. During the past decade, the Slovakian Baha'i community advanced to a point of requiring its own National Assembly, and in 1997 the House of Justice called for its establishment. When the new National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Slovakia was formed in 1998, the existing Regional Spiritual Assembly became the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Czech Republic. Between 22 and 24 May 1998, nine delegates from various communities throughout Slovakia gathered in Bratislava to elect the country's first National Spiritual Assembly. Hand of the Cause of God Dr. 'Ali-Mul).ammad Varqa represented the Universal House of Justice at the occasion. Also attending were Counsellor Shapour Rassekh, four members of the Auxiliary Board, members of the outgoing Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Republics, and almost 150 Baha'is from neighboring countries. During the evening of 22 May the assembled delegates and observers first celebrated the anniversary of the declaration by the Bab of His prophetic mission and gathered the next day to elect the National Spiritual Assembly. The election, wrote one attendee, "took place in a charged atmosphere of deepest devotion, and its results were announced amidst many tears of gratitude to the Blessed Beauty." The Assembly and delegates then consulted on how to build the Slovakian community's vision of its collective future and other vital topics.

Throughout the years of its development, the Czech and Slovak Baha'i communities have reached out to leaders of government, undertaken programs of systematic training, and sought to reach out to the wider community. For their part, Czech and Slovak leaders have long

responded positively to contact with Baha'is, beginning in the early decades of this century with the efforts of Baha'i traveling teacher Martha Root, who met personally with Presidents Masaryk and Benes. As part of its response to the Four Year Plan, the Slovak community has been engaged in building a nation-wide system of training institutes. In addition to the day-today activities taken to proclaim the Baha'i Faith to the Slovak people, on 8 February 1999 the National Assembly launched the official website of the Slovak Baha'i community. 2

2. Accessible at <[www.bahai.sk](http://www.bahai.sk)>.

## NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

### Sabah and Sarawak

The roots of the Baha'i community of Malaysia reach back to 1951, when Jamshed and Parvati Fozdar arrived as permanent settlers in Kuching, in the Malay state of Sarawak. The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Malaysia was established in 1964. More recently, the high level of Baha'i activity in Sabah and Sarawak prompted the Universal House of Justice to call for the establishment of separate administrative bodies in each state, called the Spiritual Assembly of Sabah and the Spiritual Assembly of Sarawak.

Delegates elected the first Spiritual Assembly of Sabah on 23 May 1998 in Kota Kinabalu. Present at the Convention were Counsellor Vicente Samaniego, representing the House of Justice; Dr. Inderjit Singh Ludher of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Malaysia; six members of the Auxiliary Board; and more than one hundred Baha'i observers. The Universal House of Justice, in its message to the Convention, wrote, "this gathering will be looked upon by future generations as one of the turning points in the history of the Cause of God in your land," and expressed the hope that "the Baha'i community in Sabah will flourish like a beautiful

The members of the first Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Sabah, elected on 23 May 1998 in the state's capital, Kota Kinabalu.

garden, abundant with flowers of many kinds, all watered from the clouds of bounty of Baha'u'llah."

Twenty-eight delegates traveled to Kuching to elect the first Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Sarawak during a Convention held 22-24 May 1998. This event was attended by Counsellor George Soraya, representing the Universal House of Justice; Dr. P. Sreedharan, representing the Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia; five members of the Auxiliary Board in Asia; and more than three hundred Baha'i observers from throughout the state. Following the announcement of the election results on 23 May, delegates offered the newly elected Spiritual Assembly suggestions regarding

the Convention, training institutes, the extension and development of the Sarawak Baha' i community, the holding of children's classes and adult literacy classes, and the translation of the Baha'i writings into local languages. The assemblage also gave generously to the Sarawak Baha'i fund . The Universal House of Justice, in its message to the Convention, called upon "all the Baha'is of Sarawak to rally around their newly formed Spiritual Assembly and to give it all possible support, to enable it to carry out its Godgiven responsibility of raising the banner of the unity of mankind to new heights. "

MOUNT

CARMEL

PROJECTS:

Progress 1998-99

To the more than five million followers of Baha'u'llah around the world, the edifices and terraces being built on Mount Carmel represent not just another construction project, but the fulfillment of a divine promise. When Baha'u'llah visited Mount Carmel in the late 1800s, a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire, He stood on the mountain and not only chose the spot where the Shrine of the Bab would be built, but also stated that Mount Carmel would become the center of the Baha'i administrative order. Today His followers are laboring to enhance the beauty of the Bab 's shrine and to build structures that will befittingly house the highest Baha' i administrative institutions.

The Eighth International Baha'i Convention in April 1998 gave Baha' is from around the world the opportunity to witness firsthand the progress made on the Mount Carmel Projects at the Baha' i World Centre since work began in May 1990. Prior to the formal Convention program, delegates from more than one hundred and sixty countries toured the terraces above the Shrine of the Bab and sections of the Centre for the Study of the Texts. The

Universal House of Justice later noted in its Ric;lván message to the Baha'is of the world that" . . . the construction projects on Mount Carmel, beheld with such thrilling astonishment by the delegates to the International Convention, press onward to their scheduled completion at the end of the century."

Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab

Since its completion in 1953, the unique architecture of the Shrine of the Bab, blending Eastern and Western design principles, has attracted the interest and admiration of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and visitors each year. Its surrounding gardens, whose blend of structure and spontaneity also draws close attention, have recently undergone major renovation and expansion, with the construction of nine terraced gardens above and nine below the Shrine.

With Hatzionut Street lowered and repaved, facilitating better traffic flow and creating additional space between the street and the projects, sections of the former road were then freed up for incorporation into the gardens adjacent to the Shrine. In the process, ducts for water and telephone lines were also installed.

More than one hundred and fifty tons of steel reinforcement and approximately one thousand cubic meters of concrete were

A view of the Shrine of the Bab from one of the lower terraces, showing the vibrant colors found throughout the gardens.

## MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

This detail of one of the lower terraces shows the exquisite design features that characterize each level.

used to raise the structure of the trapezoid-shaped bridge over Hatzionut Street. A five-pointed star made from the structural beams, each point fitted with a light fixture, is now visible from the street underneath. By March 1999 all stonework on the bridge was finished, including the delicately carved pedestals and balustrades, at which point landscaping of the bridge's surface began.

With most of the street-level work completed, normal traffic was restored on the thoroughfare.

As the terraces approach completion and the mountain is transformed from stone to garden, more and more areas become ready

for planting. In all, more than fifty thousand square meters of gardens on the terraces were brought under cultivation this year. To

meet this suddenly larger demand for plants, an additional nursery was established to support the planting carried out on several of the terraces. As a tribute to the Bab, two seedlings propagated from an orange tree planted by Him in the courtyard of His house in Shiraz, Iran, were placed on the ninth terrace. Stone for some of the large ornamental fountains on the upper terraces was sent to Italy for cutting, while kilometers of stone that had been cut for stairs, runnels, inner paving, and fountain pools were installed.

The final stage of the projects, the entrance plaza, lies at the foot of the terraces where Ben Gurion Street meets Mount Carmel.

In keeping with the significant role that water plays in the overall design of the terraces, pools, fountain jets, and cascades are all planned for this area. After the successful testing of a full-scale mockup of the plaza's elaborate central fountain, which features á

This landscaped

courtyard leads to the tunnel connecting the Louis Promenade on Yefe Nof Street to the nineteenth terrace.

two concentric star-shaped bowls, detailed drawings were prepared for its production.

#### Appreciation for the Terraces

As the terraces are completed, revealing by degrees their grace and majesty, the residents of Haifa are paying increasing attention.

In response to a request by the Mayor of Haifa, and with approval from the Universal House of Justice, the nineteenth terrace at the top of Mount Carmel was opened to the public in September 1998. Since then, thousands of people have visited the site, which affords a clear view of the entire mountain.

Shortly after the opening, the Municipality of Haifa released a brochure on the city, which prominently features the terraced gardens and buildings on the Arc and describes the Baha' i projects as "the eighth wonder of the world. " The brochure was soon followed by a twenty-page booklet entirely devoted to the Baha' i projects, entitled The Baha' i Shrine and Gardens on Mount Carmel, Haifa, Israel. Published in English by the Municipality of Haifa, with the assistance of the Mount Carmel Baha' i

Projects office, the booklet is directed at tourists visiting the city and features beautiful photographs of the Shrine of the Bab, the terraces , and the buildings on the Arc. It also provides basic information on the Baha' i Faith, introducing it as an independent world religion and explaining its historical connection to the Holy Land. By April 1999, French, German, Hebrew, Russian, and Spanish editions were also available, and Arabic , Chinese, Italian, and Japanese translations were in preparation. Baha'is

#### M OUNT C ARMEL PROJECTS

around the world have ordered more than sixty thousand copies, and Haifa's Tourist Board is distributing it widely.

The Baha' i projects and their contribution to the beautification of Haifa were also recognized through the presentation of the 1998 Ephraim Lifshitz Award of the City of Haifa, to the Baha' i World Centre. Instituted in the name of an esteemed citizen of Haifa, this prestigious award is granted annually for outstanding work in the fields of education and culture.

The Shrine of the Bab and lower terraces, as seen from the air, with the city of Haifa and the German Templer Colony in the background.

## Buildings on the Arc

When Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, initiated construction of the International Baha'i Archives, he envisaged that the other buildings which would eventually be built nearby would be designed in a harmonious style of architecture. The establishment of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice was the first step in the realization of the Guardian's vision. With the construction of the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the progressive completion of the International Teaching Centre, the harmony of the buildings on the Arc is now visible. Designed and constructed according to the highest building standards, equipped in all areas with state-of-the-art

With its surroundings landscaped, the Centre for the Study of the Texts appears as a delicate pavilion in the gardens.

technology, and incorporating the latest requirements for the disabled, the administrative buildings on the Arc have been built to withstand the tests of time and use by the hundreds of staff who will eventually occupy them.

### The Centre for the Study of the Texts

During the spring of 1999, the electrical infrastructure for lighting control, fire alarms, closed circuit television, and access control was installed in the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives Extension, in preparation for occupation. The nerve center for the telephone and computer systems for the Terraces and Arc buildings, located to the west of the International Teaching Centre building in a small structure known as the Arc and Terraces Communication Centre, was also completed. Office partitions, furniture, computers, and maintenance equipment were ordered, while the design of fitouts like chandeliers and carpets was finalized and production commenced.

Outside, landscaping around the buildings began in earnest.

The ground in front was graded to a gentle slope, topsoil was added, and vistas of green gradually began to emerge. By April 1999, more than sixteen thousand square meters of land around and above the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives Extension was under cultivation. A panorama of different shades, from the emerald green of the grass and silver green of the olive trees to the various shades and textures of junipers and cyads, dotted in between with the reds, purples, lavenders, blues, pinks, and

## MOUNT CARMEL PROJECTS

yellows of flowering plants, began to dot the landscape. The mountain's colors, muted throughout the winter, became more vibrant with the approach of spring. To prevent erosion and consequent soil run-off into the buildings, an extensive network of shallow depressions was created to provide drainage on the slopes above.

On the roof of the Centre for the Study of the Texts, green tiles similar to those on the roof of the International Teaching Centre building and the Seat of the Universal House of Justice were installed. Marble pedestals, which will eventually receive ornamental vases, were put in place, and the roof garden was graded, covered in gravel, and made ready for planting.

The International Teaching Centre

The International Teaching Centre building is located at the east end of the Arc path and oriented towards the Shrine of the Bab. The installation of marble cladding on its vaulted roof finished efforts to complete most of the building's external marble work by the end of 1998. Cladding on the front and rear facades and the walls of the

The entrance portico of the Centre for the Study of the Texts.

An interior view of one of the levels of the Archives Extension.

east and west wings had been completed earlier, and window frames, entablature above the columns, and precast marble soffit panels had been put in place. External wooden windows were installed before onset of the rainy season, making the building weatherproof for internal finishing work on all levels. By March 1999, the entrance portico was also paved with marble.

Inside, all finishing items such as drywall partitions, glazing, windows, doors, hardware, and ceilings were completed on the first level of the building, with similar work well underway on the next two levels. Stonework on the walls and columns inside and outside the auditorium was completed and made ready for wood panelling, and light fixtures were placed in the ceiling. The auditorium, which occupies levels four and five and has a seating capacity of about four hundred, will be equipped with the latest audiovisual equipment, translation tools, and a satellite broadcast system. Also on level four is a communal kitchen and dining area, now almost complete. The dining room will provide an audiovisual link to the auditorium, enabling larger audiences access to programs taking place there.

The completion of external marble work reveals the International Teaching Centre building in its pristine beauty.

v;;THE  
iEARrN  
REVIEW

Baha'is around the world, operating within the administrative framework outlined by Baha'u'llah, are working to initiate social and economic development projects; advance the status of women; promote the cause of peace and intergovernmental cooperation; implement programs of moral education; develop human resources through training institutes; increase racial, ethnic, and tribal harmony through dialogue and cooperation; support human rights; foster use of the arts in all their endeavors; promote scholarship; and propagate the ideals of the Baha'i world community.

The "Year in Review" explores how these activities are being carried out across the world, details some of the ways Baha'is are being recognized by the world at large, and highlights landmark achievements in the development of Baha'i communities. The sheer volume of Baha'i activities prevents the "Year in Review" from being a comprehensive record; it instead aims to provide a general survey of their evolving range and sophistication, and perhaps some insight into the challenges of building a global community.

During the year between Ric;lvan 1998 and Ric;lvan 1999, local Baha'i communities took more responsibility for initiating development projects and adapting national plans to their own skills and capacities; many national communities saw greater participation by indigenous peoples in administrative affairs; the relationship between the media and the Baha'i community in many parts of the world saw significant signs of evolution; and greater attention was paid to the proposals and ideas of the Baha'i International Community by other non-governmental organizations.

#### Social and Economic Development

In the Baha'i view, social and economic development is a collaborative process designed to empower individuals, families, and communities to support themselves materially, progress spiritually, and create new patterns of social interaction. Through consultation, action, and reflection, Baha'i development strives to inspire communities to discover and capitalize on their own potential. By sharing knowledge and experience, establishing schools, literacy, and health projects-some small, some large; some permanent, others designed to last only a short time-Baha'is engage in social and economic development. Seminars, conferences, and workshops focusing on development are also part of the process of learning through consultation.

The Azemikhah Institute has its permanent quarters near Bangui in the Central African Republic. In 1996, a national training program was established for the institute. The courses of study follow two main tracks. The first series helps the participants develop their capacities to combine study of the Baha'i writings with scientific research in order to stimulate the spiritual and material development of the community. Particular attention is given to the education of children, youth, and women. In 1996 and 1997, eighteen communities organized literacy classes for five hundred participants; classes have continued throughout 1998. Another focus of the Azemikhah Institute is to encourage and assist rural communities to plan and implement their own social and economic development projects. During the program's first year, thirty communities and over four hundred individuals took part in grassroots development efforts. Of these communities, thirteen operate literacy

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

classes with three hundred adults and one hundred youth attending. In addition, more than two hundred and fifty people have been involved at the local level in formal education programs for children as a result of their participation in the institute's courses.

In Kenya, approximately twenty Baha'i women have been chosen to travel to Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany. Two of these

Women of Matinyani, Kenya, have achieved economic independence in part through the use of devices such as these mango driers, which have increased their income as much as four hundred percent.

participants will report on how their villages have achieved economic independence through Baha'i-inspired development projects, which for twelve years have promoted literacy and children's classes, the construction of a health center and bakery, and businesses based on fruit drying and candle making.

The Unity Center, which has its headquarters in Los Angeles, California, United States, and functions under the aegis of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Los Angeles, is now home for two ambitious projects. The Multicultural Organization for Neighborhood Arts is a non-profit organization which, since 1996, has sought to provide a safe harbor for youth to develop skills and become involved in community service. The Children's Enrichment Program is another non-profit organization which has been

offering tutorial classes to children since 1992 and has just moved its operations to the Unity Center.

Mel Chester, a former resident of Los Angeles, moved to Namibia several years ago as a Baha'i pioneer. He has for some time been collecting leftover food from restaurants and grocery stores every week and bringing it to the homeless children of Swakopmund. Mr. Chester now feeds five hundred children a

week and has recently begun to feed the elderly. Several African dignitaries, in Namibia for the Southern African International Development conference, visited the Mondesa Clinic, now the center of his efforts, during their stay.

Guyana's "On the Wings of Words" literacy project began in

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1994 as a cooperative effort on the part of nine Local Spiritual

The training offered

by "On the Wings of

Words " makes use of

the arts, such as

songs, skits, and

dance, to convey

ideas. Here a singing

group prepares to

demonstrate songs at

a training session for

facilitators.

Assemblies, committed to eradicating illiteracy from their communities. It has since expanded to include the entire country,

attracted significant media attention, and enlisted over nine hundred volunteer facilitators to help train Guyanese youth aged ten

to sixteen to develop literacy skills. An editorial in the Guyana

Chronicle noted that the Baha'i initiative was exceptional because

"along with teaching the mechanics of reading, facilitators help their charges to develop a spiritual and moral consciousness." 1

The Civilization Advancement Center, or CAC, in Sabah,

Malaysia, coordinates several schools for rural students-those

without access to any other form of formal education-and teaches standard elementary school subjects within a moral framework .

The organizers of the Center envision a future in which every rural child will have easy access to education and view the three

tutorial schools they operate as part of that future. They plan to

operate tutorial schools soon in six other villages. The State

Advisory Council for Religious Affairs invited the CAC to conduct

1. See The Baha 'i World 1996- 97, pp. 236- 39, for more information on the " Wings of Words" project.

courses in four major towns of Sabah on "Women and Savings," the training module for which was developed by a group of Baha'is commissioned by the Central Bank of Malaysia and the Ministry for National Unity and Social Development.

In a short-term effort, more than two hundred people were given dental treatment in Bangladesh for two weeks in November by volunteer Baha'i dentists. The project was aided by Bangladesh's National Baha'i Development Institute.

International conferences on social and economic development were held in Bolivia, where Baha'is from twelve countries gathered, and in Malaysia, where representatives from fourteen countries reported on the progress and aims of different development projects, participated in workshops, consulted on the role of native peoples in development, and gave talks on related subjects. On the occasion of the first UNESCO Business Forum on Enterprise, Human Development and Culture, held

in Stockholm, Sweden, the European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF)

brought together nearly one hundred leading practitioners, specialists, donors, NGOs, financial

institutions, and business people from some

Baha'i radio stations, like this one in Caracollo, twenty-five countries. Bolivia, are one way of strengthening social and for a three-day "Global economic development at the regional level.

Dialogue on Microfinance and Human Development." Microfinance is the burgeoning science of granting small loans to individuals in developing areas, with the aim of stimulating sustainable, flexible, grassroots development. This strategy of empowering families, individuals, and small businesses is meeting with success in areas such as Bangladesh. Although the EBBF is not a development organization, the Forum saw an opportunity to expand the horizons of microfinance by emphasizing cultural and social development as goals that are equally as important as the alleviation of poverty.

### Scholarship

Scholarship, as described in the Baha'i writings, is an integral part of humanity's attempt to arrive at an understanding of the nature of God, human beings, and the natural world, and gains its greatest vitality, creativity, and relevance when directed towards the service of humanity. According to 'Abdu'l-Baha, the teachings of Baha'u'llah "are not merely theoretical and intended to remain in books. They are the principles of action ... When practical activity has been manifested, the teachings of God have borne fruit." 2 Animated by the belief that social and spiritual advancement flows

from the generation and application of knowledge, a goal of the Baha'i community is to foster new patterns of scholarship devoted to a holistic approach to scholarly investigation.

#### Publications

For many years, one of the only accepted sources on the history and teachings of the Baha'i religion extant in German was the book *Der Baha'ismus-Weltreligion der Zukunft? Geschichte, Lehre und Organisation in Kritischer An/rage* (Baha'ism-World Religion of the Future? History, Teachings, and Administration in Critical Terms). Written by a self-described "embittered enemy" of the Faith and replete with inaccuracies and distortion, *Der Baha'ismus* was authored by Francesco Ficicchia, who in 1978 chose to leave the Baha'i community and devote his life to "fight[ing]" the Baha'i administration "by all means whenever possible." In 1995, three German Baha'i scholars-Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh, and Ulrich Gollmer-wrote *Desinformation als Methode: die Baha'ismus-Monographie des F Ficicchia* (Disinformation as Method: The Monograph on the Baha'is by F Ficicchia). Published by Georg Olms Verlag as volume six of its "Religionswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien" ("Theological Texts and Studies") series, the book is a systematic response to not only Ficicchia's book, but also to several other points of contention raised by writers opposed to the Baha'i Faith. *Desinformation*

2. *Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 155.

has recently been reviewed positively in several publications, including the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* and the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, welcomed not only for its correction of the untruths propagated by Ficicchia's book, but also for addressing such topics as the role of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* in Baha'i literature, the reliability of certain early chronicles of Baha'i history, the relationship of E.G. Browne to the Baha'i Faith, and Baha'i conceptions of possible systems of world governance.

The *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* says the book "authentically and in the best scholastic tradition responds to the largest accumulation of issues raised in polemical writings against the Baha'is ... during the last one hundred years," and the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* marks the book as "an important contribution to the critical study of the Baha'i religion in the history of religions." An English edition of the book is in translation.

In the spring of 1999, two graduates of the Order of St. Augustine in Spain published *La Fe Baha'i: Una Nueva Religion Mundial?* (The Bahri 'i Faith: A New World Religion?). Aldo Marcelo Caceres and Luis Javier Reyes wrote the book as their thesis for their Bachelor of Arts degree in Theology, as part of

their studies to become Catholic priests. The three hundred and twenty pages of the book explore in detail the history and teachings of the Baha'i religion, including the Faith's perspective on several theological topics significant to Catholics. The authors' seminary advisor, Father Jose Demetria Jimenez, writes in the book's introduction, "What the authors of this book offer us is the possibility of an enriching dialogue which invites us to listen before making controversy, to make the effort to understand what the other person wants to tell us about his beliefs, and to let us be known by him." The book focuses mainly on similarities between the two Faiths, reserving only the last chapter for a discussion of the differences between Christianity and the Baha'i Faith. *La Fe Bahri 'i* is available for ordering directly from the Augustine Fathers.<sup>3</sup>

3. Augustine Fathers, Ediciones Religion y Cultura, Cl Columela 12, 28001 Madrid, Spain. E-mail : olandia@hotmail.com .

#### Establishment of Chair in Baha'i Studies

A milestone in the institutionalized study of the Baha'i Faith was reached on 29 March 1999 when the first academic Chair devoted to the study of the writings and history of the Baha'i Faith was created by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A ceremony to mark the occasion was held at the Baha'i World Centre and was attended by Baha'i representatives, University President Menachem Magidor and other senior officers, including the University's Rector and Vice-President, and Professor Moshe Sharon, the first incumbent of the Baha'i Chair. <sup>4</sup> At the ceremony, President Magidor spoke of the significance of the Chair's establishment to The Hebrew University, which fulfilled the University's aim of promoting interreligious dialogue and reconciliation. The Secretary-General of the Baha'i International Community, Mr. Albert Lincoln, delivered a few remarks on behalf of the Baha'i World Centre, briefly outlining the history behind the creation of the Baha'i Chair and noting the potential for scholarly advancement inherent in such a cooperative institution.

#### Baha'i Chair for World Peace

The Baha'i Chair for World Peace was established at the University of Maryland, in the United States, in 1993 and operates under the aegis of the University's Center for International Development and Conflict Management. The purpose of the Baha'i Chair is "to promote alternatives to the violent resolution of conflict through conflict management, global education, international development, spiritual awareness, and world trade; to share the experience of the Baha'i world community in building a global society; and to offer that community as a model for study."

4. Professor Sharon, who earned his Doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1971 , now teaches in the University's Islamic and Middle

Eastern Studies department, and has published extensively in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. His research interests include the early Baha'i Faith, Islamic history with an emphasis on the birth of Islam, the origins and development of Shf'ih Islam, the history of the Holy Land under Islam, messianic thought in Islam, Arabic epigraphy and papyrology, desert rock drawings and architecture, and the interaction between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The fifth annual Lecture of the Baha'i Chair took place on 7 May 1998 at the University of Maryland, College Park, when more than three hundred and fifty attendees gathered to listen to H.E. Amine Gemayel, former President of Lebanon, for whom the Chair's incumbent, Dr. Soheil Bushrui, was the principal Cultural Advisor during the President's tenure. During his address, President Gemayel expounded upon the goals of the Baha'i Chair by speaking of the need for a "synthesis of religious tenets" as "an essential prerequisite for conflict resolution on a global scale" and stating decisively that "it is the spiritual dimension that governs humanity's conduct and behavior."

The Baha'i Chair recently inaugurated the Spiritual Heritage series, which is devoted to interfaith studies. The first book published in the series is *Essays on Hinduism* by H.E. Dr. Karan Singh, a prominent Indian intellectual and political leader.

In other university news, Canada's network of Campus Associations for Baha'i Studies played a key role in mobilizing Canadian university faculty and staff to take action in support of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education in Iran<sup>5</sup> and in organizing the threemonth-long cross-Canada university speaking tour of Baha'i author Dr. William Hatcher in the fall of 1998. Dr. Hatcher spoke on "authentic morality," the necessity of determining whether one's moral standard is reckoned according to a higher authority or merely self-conceived.

#### Schools

"The greatest means," wrote Baha'u'llah, "to the advancement of the world of being and the uplift of souls," is the "education of the child."<sup>6</sup> Baha'is around the world are affirming the cardinal position of the principle of education by establishing and organizing permanent universities, primary and secondary schools, seasonal schools, children's classes, training institutes, and programs of religious and moral education.

5. See pp. 151 - 54, 279- 84, and 287- 93 of this volume for more on the attempted closure of the Baha' i Institute for Higher Education.

6. Cited in *Education: A Compilation* (Thornhill, Ontario: Baha'i Community of Canada, 1977), p. 4

Students at the New Dawn Model Nursery and Primary School in Benin City, Eda State, Nigeria. The school is operated by the Local Spiritual Assembly of

the Baha'is of Benin.

#### Permanent Schools

Several Baha'i or Baha'i-inspired permanent schools underwent notable points of development, including expansion in enrollment and courses offered and the passing of significant anniversaries. In April 1998, the Ric;lvan School in Colon, El Salvador, celebrated nine years of recognition by the El Salvadoran Ministry of Education as one of the country's official schools. The surrounding rural population has reacted positively to the school's diversity of curriculum, and enrollment has grown to include one hundred pupils from kindergarten through grade six. Ethiopia's Baha'i-inspired Unity College, which until late 1998 was the only private college in the country, saw its enrollment swell to five thousand students during the year. Courses offered include accounting, business administration, marketing, personnel management, hotel management and hospitality, and language training in Amharic, English, and Arabic. The Baha'i Study Center in Papua New Guinea graduated thirty-five grade ten students in December, the highest number since the school's establishment fourteen years ago. The Secretary for Agriculture and the Provincial Minister of Education both spoke at the graduation ceremony. The Center is registered with the College of Distance Education in Papua New Guinea and is financially self-sufficient.

The Baha'i-run Santitham school in Yasathon, Thailand, was recently declared by the Ministry of Education to be the second best medium-sized school in northeast Thailand.

The Baha'i-inspired Landegg Academy in Switzerland, which began granting academic degrees in 1988, expanded its course catalog this year. Landegg offers undergraduate and graduate programs of study in consultation and conflict resolution, the integrative study of religion, economics, ethics and development, and "applied spirituality," and has affiliations with universities in the United States and China. Its status as an institution of higher learning was affirmed in November 1998 by the Ministry of Education of the Swiss Canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden. More than one hundred students from all around the world have attended Landegg since 1996, when it began offering master of arts degrees through a combination of distance-learning and in-residence study.

#### Seasonal Schools

Held usually during the summer or winter, the seasonal school offers

Baha'i individuals and families the opportunity to gather in fellowship and study for several days or more. Many Baha'i communities held seasonal schools during the past year, some for the first time. The Baha'is of the Czech Republic, for example, held their first Baha'i summer school in the village of Trojanovice from 5 to 9 August 1998. The eighty-three attendees studied 'Abdu'l-Baha's book *Some Answered Questions*, practiced their public speaking skills, and engaged in recreational activities in the surrounding mountains . In July, the Baha'i community of the Western Caroline Islands held its first Baha'i summer school, in Yap. The first Macedonian Baha'i winter school was attended by fifty-three people in Bitola, and the Baha' is of Slovenia and Croatia held their winter school in December, near Cerknica, Slovenia. Most of the forty-three participants were attending for the first time. The twenty-five participants of Denmark's winter school , held from 24 December 1998 to 1 January 1999, gathered at the Baha'i center in Hellerup and studied the balance between the physical and spiritual aspects of life. Timed to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the passing of Queen Marie of Romania, who had acclaimed Baha'u'llah in her published writings , the Baha'i summer school in the Romani an town of Sinaia was attended by eighty-five people . Also in July, 150 Baha'is from several parts of the world gathered in Riga, Latvia, for the - regional summer school of the Baltic States. The school Participants in the Romanian summer school, was preceded by a held July 1998 in Sinaia. training institute course and was notable for its evening music and the warm fellowship of the participants . The arts were emphasized in the series of three summer schools held in August in the Guyanan towns of Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo, where between fifty and one-hundred youth and children attended. Thirty Baha'is gathered at the Baha'i winter school in Hisarya, Bulgaria, in January 1999 , which featured dramatic performances, artistic workshops , and a panel discussion concerning the goals of the Four Year Plan with members of the Bulgarian National Spiritual Assembly. Four hundred Baha'is composed Zimbabwe's International Summer School in Harare. Lectures, study sessions , artistic

workshops and performances left the participants feeling inspired and invigorated. Baha'i author Adib Taherzadeh, a member of the Universal House of Justice, attended and shared his perspective on the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the Baha'i World Centre. A successful summer school was held in the war-torn African nation of Angola, where thirty-six Baha'is were able to gather. In Uruguay, 109 people from eight countries came together at the regional winter school in February, where twelve youth accepted the Baha'i teachings. The Baha'i community of Myanmar held a small, focused summer school for three days in April, and one hundred Baha'is in Japan attended their own summer school.

#### Moral Education

Governments and school systems around the world are increasingly awakening to the society-building power of moral education.

Throughout March and April 1999, two Baha'is, Dr. Farzin Davachi and his wife Nancy, toured Botswana, Kenya, and Swaziland and consulted with officials there about ways of improving their AIDS prevention programs through moral education. In Botswana, they met with President Fets Mogae, Government ministers, the Bishop of the Catholic Church, educators, and addressed a session of the Parliament; in Kenya, they met with the Ministers of Health and Education, university professors, and the Council of Bishops of the Anglican Church; in Swaziland, the Baha'is met with the Queen Mother, several Government ministers, UN officials, and educators. The Davachis spoke of AIDS as a public health issue intimately bound up with society's

Farzin and Nancy Davachi met with the Queen Mother of Swaziland and other African leaders in the spring of 1999 to consult about the relationship between moral education and Africa :SAIDS crisis.

moral health. Moral education, they said, particularly when directed at children, is the most effective way a society can be convinced of the benefits of refraining from promiscuity, adultery, and drug abuse. Many influential officials, including President Mogae and the Queen Mother, reacted enthusiastically to these ideas and expressed a desire to shift the emphasis of their activities to spiritual, rather than exclusively material, values.

In September and October, Sandra Rowden-Rich, an Australian Baha'i, traveled to five cities in Russia conducting moral education workshops based on the popular book *The Virtues Guide*.

Students, business and civic leaders, and educators deepened their understanding of the role that strong morals play in a healthy society through role-playing, study, and consultation. Later in the year, Linda Kavelin Popov, the author of the *The Virtues Guide*, and her husband Dan Popov traveled to the Cook Islands to conduct a three-day intensive training session on the topic "Awakening the Gifts Within," in which thirty people participated. Dr. Hoda Mahmoudi, a Baha'i sociologist from the United States, traveled throughout Belize to speak about moral education in November. She facilitated workshops on moral education for teachers and school principals, visited organizations such as the Belize National Teachers Union, the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse, the National Department for Women, and various United Nations offices. With increased governmental recognition and approval of Baha'i-inspired curricula, Baha'is and Baha'i ideas are increasingly becoming involved in the creation of curricula for use in state school systems. In January 1999 the Finnish National Board of Education approved the official Baha'i curriculum for religious education at the secondary school level. By promoting universal values and a spiritual understanding of reality, Finnish Baha'is hope to prepare students for life in an evolving global society. Upon completion of a sixteen-hour training program, 550 facilitators were asked on 6 August 1998 to conduct training sessions in the 415 municipalities of Bahia, Brazil, using a manual entitled "Colegiado Escolar na Bahia-Gestao Participativa" (School Board in Bahia-Participatory Management). The aim of the one-day training session, held 27 August 1998, was to reach

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twenty-thousand school board members in the state of Bahia, who represent teachers, parents, students, and staff members of all the state's schools. The textbook used was published by the Secretary of Education of the Government of the State of Bahia and contains selections from the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha regarding the art of consultation. Nearly twentyfive thousand copies of the manual were distributed. Teachers in the Nicaraguan Department of Carazo completed eight Baha'isponsored seminars on such subjects as "the teacher as an agent of change," "global prosperity," "laws for a new world order," "environmental challenges and solutions," and "family life." Other governments also have expressed interest in Baha'i perspectives on moral education. In Liberia, the Education Ministry has invited Baha'i representatives to join Christians and Muslims in generating moral and religious curricula for the country's schools. In November, Baha'is in India were asked to train school teachers in moral education in five hundred schools in the state of Maharashtra. The

following month Chile's Ministry of Education approved a Baha'i religious education curriculum for use in public schools, and extensive contacts with the Ministry of Education have been made in Jamaica, where the Governor General is interested in establishing a nation-wide teacher training program under the stewardship of the Baha'is and modeled on Baha'i moral education programs already functioning in Ecuador.

#### Training Institutes

Training institutes are the tool through which the Baha'i community systematically promotes the development of its own human resources. Through carefully designed curricula and activities, believers are trained in how to contribute effectively to the spiritual and administrative development of their local communities, participate in interfaith activities, express their faith through the arts and music, and teach their faith. Training institutes also focus on promoting such vital goals as literacy, primary health care, and the equality of men and women. Three hundred and forty-four national and regional Baha'i training institutes are now in operation throughout the world and have trained over one hundred thousand Baha'is in the past three years alone.

#### THE BAHAI-FAITH WORLD

Songs enlivened the atmosphere of a training institute course held from 24 to 30 July 1998 at the Laos National Baha'i center.

An example of a well-functioning permanent training institute can be seen in the Dominican Republic, where for ten years the Olinga Institute has been conducting courses on the Baha'i teachings. Last year the Institute refined its administrative structure and expanded its course offerings. In Africa, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Eritrea decided that all Baha'is in that country should complete at least one institute course by January 2000. Attendance has increased over the past year, with ten courses organized in towns where many Baha'is live. In Chad, several graduates of a training institute were able to use their increased faith in and knowledge of the Baha'i teachings to welcome over one thousand of their fellow citizens to membership in the Baha'i community. After years of financial sacrifice, the Baha'is of Sarawak were finally able to open the building housing their permanent "Apau Institute." More than four hundred Baha'is gathered in September for a conference to dedicate the building. The Baha'is of Guatemala, Cape Verde, the East Leeward Islands, Sao Tome and Principe, and Tonga also exerted special efforts to develop their permanent institutes.

The first training course at the national Auki Baha'i institute in the Solomon Islands was held in January, using curriculum developed at the Yerinbool Baha'i Center of Learning in Australia.

Twenty-four Baha'is, including several facilitators of regional institutes from around the islands, gathered to spend a week studying a course on

— ,,,,,,, the Baha'i teachings

before administering

the same curriculum

in their local communities. Similar courses

were held for four days

in September in Sri

Lanka and throughout

the year in the Mariana

Islands. The National

Spiritual Assembly of

Participants in an institute course held at the

the Baha'is of Papua

Bahci 'i center of Funafuti, Tuvalu, in April 1999.

New Guinea expanded its network of training institutes by appointing boards of

directors for three more permanent institutes to augment the four

already in operation. Counsellor George Allen convened similar

weekend conferences in Gabon and the Republic of Congo in September and

November, respectively. Members of the National

Spiritual Assemblies, members of the Auxiliary Board, and other

Baha'is consulted on how to improve their country's institute

process.

Advancement of Women

To the degree that women are empowered to take their rightful

place in the organization and enrichment of society, humankind

will achieve its long-awaited unity, stability, and prosperity.

Although the role that women must play in the establishment of

world peace has as yet been only dimly realized, it is possible to find

women and men working together to promote equality all around

the world. From informal study circles and home visits among

women in Senegal to a formal round table discussion on the role

of women in a global civilization for leaders in Brazil, Baha'is

around the world are promoting the advancement of women, well

aware of the gender gap but confident of the reality of equality.

A five-day workshop in Kenya in April 1998 called "Traditional

Media as Change Agent" trained Baha'is to use folk theater,

songs, storytelling, and dance to promote the equality of men and

women. The conference was part of a long-term project, initially

sponsored by the United Nations Development Fund for Women

and now led by the African Baha'i community, designed to

empower women through the use of traditional media. 7 An identical

conference was held later in the summer in Zimbabwe, and a

similar one on the role of women in social and economic development was held in

Chad near the end of 1998.

The first South American Baha'i conference devoted to the advancement of women, called "Men and Women United for the Development of the World of Women" was held in Rosario, Argentina, for three days in November. More than 230 men, women, youth, and children from seven countries, both Baha'is and non-Baha'is, consulted on past and future contributions of women to society and the creation of a program of social and economic development

for South American women. Baha'is in the Andaman and

•

Nicobar Islands

sponsored a conference entitled "The Role of Women in Imparting Moral

Education to Children" in October, in

which eighty people, ...the 8 Baha'is women's group of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Baha'i Community of Lumumbashi, Katanga, Republic of Congo.

Another important

conference was held for women in the Sahel, the southern fringe of the Sahara desert, in August. Forty Baha'i women from Benin,

7. See *The Baha'i World 1996-97*, pp. 294-97, for more information on this project.

Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo gathered for a week in Bamako, Mali, to discuss their role in promoting the Baha'i teachings in the region. Organized by the Women of the Sahel Regional Committee, the conference was notable for the spirit of empowerment and animation present among the participants, and the continued, coordinated action it inspired. Twelve

women met in the Baha'i center of Latrikunda-Sabij i, Gambia, in March to consult on similar topics. They studied the curriculum "Learning at Home and at School, a Baha'i Program for Mothers," which addresses parenting and moral education issues.

Several activities took place in March to commemorate International Women's Day, including conferences, public discussions, seminars, and workshops. In India, the Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women played a critical role in sponsoring and organizing some of these activities, which were designed to be

On 21 December

1998, the India

Baha'i Office

for the

Advancement

of Women held  
a full day  
seminar on the  
theme of the  
Girl Child.

accessible to both the public and leaders of thought and government. Baha'is in Cameroon celebrated International Women's Day with a parade, special T-shirts and brochures, an exhibition stand, and a public meeting, which included an interfaith prayer gathering, public talks, and a dance exhibition. The Baha'i communities of Uganda and Trinidad and Tobago marked the occasion with similar activities. Baha'i representatives from the latter country appeared on national television and radio to offer their perspective on gender relations.

Baha'is are also involved in the activities of like-minded peace organizations. Baha'is have provided input to the Turkish-

Greek Women's Peace Initiative (WINPEACE), for instance, since its inception. Founded by Margarita Papandreou, former First Lady of Greece, and several prominent Turkish journalists, the Initiative is designed to bring together Greek and Turkish women in dialogue about their role in promoting peace between their countries. Fifteen Greek and fifteen Turkish delegates, including several Baha'is, attended the spring meetings in Greece and Turkey.

A 16 October 1998  
observance of World  
Food Day in eastern  
Uganda, with the theme  
of " Women Feed the  
World, " was organized  
by the Ugandan Baha 'i  
National Committee fo r  
the Advancement of  
Women.

To learn how to support and enforce legislation designed to prevent domestic violence, a delegation from the Modern Women's Foundation of Taiwan visited other women 's organizations in the United States in February. Jan Huang of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Taiwan was the only religious representative invited to be part of the delegation, which included parliamentarians, judges, other representatives from the judiciary, and officers from the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, and Foreign Affairs. The Baha'is of Taiwan have long supported the Foundation's activities.

The Baha'i community of Mauritius was among ten non-governmental organizations

invited as observers to the third Conference of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians, a follow-up meeting to the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development. Baha'is found the meeting a good opportunity to establish cordial relations and acquaint government representatives with the work that African Baha'is are performing to promote gender equality. Thirty-eight countries were represented at the conference, the purpose of which was to assess the role of

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female Ministers and parliamentarians in influencing policy development in the fields of population, sustainable development, women's empowerment, and legislative reform. Baha'is contributed three statements to the proceedings. Similar Baha'i representation occurred at the Thai Women's Forum, attended by more than one thousand women leaders from all parts of the country in October; and in the spring of 1999, three Baha'i women in the East Leeward Islands submitted a statement to a Parliamentary Committee responsible for drafting a bill on domestic violence.

The International Council of Women (ICW), the oldest international mainstream women's non-governmental organization, convened its International Seminar on Women's Leadership from 18 to 23 October in Haifa, Israel. Held at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center, the seminar was attended by two Baha'is, Mrs. Lee Lee Ludher, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia, and Mrs. Janak McGilligan from India. The Secretary-General of the Baha'i International Community, Mr. Albert Lincoln, attended the opening ceremony, along with other representatives of the Baha'i World Centre.

#### Institutional Commitment

As part of their commitment to advancing the station of women, several national Baha'i communities operate full-time Offices for the Advancement of Women. New offices were established last year in Malawi, South Africa, Taiwan, and Trinidad and Tobago, and three local task forces were formed in Mexico to coordinate their communities' responses to International Women's Day. The recently created National Association of Baha'i Women in Ireland, an initiative of the Irish National Spiritual Assembly, was formed to foster a sense of identity among Irish Baha'i women and to provide a platform for the sharing of Baha'i principles regarding the relationship of women to society at large. On the regional level, the European Task Force for Women was created in 1992 with the aim of encouraging cooperation and consultation among European Baha'i women. Since its inception, the Task Force has annually sponsored international seminars for female representatives from each European country. The Task Force's third International Women's Training Seminar was held in June in Acuto, Italy, and,

like the other seminars and workshops sponsored by the Task Force, has inspired a number of activities throughout Europe. Seminar participants afterwards held similar gatherings for their compatriots in Cyprus, the Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Iceland, Italy, Portugal, several regions in Russia, and Switzerland.

#### Human Rights

The Baha'i International Community has been involved in the human rights work of the United Nations since its inception, and as a non-governmental organization since 1948. The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was especially significant to the Baha'i community; it represented an important landmark in the quest to create a universal moral ethic and a structure of governance appropriate for such an ethic. Baha'i communities the world over promote human rights by working in collaboration with United Nations agencies and affiliates, organizing campaigns of public education, and contributing to conferences, public events, and other consultative forums.

In collaboration with the United Nations and the Ministry of Education and Culture, Baha'is in Paraguay initiated a human rights education project among Asunción's thirty thousand secondary school students. The project is the first of a four-stage program that will eventually encompass all two hundred thousand secondary school students in the country. UN representatives have said this may be the first project of its kind in the world and are giving it their enthusiastic support. Another notable instance of Baha'i/governmental collaboration occurred in Australia, where the Baha'i Office of External Affairs wrote to the Australian Local Government Association to suggest ways that local governments could celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Seventeen local councils in Australia are known to have followed the suggestions, which included adopting resolutions, mounting public displays, and publicizing the anniversary through local media.

Public celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were organized or supported by a number of national Baha'i communities, including Belgium, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Hawaii, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the

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Philippines, Turkey, and Zambia. In December the Baha'i community of Zambia issued a special statement, "The Spiritual Foundations of Human Rights," to all of Zambia's major media outlets. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Burkina wrote a similar public declaration in March.

In Norway, two hundred delegates from a number of religions, including a Baha'i delegation, attended the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in August. Sponsors of the conference

included the Norwegian government and the Church of Norway. The Norwegian Minister of International Development and Human Rights opened the conference with a plea for greater respect for human rights by saying, "Every government needs to examine the status of human rights within its own jurisdiction. In fact, the call to start with yourself, by critically examining your own behavior from a moral perspective, is a central tenet of all of history's great religious teachers, such as Confucius, Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad." The Baha'i presentation, which focused on justice, unity, and equality as the basis for conflict resolution, was made particularly poignant by the religiously-motivated execution of Mr. Ruhollah Rawhani, a Baha'i in Iran, only a few days before.

#### Race Unity and Indigenous Peoples

The past century has seen a sea change in humanity's understanding of itself: definitions of concepts such as race, ethnicity, and culture have evolved in the face of the global melding of civilizations, and barriers to unity have been torn down by the recognition of the material and spiritual oneness of humanity. As community after community steadily awakens to the possibility of unity in diversity, the pain caused by centuries of racial and ethnic violence is being openly acknowledged and addressed, and the first glimmerings of healing can be discerned.

Two important steps towards racial reconciliation and unity were taken in the Pacific region last year. In Australia, two thousand people attended the "Healing Humanity Festival" in the Canberra Convention Center at the end of 1998. Billed as a celebration of Australian cultural diversity, the festival was an opportunity to explore the challenges facing the individual, the community, and the nation, especially concerning racial harmony. At one point

a Maori Baha'i from New Zealand spoke to the assembly, calling for dispassionate reflection and collective atonement on the part of Australian society. "Each one of us here," she said, "has an interest in the process of healing. There are many problems plaguing our society but the biggest is the recognition and accomplishment of the oneness of humanity." Baha'is also participated in the second "World Indigenous People's Pathways Conference" in Queensland during the same period. In New Zealand, the National Spiritual Assembly took a leading role in the process of racial reconciliation by authoring a paper entitled "Indigenous Peoples and Minorities in the Baha'i Faith" and distributing it to all of New Zealand's Baha'is. The document frankly acknowledged the struggle facing the Baha'is of New Zealand in promoting racial unity within their community, lovingly called for new patterns of behavior based on an understanding of the oneness of humanity, and addressed from a Baha'i perspective attempts to promote the advancement of indigenous peoples.

through political activism.

Four Bloomington,  
Indiana, Baha'i  
children at a race  
unity event in the

United States wearing T-shirts reading

"No room in my  
heart for prejudice. "

A nationally coordinated campaign  
to raise awareness  
of issues related to

race unity in the United States, sponsored by the Baha'i community, has been  
underway since March 1998. A specially produced  
television program, "The Power of Race Unity," has aired on  
several national and many local and regional stations; the document "Race  
Unity: The Most Challenging Issue," written by the  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States,  
has been mailed, along with an information packet, to several  
thousand households; and calls to the toll-free information hotline

On 25 November 1998, Ruth Rydstedt presented American civil rights hero  
Rosa Parks with a copy of "Race Unity: the Most Challenging Issue, " a  
statement authored by the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.  
and visits to the American Baha'i website <sup>8</sup> have been steadily  
increasing. Some eighty percent of local Baha'i communities in  
the United States have sponsored activities in support of the campaign,  
including private viewings of the video, workshops, and  
public discussions about race unity.

Twelve years ago, several black Baha'i men, concerned about  
the state of race relations in the United States and unity among black  
Baha'is, met for a weekend to consult, reflect, and pray. Empowered and  
inspired by that first meeting, they met again the following  
year and invited others to join them. Since then, the Black Men's  
Gathering, as it became known, has been held annually at various  
locations, including the Louis Gregory Institute in Hemingway,  
South Carolina, and the Green Acre Baha'i School in Eliot, Maine.  
Through focused consultation, augmented by music and prayer,  
the men have become unified in their desire to support one another  
in the work of achieving race unity and the equality of men and

8. 1-800-22-UNITE and <[www.us.bahai.org](http://www.us.bahai.org)>, respectively.

women, both within the Baha'i community and in society at large.  
In its Ri9van 1996 message to the Baha'is of North America, the  
Universal House of Justice exhorted Baha'is of African descent to  
travel to Africa, where they could be a "unique source of encouragement and  
inspiration to their African brothers and sisters." In  
obedience to the House of Justice, groups of Baha'i men from the

Black Men's Gathering have gone on teaching trips to Africa every year for the past three years. In the summer of 1998, a group of twenty began their trip by visiting the Baha'i House of Worship in Kampala, Uganda, and journeyed elsewhere by foot, bus, and truck to capital cities and small villages alike, visiting the local Baha'is and telling others about Baha'u'llah.

The first national meeting of the Rom and Sint Gypsy groups, an "extraordinary event in the history of the Gypsy peoples" that has been awaited "for six hundred years," in the words of one Gypsy leader, was held for two days in Lanciano Terme, Italy, in June 1998. Baha'i representation was specially requested by the participants, who consider the European Baha'i community to be the "standard bearer and an example to follow for the unity principle it pursues" and who were inspired by the Baha'i teachings on unity to form their own "Transnational Federation" of the Gypsy peoples. Spanish Baha'is have long been aware of the vital role that music plays in preserving Romani culture. In collaboration with Miguel Hernandez University, Baha'is gathered top musicians to help organize a course entitled "Music as a Cultural Feature of the Gypsy People," designed to build a bridge between Gypsy musicians and the academic world. The course took place for ten days in July and was the first time the University had sponsored an activity for the exclusive benefit of the Gypsy peoples.

Baha'is in Canada's Northwest Territories released a compact disc of the Baha'i sacred writings in the Innuinaqtun language, the translation of which was two and a half years in the making. Designed to make the Baha'i teachings available to the Cambridge Bay community, the CD was presented by Baha'i representatives to an Inuit elder at a special ceremony in July, who accepted it on behalf of all Inuit elders in the area. Later, 360 copies were distributed among the community's 1,200 residents. Baha'is in Peru

translated a book of prayers, institute materials, and biographies of the central figures of the Baha'i Faith into the indigenous languages of Aymara and Quechua.

#### The Arts

Poetry, calligraphy and music all played vital roles in early Baha'i history, and different forms of arts and crafts continue to be cultivated in Baha'i communities. 'Abdu'l-Baha is reported to have said, "It is natural for the heart and spirit to take pleasure and enjoyment in all things that show forth symmetry, harmony, and perfection ... all things that have in them grace or beauty are pleasing to the heart and spirit." 9

Two volunteer choir groups undertook major tours last year: the "Voices of Baba" choir continued its annual practice of travel with a March- April concert tour through several countries in

Europe. The sixty-eight member group, with singers from seventeen countries , sang to large audiences in England, Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, and Greece with a repertoire of spirited devotional songs from all over the world . Many of the show's proceeds went to local charities. The summer concert tour undertaken by the "Lights of Unity" group brought together more than fifty Baha'is from sixteen countries, most from the former Soviet Union. The performers gathered in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to perform the first concert and continued on to tour Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan. The program combined fourteen choral pieces, a marimba band played on the opening night of slide show documenting a Baha'i-sponsored "Unity in Diversity " arts festival in Capetown, South Africa. Asian Baha'i community,

9. Quoted in A Brief Account of My Visit to Aca (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1905), pp. 11 - 14.

#### THE B AHA'f W ORLD

and dance. Audience responses to both tours were enthusiastic and often deeply emotional, with many people witnessing their own hopes expressed in the artists' message of beauty, unity, and spiritual transcendence.

Several smaller per- Noted Baha 'i artist and development specialist forming arts groups Geraldine Robarts stands with some of her art in also toured: in May, an exhibition in Nairobi, Kenya. the Turkish "Sound of Unity" group gave four performances in Ankara to nearly eight thousand people and later that summer took its dance and music to audiences in Romania and Moldova; the "Patchwork" choir from Belgium spent two weeks in July touring several towns in Hungary; the "Generation of Hope" choir performed in several Russian cities for the sixth year running; and the first Portuguese dance workshop was formed and toured the entire country during July and August. In response to the performances of the "Light of Unity" musical group in Ghana, thirty-six people declared their faith in Baha'u'llah in two regions of the country in August. An estimated twenty thousand people saw Reunion's newly launched "Unity Power" dance

group perform in a parade held in December to celebrate the anniversary of the abolition of slavery.

Native American Baha'i performing artist Kevin Locke toured Suriname and French Guiana for two weeks in January. He visited several Baha'i communities, met with religious and governmental leaders, granted interviews to the media, and facilitated arts workshops in Baha'i centers.

An institute course designed to train Baha'is capable of creating and performing music in the service of their Baha'i communities was held for three days at the end of May in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Held at the Baha'i national center, the twenty-six participants spent the conference studying musical theory and the Baha'i writings on music and gained skills concerning

the organization and successful performance of choirs. The weekend ended with a public concert at the national center with music composed and performed by the participants. The first arts, music and drama workshop took place at the national Baha'i center in Nairobi, Kenya, on 24-25 January. Twenty-two people participated, including eight members of the Auxiliary Board and Baha'is from other countries.

In May, Baha'is took part in a religious musical competition organized by the Association for Peace between Religions in Romania. One of the prizes went to a former Baha'i pioneer to Romania, Arsham Evoghli. Prizewinners were invited to perform their music at a gala concert, and several European National Spiritual Assemblies were also invited to participate. The writings of Baha'u'llah featured prominently in the concert, which was broadcast on Romanian television. The work of Bijan Khadem-Missagh, an Austrian Baha'i author and musician, led to his involvement in Allegro Vivo, a prestigious annual chamber music festival in Austria. The 19 August opening concert was dedicated to the theme of "Unity in Diversity" and featured excerpts

One of Norway's top classical composers, Lasse Thoresen is known for writing music with spiritual themes. During a visit to the home of Edvard Grieg, Norway's most famous composer, Dr Thoresen was invited to play Grieg's piano.

from the Baha'i writings and an award ceremony, during which Mr. Khadem-Missagh received the Austrian Cross for Sciences and Arts from Thomas Klestil, President of the Austrian Republic. The Queen of Sweden opened "Warsaw Autumn," an annual Polish music festival held in September, which included in its program Fire and Light, an opera/ballet inspired by the Baha'i martyrs in Iran that was written by Norwegian Baha'i composer Lasse Thoresen.

American Baha'i jazz pianist Bob Bellows spent most of September and part of October making new jazz fans in the heart of

Mongolia. He visited three cities, performed at universities, cultural centers, an orphanage, and schools, and conducted a workshop at a music college. The visit culminated in a collaborative concert with the State Philharmonic Orchestra and other Mongolian musicians in Ulaan Baatar. An estimated three hundred thousand television viewers in Panama watched a documentary on Jamboree '98, a Panamanian arts festival. The show included segments profiling the Baha'i community, including footage of dances from Panama's Baha'i art workshop.

#### Youth

The Baha'i community counts as one of its special responsibilities that of nurturing the spiritual life of its youth, whose energy and enterprising spirit enables them to make special contributions to the establishment of world peace. Baha'i youth are often called upon to organize workshops, conferences, and other development projects. Many youth are suited to express the ideals of their Faith through the arts, prompting some to participate in dance or music workshops. Several travels and performances of such workshops took place over the course of the year. A Hawaiian dance workshop toured the Mariana Islands in June, sixty members of the Sarawak Baha'i youth workshop traveled throughout southeast Asia in December after completing a training course, and the Irish Diversity Dance Workshop performed for several summer days in the city of Cork. On 6 February 1999, the Anchorage, Alaska, Baha'i youth workshop was one of several recipients of the "Spirit of Youth" award. Presented by the city of Anchorage to youth who had made outstanding contributions to the community

#### The Third World

Youth Forum of the

United Nations

System, held in

Braga, Portugal,

from 2 to 7 August

1998, included

Bahá 'lInternational

Community representatives from Canada, Sudan/Sweden,

and the United

States.

during the previous year, the award was given in the category of Dance Theater. The Baha'i youth group in the Eastern Caroline Islands garnered an arts award in November, winning the Pohnpei Youth Talent Show with its performance of drama, dance, and music. The Badi Youth Group of Macau won a similar Youth Service Award, and three Canadian Baha'i youth living for a year in the Bahamas formed the first youth dance workshop there, which performed in two schools on the island of North Andros.

Youth from Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique also formed a performing arts group and, after completing a training course on the arts in December, performed at a youth club and arts center in Abymes, Guadeloupe, in March 1999 to an enthusiastic audience. An example of the power of the spirit of Baha'i youth occurred in Mexico, where six Mayan youth, all under the age of sixteen, on their own initiative, organized and carried out a local community development project. The youth systematically chose the methods through which they intended to achieve their goals, which were to witness an increase in the number of Baha'is, study circles, children's classes, and activities on the part of the Baha'i Local Spiritual Assembly. Through their efforts, which lasted thirteen days, all these goals were achieved. In Sri Lanka, ten Tamil youth created and performed dramatic skits that depicted the harmful effects of alcohol and explored family issues for audiences in two neighboring towns. Following a visit of the Scottish Diversity Dance Theater to Alford Academy in Aberdeenshire, two Baha'i youth returned to the school for two weeks in October to lead dance theater workshops. At the end of the

Children in Pakistan hold up signs with Baha 'i principles written on them during a Baha 'i event.

process, while watching a performance by the newly trained students, the Academy's headmaster reportedly exclaimed, "This is what I call education!"

The first national youth conferences of Cuba, Mexico, and Zambia were held during the spring and summer of 1998. Using workshops, collective study, consultation, dance, and drama, attendees explored the role that youth can play in the development of their Baha'i communities. Thirty-five Baha'i youth attended the first youth training institute course in American Samoa in March, where they studied the Baha'i writings and created artwork, songs, and short plays. Other international youth conferences were held in Cameroon, India, Luxembourg, the Mariana Islands, Sweden, and Venezuela. Some focused on the arts, others on community development. Through these conferences, youth have been able to identify four key areas in which they have gained wide experience: teaching children's classes, using the arts in service to their Baha'i communities, facilitating institute courses and local study circles, and spreading the Baha'i teachings in areas populated by indigenous peoples.

## YEAR IN R EVIE W

Involvement in the  
Life of Society

Baha'is strive to contribute to the discourse  
of society by participating in activities and

dialogue of governments, other religions,

progressive organiza-

tions, and leaders of thought. As part of a

governmental sym-

posium on "Poverty

and Consumerism-

Bahri 'i youth of Iringa, Tanzania, with sf!Veral

Baha 'iyouth from other parts of the world, after

six months of teaching in the summer of 1998.

Rallying for Change," the non-Baha'i author of a report entitled "Our Future Prosperity" included in her report to the government of Trinidad and Tobago an appendix containing the full text of a relevant statement prepared by the Baha'is of that country and included suggestions for further reading in Baha'i literature. The document was sent to all government ministries, UN and NGOs, and the University of the West Indies. In South America, Baha'is provided input and organizational support to the formation of El Salvador's "Plan for the Nation," a long-term social and cultural development plan for the country. The Baha'i view on the theme "The Earth, One Village" was solicited by the Office of the President of Senegal for its December panel presentation on the subject. The Baha'i member was the panel's only religious representative.

Throughout the spring of 1999, the government of Sierra Leone invited all civic groups, including religious organizations, to provide concrete recommendations on how to further the peace process aimed at ending the political unrest that has raged in the region for years. The Baha'i community was given a unique opportunity to provide input when two of its representatives were invited to participate in a thirty-minute interview on state television, during which they spoke about Baha'i strategies of conflict resolution, recounted what the Baha'is had been doing to support peace in the region, and outlined the history of the

Baha'i community in Sierra Leone. North, in Guinea-Bissau, the newly sworn-in Prime Minister sought the

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community when the

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**BAHA'I FAITH**

country's transitional

government was

formed in February.

On 1 May 1998, the Saha'is of Saminda, Cameroon, Hurricane Mitch, were invited, along with other groups who have the worst Atlantic radio programs on the provincial radio station, to storm in the last two participate in a Labor Day parade through the center of town. The banner mentions the Saha'is' hundred years, swept broadcasts: "Mothers, Fathers and Children" and through Honduras in "Living the Life." October 1998. Honduran Baha'is assisted in directing aid to those areas most badly hit by the storm and accurately informed aid organizations and the government of the rapidly changing situation. One aid worker commented, "The Baha'is have been instrumental in helping us clarify where the help was needed most and how to distribute it well." The national Baha'i center, because of its proximity to an airport, served as a focal point for the distribution of food and vital medical supplies to the region's citizens, as did Baha'i buildings elsewhere in the country. Following the storm, Baha'is around the world initiated an informal fund-raising campaign on the internet, sending more than sixty thousand dollars and eight thousand kilograms of food and supplies to the country's peoples.

#### Interfaith Activities

"Consort with the followers of all religions," is Baha'u'llah's exhortation, "in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship." 10 Interfaith activities are critical to the creation of a world defined by justice, unity, and understanding. In what may be a world first, one

10. Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette, Baha' Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 22.

nation's religious leaders gathered to discuss ways of combating the decline perceived in their country's morality. Traditional African leaders and representatives from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Faiths in South Africa met in October at a Moral Summit to prepare and sign a collective "code of conduct" aimed at preventing violence, corruption, and other signs of moral decay in their country. President Nelson Mandela attended the signing. A similarly diverse panel discussion, broadcast on Austrian radio, was held over the Easter holidays to discuss the words "It is done," the purported last utterance of Christ. The organization of the May conference in Kenya of the All African Council of Churches was aided by the participation of Baha'is, who were asked to coordinate the components that dealt with unity, peace, and justice. Representatives of the Baha'i community of Germany were invited to take part in two important interfaith events: the "Mainz Dialogue," at which high-ranking religious officials met to discuss interreligious cooperation and the creation of a joint statement, and the "Inter-Cultural Council

of Germany," an initiative of the Lutheran Church with similar aims . Baha'i artists participated in the 25 May ecumenical concert organized by the Association for Peace Between Religions in Romania.

On the three-hundredth anniversary of an important Sikh holiday, five million Sikhs gathered in Punjab , India, for a major

At a 6 March 1999

UN celebration of international

Womens Day,

several Cypriot

Saha 'is distributed ll~i

carnations with "a

message ofp eace

and hope" attached

to them, and were

able to meet with

Dame Ann Hercus

(2nd left), Chief of

Mission of the UN

Peacekeeping

Force in Cyprus.

Refugee children listen to a concert organized by the Ba ha' is of Manukau City, New Zealand, for residents of the Government's Mangere Refugee Hostel. Left to right: Jerome from Rwanda, Mustafa from Somalia, and Saiid from Ethiopia. Two Baha 'is from Tonga sit behind them.

celebration. Mrs. Lee Lee Ludher, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Asia, Dr. I. S. Ludher from the National Spiritual Assembly of Malaysia, and Dr. Ali Merchant from the National Spiritual Assembly of India represented the Baha'i International Community at the gathering's Conclave of Spiritual Leaders. The Baha'i delegation was given the opportunity to speak during the closing ceremony, which was attended by nearly one million people. Mrs. Ludher and Dr. Merchant chose to address the assemblage together, he in Hindi, she in English.

Other Activities

Administrators of the Baha'i-run Montessori school program in Western Samoa were invited by the government to contribute ideas to the National Seminar on Early Childhood Education in November. Some of the more than one hundred and fifty highranking participants in the seminar were clearly enthused by the Baha'i presentation and by their visits to the Montessori schools

operated by the Baha'is. The Government of Samoa also asked the Baha'i educators to help create a standard curriculum for all Samoan pre-schoolers. Two government-owned radio stations in

Liberia have contacted the Liberian Baha'i information center requesting Baha'i participation in their religious programs. In January the Baha'is of Antigua/Barbuda were asked by a committee of the Antigua/Barbuda Parliament for their feedback on a proposed domestic violence bill. The Baha'is were the only religious group to make a presentation in support of the bill, thus contributing a spiritually grounded perspective to the debate. A Baha'i-sponsored "Peace and Unity Rally" attracted more than three thousand of Fiji's residents. After the march, talks were given by the local Mayor, representatives from Government ministries, and a Baha'i. During the 6 February 1999 Proclamation for Justice in Equatorial Guinea, Baha'is recited selections from the Baha'i writings on peace. A Baha'i in the village of Slabodka, Belarus, organized a well-received celebration of International Children's Day in June, which included sports, games, exhibitions of children's art work, contests, and a concert. As a result, several other villages have invited the Baha'is to organize similar events in their areas .

The ceremony granting the fourth annual World Citizenship Awards, sponsored by the Bahri 'i community of Brazil, was held 15 December 1998 in Brasilia.

The

winner, from 3rd left to 2nd right, were Rabbi Henry Sobel, Mrs. Raimunda of the Women's Education Network, Dr. Silvestre da Silva of the Brazilian Bar Association of Silo Paulo, and Mr. Marcia Gontijo of Amnesty International.

The European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF) and the Baha'i community of Bulgaria participated in the Sixth International Conference on Moral and Ethical Principles in a Social Market Economy in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October 1998. Sponsored by the EBBF, the Bulgarian National Spiritual Assembly, and eight other organizations, the conference brought together more than one hundred business leaders, academics, NGOs, journalists, and students to discuss business ethics, corruption, organized crime, microfinance, and corporate social responsibility.

Following the tragic 15 August bombing in Omagh, Baha'is in Northern Ireland organized a memorial evening for the victims and their families in October. As each victim's name was read aloud, a rose was placed in a vase, followed by a minute of silence. The program ended with prayers and readings from the

Parade float made

by the Bahá'í

communities of

Port Coquitlam

and Langley,

Canada, on the

theme 'A Violence-

Free Family' in the  
spring of 1998.

Baha'i writings . Baha'is in Canada organized a conference for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in St. John's , Newfoundland, in October. The "Points of Contact" conference hosted 153 people and featured not only keynote talks, but also an original dramatic work and extensive consultation among the participants on social issues facing the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. Throughout last year, Korean Baha'is were very much involved in the preparations for the first global NGO forum in South Korea, to be held in 1999 in Seoul. Representatives from NGOs, universities, and the media were expected from all over the world to consult on ways of achieving social peace.

#### YEAR IN REVIEW

As part of commemorations honoring the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Turkish Republic, the Baha'i Women's Community of Adana, Turkey, in cooperation with the local government and the Adana Women's Union, organized a day-long festival. The Baha'is also participated in the main parade in Adana, bringing the largest number of participants. On 24 January President Cassam Uteem of Mauritius gave the keynote address at the World Religion Day observance sponsored by the country's Baha'i community. Talks by representatives of several world Faiths, centering around the theme "Towards a Caring and Prosperous Community," followed the address.

#### Community Development

The work of creating distinctive Baha'i communities involves a wide variety of activities, such as establishing local and national Baha'i centers, gaining legal recognition for Baha'i institutions, strengthening relationships with other religions and leaders of thought, translating and disseminating the Baha'i writings, gathering in regional and national Baha'i conferences to consult and build wider bonds of unity, training Baha'i administrators, and sharing the Baha'i message with society through public exhibitions, meetings, and other activities. Baha'i community development is designed to stimulate creativity and capacity at the grassroots level and is intimately bound up with the work of developing new patterns of society.

Throughout the year under review, Baha'is in Cambodia saw their community grow noticeably in strength and maturity. In cities

Participants in a

30 August 1998

consultative conference in Kampot province, Cambodia, drew up plans for the development of their Baha'i community. Such

gatherings help  
promote unity and a  
sense of shared  
responsibility.

such as Seam Reap, Kampot, Battamban, and Sihanoukville,  
where special efforts at community development have been  
made since summer 1998, Baha'is are now hosting training institute courses  
using standardized Baha'i curricula, holding regular  
Nineteen Day Feast gatherings, enjoying stronger relationships  
with local government, witnessing an increase in the attendance  
of children's classes, and an expansion in the number of Baha'is.  
Poverty, ethnic and political strife, and environmental degradation are just a  
few of the challenges that have inspired daily  
occasions of sacrifice and dedication by Baha'is in different parts  
of the world. Unrest in the Congo Republic has upset traditional  
patterns of life, but the Baha'is of Dolisie report rapid progress  
in the functioning of their community. Strong interest in the  
Baha'i teachings is being shown by the local population, fueled  
by frequent public meetings, a series of training courses, public  
showings of Baha'i films, and an exhibition in a youth cultural  
center of Baha'i writings concerning education and the role of  
women. In a nearby village, the government has banned all gatherings except  
Baha'i ones. In spite of the unrest that has racked  
Rwanda in recent years, Baha'is there have made great strides in  
continuing their activities. On 19 April 1999 the Baha'i Radio  
program in Rwanda resumed its regular broadcast schedule after a  
five-year hiatus. In Costa Rica, the Regional Conference of Talamanca was  
scheduled to be held on a piece of forested land  
recently cleared by the community. As the Baha'i center planned  
for the space had not yet been built and no other suitable meeting  
place existed, the local Baha'is spent the day before the conference building  
benches, a simple kitchen, and a meeting room  
from the felled trees.

In 1995, Hurricane Marilyn devastated parts of the Virgin  
Islands, causing many to lose their jobs and homes. Many  
Baha'is were forced to leave the islands, and the national Baha'i  
center was destroyed. Three years later, in August, the community  
held the first teaching conference since the 1995 storm. Held at  
the reconstructed national Baha'i center, the conference marked  
a turning point in the process of reconstruction. Attendees studied  
the most recent Bahá'í message from the Universal House of

Justice, consulted on ways of meeting the needs of their community, and shared  
their love of music and the arts.

The Baha'is of Canada marked the ten-year anniversary of  
Baha'i programming on the Vision TV network, a nationally broadcast channel  
that reaches more than seventy percent of Canadian

homes. Baha'i program highlights include the four-hour broadcast of the Second Baha'i World Congress in New York in November 1992, which attracted an audience of more than three hundred thousand viewers; a documentary about the construction of the Baha'i House of Worship in New Delhi, India; and the first Baha'i video image broadcast via satellite, of Amatu'l-Baha Rul:iiyyih Khanum walking through the gardens surrounding the Shrine of Baha'u'llah for the program Baha 'u 'llah: A Glimpse of His Life and Teachings. One hundred and twenty-two broadcasts of sixtyseven Baha'i programs have aired on Vision TV since 1988.

#### Conferences

Local, national, and regional Baha'i conferences are designed to raise participants' awareness of shared goals and to foster consultation, fellowship, and bonds of unity among people who live far apart. Inspired by the long-running Black Men's Gatherings organized by Baha'is in the United States, Botswanan Baha'is held their first similar gathering in May. Participants explored their role as black men from a Baha'i perspective by studying the Baha'i writings to and about the black race, and afterwards spoke of regaining their "sense of nobility." They also consulted about ways of better supporting their Baha'i sisters and plan to incorporate the gatherings into the larger process of community transformation. The Malaysian Baha'i community's "Mid-Point Congress," so named because it fell during the mid-point of the Four Year Plan, was held in August 1998. The conference brought together some thirteen hundred Baha'is, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors, five Auxiliary Board Members, and all members of the Malaysian Spiritual Assembly. The Spiritual Assembly prepared for the congress by organizing a nine-day prayer vigil among all ninety-seven of the country's Local Spiritual Assemblies.

Training conferences for Baha'is serving in administrative positions are used to systematize and streamline the day-to-day functioning of Baha'i administrative bodies and build a unified vision among their members. In the fall of 1998, such a conference was held in Taraz, Kazakhstan, and was attended by forty Kazakh Baha'is from eleven communities. In Kiribati, for eleven days in mid-summer, nearly eighty members of the Auxiliary Board , their assistants, and other Baha'is studied the principles that govern the Baha'i administrative system. Ten assistants to Auxiliary Board members in Laos met for a one-day training session in September to learn how to facilitate local, informal study groups on the Baha'i teachings. In Lesotho , Counsellors Garth Pollock and Daniel Ramoroesi led a conference for two days in December, where they explored ways of inspiring growth, action, and reflection in Baha'i communities and also outlined budgeting

methods and other organizational concerns. Twenty-five Baha'is attended, including Auxiliary Board members, members of National and Local Spiritual Assemblies and members of the Lesotho Institute Board. Twenty-five Baha'is in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, including six members of the National Spiritual Assembly, attended a conference to learn more about the law of I:Iuququ'llah in March.

#### Baha'i Writings

The writings of Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha form the sacred textual basis not only for the existence of the worldwide Baha'i community, but for its continued development and spiritual vitality. Study of the Baha'i writings is an integral part of community life and access to them is promoted through translations into local languages. Several communities have underscored the importance of increased availability of the Baha'i writings through formal ceremonies honoring the launch of new publications. One hundred and forty Baha'is attended a two-day devotional meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, in November, at which Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, recently translated into Icelandic, was formally presented to the Icelandic community. A public presentation to a Russian audience of the Russian translation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the most important book of the Baha'i

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The thirty-fifth National Convention of the Bahri 'is of Malaysia, held 29- 31 May 1998, witnessed the presentation of the newly completed Tamil translation of the Kitab-i-Aqdas to Counsellor Rosalie Tran, who accepted it on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.

revelation, took place in November. More than three hundred prominent guests filled the hall at the House of Friendship in Moscow to listen to a presentation by Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, Professor Emeritus of Yale University, and an expert in Russian history, as he described the content, significance, and history of the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Other segments of the program included the formal presentation of the book to the Director of the Library of the Duma, the President's Human Rights Commission, and the Parliamentary Committee on Religious Affairs; performances of classical music; readings from the Kitab-i-Aqdas; the performance of a scene from a play written by an early Baha'i; and a choral quintet set to a selection from the writings of Baha'u'llah. A similar ceremony was held in September in Pakistan to introduce the Kitab-i-Aqdas to the residents of

Azad Kashmir, Muzaffarab , with the respected Muslim scholar Allama Siyyid Kifayat Hussain N a.qvi presenting the keynote speech.

#### Baha'i Centers

National, regional, and local Baha'i centers fulfill several important functions and are designed to serve the communities in which they are established through a diverse array of activities, including devotional and religious gatherings , classes, public service projects, art and music exhibitions, and public health and literacy initiatives. Several new local and national Baha'i centers were established this year. The Baha'i community of Thailand

Dr. Utairat

Chaumrattanakul

of the Spiritual

Assembly of Thailand presented the

Kitab-i-Aqdas, the

Peace Statement,

and a copy of The

Hidden Words to

HRH Princess

Soamsawali at the

inauguration of the

new Thai national

Baha'i center.

was honored by the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Soamsawali at the official opening of the Thai national Baha'i center in Bangkok on 26 November, 1999. Upon her arrival, the Princess was welcomed by members of the Thai National Assembly and then opened the curtain covering the center's front door to mark the center's inauguration. This was the first royal visit to a Baha'i event in Thailand, which was also attended by representatives of the Japanese, Malaysian, and Singapore National Spiritual Assemblies and by Zena Sorabjee, a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Asia.

The Baha'i communities of Albania, Bermuda, Sicily, St.

Helena, and the West Leeward Islands all opened the doors of

their new national Baha'i centers last year as well. The Albanian

Baha'i center is located in downtown Tirana near the Tirana

International Hotel, the most prominent of the city's landmarks;

the ceremony marking the expansion of Bermuda's Baha'i center,

which occurred on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the

The role that Bahci 'i

centers play in the

development of the '

local community is

considered to be very important. On 9 April 1998 in Talamanca, Costa Rica, a group of Bri Indians held a prayer gathering at the site on which they plan to build their Bahá'í center.

Members of the St. Helena Bahá'í community, along with several youth volunteers from abroad, held a special celebration on 20 June 1998 to commemorate the opening of St. Helenas new Bahá'í center.

Bermudan Bahá'í community, was attended by several highranking officials, including the Premier, the Governor, and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Bermuda; Sicily's inauguration coincided with the occasion of the community's first Bahá'í summer school; and St. Helena's building had been constructed the previous summer largely by the volunteer labor of Bahá'í youth, several of whom came from overseas to help. The inauguration of the national Bahá'í center for the West Leeward Islands occurred during the National Convention in April 1998. Ground was also broken for the construction of a new national center in Trinidad. Other local Bahá'í centers were established last year in places as far flung as Lubaini, Malawi; Arto Atoll, in the Marshall Islands; Patangata, Tonga; and Keningau, Sabah.

#### Legal Recognition

The Bahá'í communities of Austria, Georgia, and Russia all achieved long-sought goals of legal recognition during the year. In January 1999, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Russia received formal recognition as a "centralized religious organization" under a new law passed in the fall of 1997 governing religions in Russia. This legal recognition enables the Russian Bahá'í community to rent and own property, and to publish, import, and distribute Bahá'í literature. Similar privileges were granted to the Austrian and Georgian Bahá'í communities through their

registrations.

After a long period of trying to acquire land for a Baha'i cemetery, the Baha'is of Colombo, Sri Lanka, received a letter in November from their local government, allocating a plot of land to be set aside as "Baha'i Burial Ground."

#### Contact with Prominent People

Several meetings took place between representatives of the Baha'i community and royalty, heads of state, traditional chiefs and leaders of thought last year. During a special campaign in April, each of Fiji's Paramount Chiefs received a copy of *The Prosperity of Humankind*, a statement of the Baha'i International Community, to inaugurate the next stage in the Baha'i community's efforts to raise the Chiefs' awareness of the Baha'i teachings. More than twenty-five Chiefs of American Samoa attended the dedication ceremony in honor of the newly reconstructed national Baha'i center in December and, during one part, led a traditional ceremony in honor of the center and the gathering. In August, two Chiefs on the Ni-Vanuatu island of Tanna wrote strongly-worded letters to Vanuatu's National Spiritual Assembly regarding the July execution of a Baha'i in Iran. 11 Governor Roy Schneider of the Virgin Islands met with a Baha'i delegation on 15 April. During the meeting, after reading Baha'i literature and speaking with the Baha'i representatives, he instructed his aide to ensure that Baha'i information sheets would be distributed to all government agencies, schools, and libraries for posting and suggested

11. See pp. 151-54, 279- 86, and 312 for more on the Baha'is in Iran.

to members of the delegation that they coordinate a public information campaign throughout the islands to raise people's awareness of the Baha'i teachings.

Meetings with heads of state in various countries have served to strengthen relationships between Baha'i communities and their governments and as a way of acquainting leaders with the goals of the Baha'i community. The first instance of Baha'i representation at a meeting with a Malaysian head of state occurred on 27 November in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, when Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, along with several chief ministers, met with

On 23 March 1999,

Baha'i representatives met with Mr.

Cassam Uteem,

President of

the Republic of

Mauritius.

religious leaders from around the country. Mr. Young Syh Fwu, Secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bah a' is of Sabah, represented the Baha'i community. During the meeting the Prime

Minister stressed the importance of religious tolerance, and Mr. Young Syh Fwu spoke of the Baha'i principle of obedience to government, afterwards presenting the Prime Minister with Baha'i literature.

Several other meetings took place in Europe, Africa and Asia: During the "Women and Work" exhibition of the Dutch Women's Council on 27 November, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands visited several booths, including that of the Baha'is. The Queen spoke with the Baha'is there for several minutes about world peace, education, and human rights and accepted a copy of the latest edition of The Baha'i World. President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda likewise accepted Baha'i literature during his visit to

the Baha'i booth at the International Women's Day commemoration in Kampala on 8 March. Several members of the Spiritual

Assembly of the Baha'is of Hong Kong met with the Honorable Secretary for Home Affairs David Lan on 2 September. The Secretary was interested in learning about the Baha'i teachings and requested more Baha'i literature to augment his office's research library. On 13 December, a Baha'i delegation made a courtesy call to the Honorable Hilarion Davide, newly appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. In the course of the forty-five minute conversation, the Chief Justice made several references to possible word-plays between the word "Baha'i" and similar words in the Philippine language, likening the Baha'i Faith to a dwelling ("bahay" in Filipino) which houses all the religions under one roof, and the first two syllables of Baha'u'llah (baha) to the Visayan term of the same pronunciation, which means "flood," saying the Baha'i teachings could be considered a "flood of love, justice, and grace."

As a representative of the Universal House of Justice, Mr. Giovanni Ballerio toured the southern Pacific, meeting with Kings and Heads of State, including His Majesty King To'a 'ahau Tupou IV of Tonga.

Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands visited the Baha'i stand at an exhibition in Amsterdam in November

1998. The Queen was presented with the latest copy of The Baha'i World.

### Public Recognition

Several notable instances of an increasing respect accorded to the Baha'i community and its teachings by the media occurred in Europe last year. To commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Baha' i community in France, the Baha'is organized several events , including a gala concert, an interfaith colloquium entitled "France, a Land of Faith," and a public celebration of France's Baha' i centenary. French media coverage of the celebrations was substantial. National publications such as Le Monde, Liberation, L 'Express, Panorama, Notre Histoire, Phosphore, and La Vi e all took advantage of the occasions to write about the Baha'i community; national radio stations broadcast interviews and news reports about centenary activities, and several television stations repeatedly aired similar segments. The British Broadcasting Corporation aired a twenty-five minute interview with Olya Roohizadegan, a Baha'i from Iran, four times in July and August. Mrs. Roohizadegan spoke of her experiences as a Baha'i living under the post-revolution Iranian government, the Baha'i women martyrs of her home town, and the Baha' i teachings. A milestone was reached in Greece when the best-selling newspaper To Vima positively portrayed the Baha'i Faith in an interfaith article, "Five gods in the same city: People begin from different starting points and end up with common values." Two multid denominational schools in Limerick and Cork City, Ireland, both now close each year for a Baha'i holy day. One of the schools ' calendars marks 12 November, the anniversary of the birth of Baha'u 'llah, as "Baha'i Day," and suspends operations on that day. The other school closes for a different Baha'i holy day each year. In both schools, prior to the closure, Baha'i parents are invited by the school to speak to students about the Faith. In April, the national television station in Barbados and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation contacted the Baha'is of Barbados to tape readings of the Baha'i writings for regular broadcast on radio and television, under the titles "Thoughts for Today" and "Evening Meditations. " For ten to fifteen minutes every Sunday morning, Namibia's Radio Ovambo airs a presentation on some aspect of the Baha'i teachings. Each program is first translated into the local language by the National Broadcasting Corporation. On 15 May Norwegian Radio broadcast a new composition by Baha' i composer Lasse Thoresen of selections from the writings of Baha'u'llah set to music.

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Singapore's Inter-Religious Organization, a body formed to promote peace, understanding and goodwill among people of different faiths, three specially-designed stamps were issued in January 1999, depicting nine of the major religions in Singapore. The Baha'i Faith was honored through its inclusion. Elsewhere, the post office of Hungary issued a one-day franking stamp on 21 November 1998 to celebrate the eighty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in that country.

Muslim	Muslim
Sikh	Sikh
Baha'i	Baha'i

Three stamps which feature Singapore's main religions were issued by the Inter-Religious Organization of Singapore in honor of its fiftieth anniversary.

Slovenia's national TV 1 network aired a half-hour program about the Baha'i Faith in February. The program was commissioned by the Office of Religious Affairs and contained three interviews with Baha'is, a Baha'i dance workshop performance, excerpts from a moral education initiative, and photographs of Baha'i holy places in Israel. In September, *Evangelische Kommentare*, a Protestant publication in Germany, published an article profiling Germany's religious minorities. Members of the Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Baha'i communities had the opportunity to write about their experiences with Germany's Christian majority. The article was a product of the increasing dialogue between the Baha'i community and established churches in Germany, attained after a long period of misunderstanding. In the words of the magazine's editor, after the German Baha'i community "succeeded in correcting incorrect representations that had been circulated about it among the general public, the Baha'is have more recently been appreciated as religious partners, by the churches as well."

The Yad Vashem ("Righteous among the Nations") award is the most prestigious award given to a gentile, honoring those who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. The award for 1998 was given on 17 December in San Francisco, California, to Martha Forgeur-Henkart, a Baha'i living in Sacramento. Mrs. Forgeur-Henkart provided shelter for a number of Jews in Belgium fleeing from the Nazi regime by establishing safe houses and distributing false identity papers. Her name is to be engraved on a special Wall of Honor at the Yad Vashem memorial center in Jerusalem.

#### Sharing the Baha'i Message

Over the course of the year in review, many communities have developed their educational and cultural lives and the functioning of their administrative institutions; other Baha'i communities

have broken through barriers in the way of dialogue and understanding between them and their governments and countrymen.

Still others have initiated large increases in the size of their communities, and other smaller communities, like the Baha'is in Greenland, have seen an exponential rise in Baha'i activity this year in the form of traveling teachers and regular public talks. An integral part of Baha'i life is teaching the Faith of Baha'u'llah, both in organized campaigns and on an individual basis.

Among the countries that have witnessed a substantial expansion of their Baha'i communities during the course of the year is Ethiopia, where more than one thousand new believers were enrolled during the month of March. Many were members of two tribes, the Agnwak and Gniwar, which had spent years fighting each other. Their newfound adherence to the Baha'i teachings, however, enabled them to set aside their traditional animosity and begin living in peace. The government noted the change in the tribes' attitude and has now granted permission for them to live in the same area. Tribal members are now bringing the Baha'i message to other warring factions, as far south as the Sudan. Colombia is another country in which large-scale expansion took place; more than fourteen hundred people accepted the Baha'i teachings in thirty-two of the country's departments during the summer.

A teaching campaign in Madagascar during two weeks in August succeeded in reaching more than seventy-two thousand

Udaga Narayan Singh, left, Knight of Baha 'u 'llah for Tibet, who is now pioneering in Biratnagar, Nepal, with Kalsang Ranzun, a new Tibetan Baha'i who traveled from Lhasa to Kathmandu to visit Udaga.

people, including three thousand prominent people and leaders of thought. Nearly five hundred of those contacted became Baha'is. The Baha'i community of Bangladesh welcomed 620 new members in a campaign lasting from July to September. The Baha'i teachings were first introduced to the local government, which then assented to the Baha'is' activities. A Baha'i from the United States spent twelve days touring the southeast and north-central areas of Guinea in November. He met with the many Baha'is there, gave public talks, and facilitated the establishment of children's classes. Mozambique is home to more than six hundred new Baha'is, thanks to the efforts of ten Baha'is who traveled throughout twelve provinces in March, informing people of the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Two new Local Spiritual Assemblies were formed, one of which has already built a Baha'i center. Projects to strengthen the new believers' understanding of the Baha'i teachings are underway. Members of a traveling group of local Baha'is in Haiti slept on woven mats, endured extremely hot temperatures, daily torrential rains, mosquitos, and illness with patience and good humor. They succeeded in attracting sixty-four people to the Haitian Baha'i

community during July and August.

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Following the success of the Baha'i booth at the first International Book Fair held last year in Puerto Rico, the Baha'is were invited by the Puerto Rico Museum of Religious Anthropology to organize a booth in its exhibition at the largest shopping mall in the area. The Baha'is have been invited to participate in several subsequent exhibitions sponsored by the Museum. This has proven to be an unprecedented opportunity for the Puerto Rican Baha'i community to proclaim the Baha'i message and has resulted in several opportunities to raise the public's awareness of the Baha'i teachings. The Baha'is of the Canary Islands used the occasion of a book fair in Los Cristianos, Arona, to make Baha'i literature available to the public for the first time.

After twenty-six Baha'is completed a one-month training course at the Enoch Olinga Institute in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, two groups were formed to undertake a two-week-long public awareness campaign in February. One group traveled to the west and the other to the north of the country, where they organized children's classes, public classes on the life of Baha'u'llah, interviews with several radio stations and newspapers, and youth workshop presentations in public and on television. Thirty-seven people declared their belief in Baha'u'llah during the course of the campaign.

Audiences in Mbozi, Tanzania, were treated to several performances of the Ruaha Secondary School Dance Workshop for eight days in June and July. Seventy-one people felt inspired to join the Baha'i Faith during the workshop's tour, which was augmented by public talks and children's classes. There was near-constant teaching activity in the Central Asian country of Moldova, where one hundred people became Baha'is over the course of the year. Thirteen travel teachers from within the country and twenty-nine from elsewhere contributed to the growth.

Some of the smaller campaigns and teaching conferences that took place around the world are indicative of the type of activities that thousands of local Baha'i communities undertook during the year. Among these were the efforts made for three days in April by ten Baha'is from five communities in Nepal. They traveled to the southern Chitwan district, a region without any Baha'is, where they set up a Baha'i book stall, distributed literature, and held public meetings as part of a public information campaign.

Seven people became Baha'is, thus establishing the district's first Baha'i community. In the Seychelles, twenty people joined the Baha'i community during a nine-day September campaign, and in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, fifty new Baha'is were welcomed between August and September. Baha'is in

Iquique, Chile, proclaimed their community's allegiance to achieving the goal of world peace through an organized proclamation campaign in the fall, and a Baha'i from Barbados spent two and one-half weeks in July in Dominica traveling and telling people about Baha'u'llah.

The Baha'i communities of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom celebrated notable anniversaries this year. Robert Weinberg reports on their commemorative activities.

1998-1999

A Year of Retrospect  
and Prospect

While a large proportion of humanity has taken the opportunity during the past year to anticipate the turn of a century and the beginning of a new millennium, several national Baha'i communities have spent the period reflecting on their origins, celebrating their achievements, and initiating dialogue on their country's—indeed the whole planet's—future.

The last twelve months saw significant celebrations of the centenary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith on the European continent, most particularly in France and the United Kingdom.

Germany, meanwhile, acknowledged the seventy-fifth anniversary of the foundation of its Baha'i community, Belgian Baha'is marked their fiftieth birthday, and in Ireland, events were held to celebrate half a century of the establishment of Baha'i institutions in that country. Canada, meanwhile, observed a double commemoration, marking the centenary of the arrival of the Baha'i Faith in Canada and the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly.

Millennia, centenaries, and anniversaries are all, of course, a human invention. The Nobel Prize-winning novelist Thomas Mann wrote, "Time has no divisions to mark its passage, there is never a thunderstorm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells or fire off pistols." Yet, for Baha'is, a significant anniversary is something to celebrate. It gives community members an opportunity to contemplate how far they have come, who their spiritual forebears were, and how they managed to achieve what they did. Anniversaries can provide a lesson in how to transmit the experiences of the past to the future.

The first Baha'i center in Europe was established by May Maxwell (nee Bolles). Born in 1870 in the United States, Mrs. Maxwell spent many years resident in Paris with her mother and brother. In February 1899, she was among the first group of

western pilgrims to go to Acre (in what was then Palestine) to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah and leader of the Baha'i Faith, who was still being held as a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire. On her return to the French capital, she began to tell others of the new religious movement she had discovered. A significant group of Baha'is emerged around her, among them a number of

In 1913, 'Abdu'l-Baha visited Paris for approximately five months. He is pictured here with His companions at the Eiffel Tower.

## RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

In November 1998, more than one thousand Bahri'is gathered beneath the Eiffel Tower to commemorate 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Paris in 1913 and to inaugurate a conference marking the centenary of the Baha'i Faith in Paris.

artists and artisans, and believers of various nationalities, including the early English Baha'i Thomas Breakwell.

To mark the centenary of these momentous events, the Baha'i community of France held an ambitious conference in Paris from 27 to 29 November 1998. The celebrations began when more than one thousand Baha'is gathered beneath the Eiffel Tower for a photograph, on the same spot where 'Abdu'l-Baha had been photographed during His historic visit to Paris in 1913. Later, the conference opened with the participation of two thousand people, including more than two hundred guests of the Baha'is and six hundred Baha'is from outside France. The structure of the program, which was modeled on the Second Baha'i World Congress held in New York in 1992, included talks, film and video presentations, and theatrical and musical segments. A high point of the conference was the colorful public concert "La Nuit de l' espoir" ("The Night of Hope"), held at the Salle de la Mutualite, one of the largest halls in Paris. Before the event, more than two hundred and fifty special guests, including ambassadors, politicians, religious and civil dignitaries, journalists, and representatives of

Civic dignitaries and  
Saha'is in the north of  
England gathered in  
Liverpool's St Georges  
Hall for a regional  
celebration of the  
centenary of the Baha'i  
Faith in the  
United Kingdom.

major non-governmental organizations attended a reception and expressed great interest in and admiration for the work of the Baha'i community. Another highlight of the event was a dedication and reception

held immediately after the conference at the Paris apartment where 'Abdu'l-Baha had stayed. Also marking the French centenary, a colloquium entitled "France, a Land of Faith," was held on 5 December in the prestigious Palais du Luxembourg. The goal of the event was to show how spiritual values have played an important role in the nation's growth and to point out the necessity, if France is to meet the challenges posed by the accelerating pace of global development, for balance between material civilization and spiritual values. Nine speakers representing the main religions of the country took part, including the Grand Mufti of Marseilles and the Director of the Institute of Science and the Theology of Religions at the Catholic Institute of Paris. Some one hundred and seventy people attended the colloquium. Media coverage of the centenary celebrations was unprecedented for the French Baha'i community, with a three-minute report shown on one of France's major television stations, a dozen radio programs, and a large number of newspaper articles, including a lengthy piece in *Le Monde* and another in the weekly *L'Express*. Among the participants in the French festivities were many visitors from the United Kingdom who, on their side of the English Channel, spent much of the past year celebrating the centenary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Britain. The first Baha'i

## R ETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

A production tracing the history of Britain's relationship with the Baha'i Faith was held at London's historic Hackney Empire Theatre.

of the British Isles, the American-born Mary Virginia Thomburgh-Cropper, was among the first party of Western pilgrims to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha. Soon after returning from her visit she taught Ethel Jenner Rosenberg, a distinguished painter of miniatures, about the Baha'i teachings. The two of them formed the nucleus of the first Baha'i community in Britain. Many of the dedicated early British believers were upper-class women who expressed their newfound faith through involvement in humanitarian and charitable causes. The most distinguished of them- Sara Louisa, Lady Blomfield-was an avid supporter of women's suffrage, campaigned for the rights of prisoners, animals and children, and was an active early participant in the formation of the Save the Children Fund. As part of the United Kingdom's centenary activities , plans have been developed to restore the grave of Lady Blomfield in London. The extraordinary achievements of these women inspired dozens of gatherings throughout the year, as communities all around the United Kingdom held celebratory events. A special centenary

website was established featuring useful information, historical

Irish President 4",

Mary McA leese

attended a

reception in

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Dublin Castle :S St.

Patrick:s Hall on

22 April 1998 to

celebrate the f tftieth anniversary of

the founding of

Bahci 'i institutions

in Ireland.

To mark the seventyf tfth anniversary

of the establishment of the

National Spiritual

Assembly, a

Baha'i delegation

met with

German President

Roman Herzog

(far left).

articles , and illustrations for communities to draw upon. Many of the year 's activities made use of the exceptional artistic talent to be found in the United Kingdom's Baha'i community. The inspiring multinational choir "One World Rhythm" performed throughout the country; a youth dance workshop based in Northeast England, "Express Freedom," impressed audiences around the region; and a creative and often comical celebratory production written by Baha'is was performed at London 's historic Hackney Empire Theatre.

Youth also featured in the celebrations, as one hundred and seventy-five young Baha'is and their friends attended a centenary conference in Warrington.

In Northern Ireland, more than two hundred Baha'is gathered in Belfast for a program that included a presentation on the history of the Faith in the territory. Participants also looked to the future and discussed methods by which the Baha'i teachings could be more effectively applied to the problems troubling the region.

## R ETROS PECT AND PROSPECT

On 22 March 1999, Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed a letter to the United Kingdom's National Spiritual Assembly, saying. "I congratulate the Baha'i community on the centenary of its establislunent in this country. I share your principle of equality between all people and welcome your encouragement of dialogue between

those from different faiths and cultures. I hope your Centenary and New Year celebrations are a great success."

On 22 April 1998, Irish President Mary McAleese attended a reception in Dublin Castle's St. Patrick's Hall to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Baha'i institutions in Ireland. Representatives of both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland attended, along with dignitaries from the Methodist Church, the Sikh, Jewish, and Buddhist communities, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ambassador, the Bulgarian Charge d' Affaires, local schools, and several Irish non-governmental organizations. The President delivered a heartfelt and moving speech about the Baha'i teachings and the history of the Irish Baha'i community, enlivened by spontaneous comments and reflections, speaking far beyond the time originally scheduled. This was the

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in Belgium, a conference entitled "Spiritual Sources and a New Order of Values for the 21st Century" was held at Brussels' Palais des Congres.

For the first time an Irish President had attended a Baha'i event, an occasion which coincided with the first time other Irish religious representatives had officially acknowledged a Baha'i presence in the country by participating in Baha'i activities.

Elsewhere in Europe, to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of Germany's National Spiritual Assembly, a Baha'i delegation met with President Roman Herzog. For three quarters of an hour the three Baha'i representatives talked with the President about the writings of Baha'u'llah, Baha'i social and economic development projects, the situation of the Baha'i community in Iran, and Baha'i involvement in the United Nations.

In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Baha'i Faith's introduction to Belgium, a conference entitled "Spiritual Sources and a New Order of Values for the 21st Century" was held at Brussels' Palais des Congres. One hundred and fifty people attended, of whom half were guests of the Baha'is. The keynote speaker of the evening was Chingiz Aitmatov, the Kyrgyz Ambassador to Belgium and the European Community. Aitmatov is one of the most widely read contemporary writers, with novels translated into more than one hundred and fifty languages. During the colloquium he gave an inspiring presentation in which he offered an analysis of the world's religions and contemporary cultures. He referred to competition among the religions and bemoaned the afflictions occasioned when "each religion endeavors to affirm itself at the expense of the others." Other speakers at the event included Andraz Laszlo of the Club of Budapest, Professor William Hatcher from Canada, Professor Anne Morelli from the Institute of the History of Religions of the Universite Libre de Bruxelles (Free University of Brussels), and Dr. Christine

Samandari-Hakim of the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information in Paris.

Many of these European Baha'i communities owe much to their coreligionists from North America, whose pioneering efforts in many instances brought about the birth and subsequent growth of the Baha'i Faith in European territories. While May Maxwell's historic role in establishing the first Baha'i center in Paris was being remembered during the past year, her adopted home in Canada had its own occasion to celebrate.

#### R ETROS PECT AND PROS PECT

Canada's Baha'is took the opportunity of their National Convention in Montreal, held from 14 to 18 May 1998, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the country's first National Spiritual Assembly. A number of invited guests who had rendered distinguished service to the community, as well as those who had been at the Convention in 1948, were present. In a special message to the gathering the Universal House of Justice called upon the Canadian Baha'is to maintain their position in the forefront of the development of the worldwide Baha'i community and particularly emphasized the need to involve the First Nations people of Canada in the unfolding processes towards world unity.

A heartfelt letter was also received from May Maxwell's daughter, Amatu'l-Baha RuJ:iyyih Khanum, the Baha'i community's foremost dignitary. "My ardent hope," she wrote, "is that the new generation, as well as those who have recently embraced the Divine Message of Baha'u'llah and entered into the tabernacle of His world-protecting, world-guiding teachings, may distinguish themselves, at home and abroad, in its service, and prove themselves worthy of the many blessings they have received as one of the oldest Baha'i communities in the Western World, whether of Europe or the American continent.

We all know that the fastest runner, the most valiant exponent, the most steadfast protagonist is in any event likely to win the palm of victory."

The other cause for celebration in Canada during the year was the one hundredth anniversary of the introduction of the Baha'i Faith to the country. In September 1898 a young woman named Edith Magee returned as a Baha'i to her home in London, Ontario after learning about the Baha'i Faith in Chicago. During the anniversary year, local communities around the country took the Mrs. Francoise Smith, center, who

opportunity to hold public birth- attended the first National Convention in Canada, with members of day celebrations and show special the current National Assembly.

archival displays about the history of the Faith in Canada. Dr. Will van den Hoonaard, author of The Origins of the Baha'i Community of Canada 1898- 1948, also traveled to various towns and cities to lecture about Canadian Baha'i history.

In reflecting during this year of anniversaries on their past glories and achievements, these Baha'i communities have not simply been paying nostalgic tribute to their spiritual forebears. All these events have served to remind Baha'is of the responsibilities they will shoulder in the coming years when, it is anticipated, more and more of humanity will turn to the Baha'i community for the insights and guidance to be found in Baha'u'llah's teachings. Remembering the achievements of the past reminds Baha'is of the foundation of sacrifice and dedication that built the good standing and reputation of the Baha'i community in the world today. Baha'is all over the world know that no less a sacrificial outpouring of commitment is required to continue the movement towards world peace and unity called for and initiated by the revelation of Baha'u'llah.

THEBAHA,f  
INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
Activities 1998-99

The Baha' i International Community (BIC) is the non-governmental organization that represents the more than five million Baha'is living in at least 235 countries and dependent territories around the world . Its 179 national and regional affiliates work through a variety of forums to give practical expression to the Baha'i Faith 's central principles of peace and justice. Among the wide range of issues it addresses, the BIC is especially concerned with four major themes: human rights , moral development, the advancement of women, and global prosperity. Whether at the local, national, or international level , these foci give shape and substance to the Baha'i International Community's activities.

Both the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office and its Office of Public Information play important roles in the promotion of this work. The United Nations Office, with fifty years of diplomatic experience offering Baha'i perspectives on global issues and supporting UN programs , has in recent years worked with its national affiliates to enhance their efforts in these four focal areas. The Office of Public Infonnation, which also represents the

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Baha'i community internationally, disseminates information about

the Baha'i Faith around the world, oversees production of the award-winning newsletter One Country, and maintains the official Baha'i web site.

#### United Nations

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

As part of the community of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in special status (formerly called "consultative status") with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1970 and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) since 1976, the Baha'i International Community participates in a wide range of UN activities. It offers Baha'i perspectives on the work of the UN and its agencies and works with both its national affiliates and other NGOs.

During the 1990s, the base of Baha'i diplomatic work has broadened to rely more heavily on National Spiritual Assemblies, as a result of the involvement of a number of national Baha'i communities in various United Nations conferences. Since then national Baha'i communities, with the support of other like-minded organizations, have been finding ways to ensure that the promises of those conferences are translated into reality. As national Baha'i communities have begun to take on responsibility for influencing governmental attitudes and policies on matters of global, not merely national, importance, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office has sought to provide them with support and training.

#### Human Rights

The Baha'i International Community has been associated with the UN since 1947, and its focus on human rights education is part of its long-term efforts to promote respect for and understanding of a full range of basic human rights and responsibilities. In the Baha'i

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view, a willingness to respect and safeguard the rights of all people is essential to the establishment of global order and sustainable peace in the world.

The Human Rights Education initiative, a global campaign involving Baha'i National and Local Spiritual Assemblies in an effort to influence the processes towards world peace, was launched by the Baha'i International Community in 1997 and gathered momentum during 1998-99. National Spiritual Assemblies that have chosen to participate in the campaign have begun finding

ways to encourage their governments, often in cooperation with other organizations, to undertake activities in support of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004).

The Human Rights Education Reference Manual, recently developed by the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office, was distributed to 145 National and Regional Spiritual Assemblies. The manual, which discusses both Baha'i diplomatic work generally and human rights education specifically, is being used as the basis for a systematic program of diplomatic training offered to external affairs personnel of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world. The first such seminar was held at the Green Acre Baha'i School in Eliot, Maine, USA, in October 1998. At UN Headquarters in New York, the Baha'i International Community cosponsored a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at which the need for human rights

education was addressed by a number of prominent officials. The

United Nations

High Commissioner for Human

Rights, H.E. Ms.

Mary Robinson,

acknowledged in

H.E. Ms. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for her keynote address

Human Rights, speaking at the 30 October 1998

symposium "Towards a Universal Culture of Human

rights: the Role of Human Rights Education. "

Contributions of the

TKE BAHAI: WORLD

Graduates of a diplomatic training seminar, sponsored by the

Baha'i International

Community's UN office

and designed to train

Baha'is to influence

the processes towards

world peace at the gov-

ernmental level, held

11- 17 October 1998 at

the Green Acre Baha'i

School in Eliot, Maine,

United States.

Baha'is towards human rights education and mentioned the arrests of Baha'i university professors in Iran. The meeting was co-sponsored by the NGO Committees on Human Rights, the Status of Women, and Freedom of Religion or Belief.

At the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights, held March-April 1999, three Baha'i International Community statements were circulated as official UN documents. One addressed the protection of minorities; another the human rights situation of the Baha'i community in Iran in general; and the third the creation and subsequent crackdown on the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education in Iran.

1 The plight of the Baha'is in Iran was also addressed in an oral intervention during the Commission's deliberations. With other NGOs, the BIC signed joint statements on the Girl Child, the Draft Report of the Working Group on the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and on the need for a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

Protecting the religious freedom of Baha'is throughout the world is an important aspect of the work of the Baha'i International Community's office in New York and the primary focus of work for the BIC office in Geneva. Working through the UN offices, commissions and committees that monitor compliance with the various UN human rights agreements, the Baha'i International

I. These statements appear on pp. 299- 302, 279-86, and 287- 93 of this volume, respectively.

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Community has for twenty years directed international attention towards the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran by providing the UN and national governments with reliable information regarding the current status of the beleaguered Iranian Baha'i community. 2 Interest in religious freedom is growing among governments and NGOs , and the situation of the Baha'is in Iran is seen by some as a perfect example of intolerance and discrimination based solely on belief. At the August 1998 Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, for example, held to create an international coalition to fund programs that support religious freedom, the situation of the Baha'is was considered. In his address to that conference, the Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office, Mr. Techeste Ahderom, described the Baha'is as "a peaceful community whose members strictly adhere to the teachings of their Faith, which enjoins them to avoid partisan political involvement, subversive activity and all forms of violence. The Baha'i community," he assured those gathered, "is not aligned with any government, ideology or opposition movement." After offering an overview of the situation of Iran's Baha'i community, the country's largest religious minority, Mr. Ahderom narrated briefly the circumstances surrounding the execution of Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani, noting that during the last nineteen years more than two hundred similar executions have taken place, all in the name of the

Islamic Revolution.

Environment, Development, and Global Prosperity

The World Faiths and Development Dialogue, initiated jointly by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury, began in February 1998 at Lambeth Palace and continued this year with two meetings: one in Rome in December 1998 and the other in Johannesburg in January 1999. The Lambeth Palace gathering brought together development experts and spiritual leaders from nine major religions for two days of consultation on the relationship between material and spiritual development. The Rome meeting continued themes raised at Lambeth Palace and also set the framework

2. See pp. IS 1- 54, 279- 86, and 287- 93 for further information regarding recent developments in the human rights situation of the Baha'is in Iran .

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for the faiths' participation in the larger meeting in Johannesburg between World Bank officials, organizations from African civil society, and various religious groups, which was held by the World Bank to garner ideas and suggestions for the World Development Report 2001(WDR2001).

Because the Rome meeting was small the fifteen participants were able to present ideas directly to members of the WDR 2001 drafting team but also to discuss issues in some detail. The Baha'i International Community representatives in both Rome and Johannesburg emphasized the importance of basing development work on a broadly conceived and widely shared positive vision for the future instead of focusing on narrowly defined problems. For example, the faiths were encouraged first to define prosperity (or progress or development) and only then to seek to define poverty. Similarly, drafters of the WDR 2001 were urged to define social harmony and well-being before trying to measure social exclusion and vulnerability. Moreover, it was proposed that any approach to development must be animated by the conviction that, since humanity is one, each child born into the world is a trust of the entire human race.

At the Johannesburg meeting the question of how to measure the application of spiritual principles in development was addressed by the Baha'i International Community in the form of the statement Religious Values and the Measurement of Poverty and Prosperity. This paper was presented at a workshop sponsored jointly by the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, Cornell University, the MacArthur Foundation, the Swiss Development Corporation, and the World Bank. 3

Baha'i youth are also active participants in UN activities around the world. Representatives of the Baha'i International Community at the Third World Youth Forum of the United Nations System,

held in August 1998 in Braga, Portugal, facilitated one of eight working groups. Representatives of the European Baha'i Youth Council and the Baha'i Youth Committee of Portugal were also active participants in the working groups, contributing substan-

3. See pp. 269- 77 for the full text of this statement.

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tially to the Braga Youth Action Plan, the document prepared by the forum for ultimate presentation to the UN General Assembly. The BIC also participated in the historic First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in August 1998.

### Advancement of Women

In keeping with the trend toward greater activity at the national level, the number of national Offices for the Advancement of Women grew this year to forty-nine, an increase of almost twenty-five percent since last year. The efforts of these offices are encouraged by a newsletter circulated by the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women, which includes stories of Baha'i projects, news from the UN, and information about opportunities for involvement in regional activities to promote equality.

The BIC has been active in a variety of different activities pertaining to women at the UN. Since 1988, it has convened the Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden for Women; it was invited to attend the International Conference on Educating Girls: A Development Imperative, sponsored by UNICEF, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Inter-American Development Bank, held in May 1998 in Washington, D.C.; and the Baha'i International Community was the only religious NGO present at an invitational seminar held in Beijing in June 1998, hosted by the All China Women's Federation (ACWF). The seminar, which was attended by approximately one hundred and eighty NGO participants, was called to discuss follow-up actions to the Fourth World Conference on Women and featured reports on largely grassroots activities to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

One topic of interest noted by some members of the ACWF was strengthening national mechanisms for the advancement of women, one of the issues addressed at the Commission on the Status of Women held in March 1999 in New York. At the request of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the Baha'i International Community organized an evening panel discussion during the Commission entitled "Building National Machinery for the Advancement of Women: The Role of Civil Society." It was cosponsored by the Division and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. The

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BIC also signed a joint statement by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women's Task Force on Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women. As convenor of the Task Force on National Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women for the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, the Director of the Baha'i International Community's Office for the Advancement of Women, Ms. Bani Dugal-Gujral, attended the expert group meeting on that topic, held in September 1998 in Santiago, Chile, where she presented to the experts the Task Force's recommendations.

Women and health, the second topic considered at this year's Commission, has long been a concern of the Baha'i International Community. The expert group meeting on that topic, held in September 1998 in Tunis, Tunisia, to prepare for the Commission, focused on providing assistance to governments wishing to design and implement gender-sensitive national action plans for the health sector. BIC representatives attended the expert group meeting and contributed a written statement. 4

#### The Future of the United Nations

As the United Nations moves into the new millennium, it is taking full advantage of what Secretary-General Kofi Annan calls "a unique and symbolically compelling moment for Member States to articulate and affirm an animating vision for the United Nations in the new era." 5 The General Assembly session convened in the year 2000, designated "The Millennium Assembly," will include a "Millennium Summit" for heads of state and government and will be preceded in May 2000 by a "Millennium Forum," through which organizations of civil society can have input into the Millennium Assembly. The Baha'i International Community, as Co-Chair of the organizing committee, hopes that through the Millennium Forum organizations of civil society will contribute to a new vision for the future of the United Nations and an organizational structure whereby the peoples of the world can participate effectively in global decision-making.

4. See pp. 295- 97 for the text of this statement.

5. From a report to the UN General Assembly (A/52/850).

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### Meetings

The Baha'i International Community chaired five NGO committees and task forces in New York and Geneva this year: the NGO Committees on Human Rights, on UNIFEM, and on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the Task Force on UN-NGO Relations for CONGO (Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC). In Geneva the Community chaired the Sub-Group on Education, Literacy and Mass Media of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The

BIC attended a seminar of experts on an Islamic Perspective on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights held November 1998 in Geneva, which followed Sub-Commission Working Groups on Indigenous Populations, Minorities, and Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Other meetings and UN sessions monitored by the Baha'i International Community this year include the seventh session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; the twenty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; the fifty-first World Health Assembly; UN General Assembly Special Session Devoted to the Fight against the Illicit Production, Sale, Demand, Trafficking and Distribution of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court; the fifty-fifth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; the Substantive Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council; meetings of the UNICEF Executive Board; the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Programme; the second session of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime; and the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

#### Public Information

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

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The major publication of the Office during the year was *Who is Writing the Future?* Released in February 1999, this statement both reflects upon the events of the twentieth century in the light of Baha'i teachings and relates global developments during the past one hundred years to the challenges now facing humanity, providing a Baha'i perspective on events at this critical point in human history. 6

The visitors' program at the Baha'i World Centre continued to grow. Between RiQvan 1998 and Ri9van 1999, the Office of Public Information coordinated and welcomed more than two hundred visits and welcomed some 2,595 visitors from eighty-five countries. The Speaker and several members of Israel's Knesset, the State Comptroller, senior officials from several government ministries, and a former Supreme Court justice were among the Israeli guests. Ambassadors from Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Spain, Thailand, the Ukraine, and the United States, and Embassy officials from Bolivia, Brazil, Chile,

China, Korea, and Thailand visited, as did government ministers and officials from Australia, China, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Hungary, India, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Thailand, the Ukraine, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. Visitors from the field of academia included the Dean of the Catholic Faculty of the University of Vienna and several delegations from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, including the President, the Vice President, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, professors, and students. In October 1998, at the time of a seminar on the theme "Women's Development, Help Women Help Themselves," sponsored by the International Council of Women, the executive committee of the ICW and conference participants visited the Baha'i World Centre. Journalists, media representatives, mayors from cities in the United States and Cyprus, and others also came during the year.

The Office, which was responsible for the production of the video *Creating a Culture of Growth*, shown at the Eighth International Baha'i Convention in April 1998, subsequently distributed copies of the video to Baha'i communities throughout the world. Another initiative of the Office was the establishment of a pilot

6. For the full text of this statement, see pp. 255---68.

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video bureau in the Congo Republic, which has produced short videos on Baha'i projects in Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The Bahri 'i World website, now in its third year, added two new sections-one on social action, focusing on human rights, moral education, and the situation of the Baha'is in Iran, and the other featuring perspectives and profiles. The number of visits to the site doubled during the year. Plans are underway for the launch of an Arabic language version of the site. 7

One Country, the official HE. Dr. Specioza Wondira Kazibne, Vice-President of the Republic of Uganda and Minister of Agriculture, national Community, entered Animal Industry, and Trade, its tenth year of publication . shown with the Secretary-General Published quarterly in English, of the Baha 'i International Community, Mr. Albert Lincoln, visited

French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and German, One Country reached an estimated 50,000

the Baha'i World Centre on 18 April 1998.

subscribers in more than 180 countries and garnered many more readers through its site on the World Wide Web. 8 During 1998-99, One Country won an "Award of Excellence" for its overall content and design in the Apex '98 Awards for Publication Excellence. During the year, One Country reported on major international conferences, including the Oslo Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (Norway, August 1998), which brought together governments, academics and non-governmental organizations to talk

7. The URL for the Baha'i World website is <[www.bahai.org](http://www.bahai.org)>.

8. The URL for the One Country website is <[www.onecountry.org](http://www.onecountry.org)>.

about religious tolerance, and the Global Dialogue on Microfinance and Human Development (Stockholm, April 1998), which was co-sponsored by the European Baha'i Business Forum. Major feature stories during the year focused on the highly successful "On the Wings of Words" literacy project sponsored by the Baha'i community of Guyana; a distinctive grassroots community vegetable growing project undertaken by the Baha'i community of Mongolia, which has become a model for the nation; and the global approach of the Santitham School, a Baha'i-sponsored primary school in provincial Thailand. One Country also carried major news features on the efforts of the Honduran Baha'i community to marshal international aid and disaster relief assistance following Hurricane Mitch in November 1998 and on the efforts of the Iranian government to shut down the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. The Paris bureau of the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information was engaged in a wide variety of activities during the year. The office assisted the French Baha'i community in its centenary celebrations, particularly in connection with the artistic evening "La nuit de l' espoir," and continues to liaise with the company "9 Productions" on a number of projects, including the organization of a second "Nuit de l' espoir." "9 Productions" is a joint effort of Baha'i and non-Baha'i artists with the aim of promoting the universal message contained in the teachings of the Baha'i Faith to large audiences.

One of the Paris bureau's other major undertakings during the year was coordination of the "Promoting Positive Messages through the Media" project, which operates through the Royaurmont Process. Office staff made preparatory visits to Bosnia Herzegovina and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and received approval from the Government of Luxembourg to undertake the second phase of the project, including a multinational seminar to be held in Romania in the fall of 1999 and pilot projects in a selected number of schools in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. 9

Training Baha'i communities to undertake public information work is another thrust of the bureau's activities. This year, it hosted a three-day public information training program in Paris for

9. For a full account of this initiative, see pp. 145- 50.

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representatives from Baha'i communities in the francophone world and provided ongoing public information support to European and French-speaking National Spiritual Assemblies outside Europe, the European Baha'i Business Forum (EBBF), and the German National Assembly in conjunction with the Expo 2000 project in Hannover.

#### Conclusion

More than a century ago, Baha'u'llah called for the creation of a system of international governance, based on the principle of collective security, which would encompass all of the nations of the world and lay the foundations for a lasting and universal peace. The Baha'i International Community, through both its United Nations Office and its Office of Public Information, actively promotes this concept and seeks to engender justice, peace and prosperity at the international level. The Community's activities during 1998-99 bear witness to its commitment to these world-unifying ideals.

This article reports on the Bahri 'i contribution to a European Unionsponsored moral education initiative now underway in Southeastern Europe.

#### BAHA'I INVOLVEMENT IN THE ROYAUMONT PROCESS

After the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the 1992-1995 war in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the European Union pledged to mobilize civil society in a "soft" diplomatic effort to relieve the ethnic tensions that had roiled the religious, cultural, and economic landscape of the continent, and in particular, Southeastern Europe. Beyond the military and economic initiatives that successfully ended the fighting, other measures are necessary to end the war against intolerance; one can bring pressure to bear on a militia leader to lay down his weapons, but one cannot force him to stop hating his neighbor. The Dayton Agreements thus raised an age-old dilemma: in the quest to create a culture conducive to democracy and ethnic harmony, how can governments eradicate divisive attitudes and prejudice? Out of the crucible of this question was born the Royaumont Process.

Named after the French town in which the Process was created,

the Royaumont initiative was established on 12 December 1995 by the European Union with the goal of creating a "framework of dialogue and cooperation" in order to "promote stability and good

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neighborliness" among the nations of Southeastern Europe. Since much of the past and present conflict in the area is based on ethnic tension, Royaumont has focused on using non-governmental organizations to relieve ethnic strife through the promotion of interethnic dialogue and cross-border cooperation and promotes initiatives in such fields as education, art and culture, religion, science, technology, and recreation. The Royaumont administration is responsible for establishing projects in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Russia, Turkey, the United States, and all fifteen European Union member states are also active members of the initiative. The Process is coordinated by Panagiotis Roumeliotis, a Greek diplomat. 1

After the creation of the Royaumont Process, a two-year search ensued to find suitable projects to fulfill its goals. In 1997, the Baha'i International Community--an accredited NGO with the United Nations--offered its expertise to the organizers of the Royaumont Process, proposing that a moral education initiative created by a Baha'i in Russia might be adapted to fit the Process's goals . For several years the "ZIPOPO" 2 program- in English, "The Happy Hippo Show"-had been successfully motivating Russian audiences to consider the application of moral principles to their day-today problems. "The Happy Hippo Show" is a unique drama-based interactive tele-vision/radio program that has been developed and implemented by Shami! Fattakhov, a television journalist from Kazan, Russia. With "The Happy Hippo Show," Mr. Fattakhov has been using broadcast media to explore points of ethnic and cultural unity and to stimulate public dialogue on the unifying power of morality. The English name of the program alludes to a

1. Dr. Roumeliotis was appointed to coordinate the Royaumont Process by the Council of the European Union. Other organizations involved in the planning and implementation of the Royaumont agreement include the European Commission, the European Parliament, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Eastern Europe , the Central European Initiative, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation collective.

2. "ZIPOPO" is an acronym of the Russian words "Zaochniy institut pozitivnovo povedeniya," or "The Academy of Positive Behavior."

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remark attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who is reported to have said to

a crying child, "Don't be sad, be a happy hippopotamus!" 3  
On 1 April 1998, representatives of all countries involved in the Royaumont Process gathered at a summit in Athens, Greece, to discuss potential Royaumont projects. There, the details of the Baha'i initiative-"Promoting Positive Messages through the Media: 'The Happy Hippo Show'" -were first presented and approved for financing. In the words of Dr. Roumeliotis, "'The Happy Hippo Show' was one of the first projects to be submitted for evaluation to the Member Summit since it was the first to be so well prepared and comprehensive. " 4

Baha'i involvement with the Royaumont Process is coordinated through the Paris Branch of the Baha'i International Community's Office of Public Information and is funded by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Ambassador Ronald Mayer of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, who has been involved with the Baha'i project, has said that it "fits perfectly with the objectives of Royaumont, as its aim is precisely to promote values, messages, and ideas encouraging reciprocal understanding and comprehension." "The Happy Hippo Show" has also received high praise and enthusiastic pledges of support from Balkan host governments.

"The Happy Hippo Show" draws upon the power of drama and consultation, presenting brief, evocative sketches that spark discussion between the host and audience. One play performed last year in Zagreb, Croatia, was called simply "Cold Coffee." Set in a local coffeehouse, the piece featured three Croatians-two men and a woman. During their meal, they speak several times in derogatory terms about their Serb waiter. At the drama's climax, the waiter accidentally spills coffee on one of the Croatians, and the

3. See pp. 229- 33 of The Baha 'f World 1996- 97 for further information on the ZIPOPO project.

4. More than twelve other projects under the Royaumont Process have since been established, including a program to strengthen ties between Southeastern European human rights NGOs (sponsored by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights), an educational initiative to train culturally sensitive leaders (sponsored by the Hellenic Foundation for European Foreign Policy), and a plan to encourage cooperation among Southeastern European universities.

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To fulfill the Royaumont Process's goals of stimulating public dialogue and consultation on ethnic issues, graduates of the November 1998 Happy Hippo training seminar in Zagreb, Croatia, performed the short play "Cold Coffee" for the public and media.

two men rise to attack him. At that point in the performance, the host shouted "Freeze!"; the drama stopped and the host and the audience took over. The following segment of the show was

devoted to discussion among audience members, with the host asking questions and occasionally interjecting ideas or quotations to spur discussion. The exchange that followed the performance centered around ethnic relations between Serbs and Croats, with audience members offering everything from simple pleas for tolerance to the observation that ethnic differences are an undeniable reality with ramifications that demand careful attention. The program ends with the actors presenting one or two possible positive solutions. One audience member, a university student from Zagreb, said of the show, "I thought it was excellent in that it was actually trying to solve the issue, and people were speaking openly. Sometimes in your family, you are not allowed to speak, but if you can come here, to events like this, you can be heard."

The basic format of "The Happy Hippo Show," with its live drama, audience response, and spontaneous discussion between the host and audience is remarkably adaptable. Virtually any subject,

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from the causes of local ethnic conflicts to premarital sex, can be explored in depth, and more than two hundred scripts for the show have already been written. The format welcomes grassroots participation and is designed to be particularly accessible to youth. The goal of Baha'i involvement in the Royaumont Process is to train journalists, education professionals, members of non-governmental organizations, those who work with youth, and other interested people to work towards the fulfillment of the Royaumont objectives. One of the ways of doing that is by establishing "Happy Hippo" programs throughout Europe.

In the initial phases of the project, Mr. Fattakhov conducts local training workshops for prospective hosts. In a few days of intense instruction, participants are taught the basics of organizing and managing a television or radio show, how to write and solicit scripts, direct actors, and serve as their show's host. As facilitators of the discussion segment of the show, hosts are trained in the art of successful consultation and are encouraged to adapt the "Happy Hippo" format to the needs and capacities of their own communities.

After "Cold Coffee" was halted, audience members discussed issues related to inter-ethnic tolerance. Seen in the center of the photo, to the right of the white signboard, a host wearing the Happy Hippo costume rewarded audience members who made positive statements.

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Training seminars have been conducted in six countries thus far: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia, with more planned for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,

Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In addition to airing on television, the show has been produced in the business community, in kindergartens, youth camps, schools, hospitals, and universities. In Croatia, the weekly "Happy Hippo" radio program, which addresses such issues as multiculturalism and women's rights, was nominated best radio talk show of the year in the spring of 1999.

Of the seminars, Dr. Roumeliotis writes, "The implementation of this project was a success and the reports we have been receiving demonstrate a profound interest by the target countries in the work proposed by the Baha'i International Community." In countries where seminars have taken place, plans are in process to identify and support promising follow-up projects, to produce "The Happy Hippo Show" on television, to implement "Happy Hippo"-inspired moral education curricula in the school system, and to hold additional, more comprehensive training seminars.

The "Happy Hippo" format has also been adapted for use in moral education programs in countries as diverse as China, Finland, India, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, the Malay states of Sabah and Sarawak, Sweden, the Ukraine, and the United States.

Update: The Situation of  
THEBAHA'IS  
IN IRAN

The situation of the Baha'is in Iran during 1998-99 was marked by several major crises. The first of these was the execution of Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani in July 1998, and the second was the government's attempted closure of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) in October. In addition, government authorities confirmed death sentences on two Baha'is.

Two comprehensive written statements by the Baha'i International Community, presented at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in the spring of 1999, summarize these events and are included in this volume. 1

The execution of Mr. Rawhani brought condemnation from all corners of the globe. The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson; the President of the United States, Bill Clinton; the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Australia, Alexander Downer; and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Canada, Lloyd

I. One, a report on the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education, appears on pp. 287- 93 ; the other, an update on the current situation in Iran, can be found on pp. 279- 86 .

Axworthy, all issued statements expressing their disapproval.

Mr. Axworthy stated, "This brutal action is a grave disappointment," while the White House Press Secretary's statement said,

"The United States condemns this action, which violates the most

basic international norms and universal standards of human rights." Media coverage of the execution was extensive, with articles appearing in the International Herald Tribune; France's *Le Monde*, *Liberation*, and *La Croix*; London's *Sunday Telegraph*; Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Tageszeitung*; Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *West Australian*; Canada's *Globe and Mail* and the *Montreal Gazette*; and other newspapers in India, Uganda, Botswana, Malta, and Turkey. The *Tehran Times* printed a denial of the execution, while the headline in the independent paper the *Iran Times*, published in Washington D.C., read "First Baha'i is reported executed in six years." A *Jerusalem Post* editorial mentioned the execution in the context of hard-line opposition to reform in Iran. Wire services around the world, including AP (the Associated Press), UPI (United Press International), Reuters, Agence France Presse, dpa (the German press agency), the BBC Newsfile, and ARGUS in Switzerland also followed the story.

Radio coverage included pieces on a number of BBC stations, Radio France Internationale and Radio Orient (an Arab radio service in Paris), Radio Canada (the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's French-language radio service), Voice of America, a number of Australian Broadcasting Commission stations, and radio stations in Uganda and Botswana. The Australian Broadcasting Commission carried the story as a major item on its television news broadcasts in Western Australia and Victoria, and Botswana's only television channel reported on the execution in both Setswana and English.

In late August several European newspapers-notably *Liberation* in France and *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* in Switzerland-again focused on the situation of Iran's Baha'is, referring to the "brutal persecution of the Baha'i religious community" in the context of France's efforts at rapprochement with Iran.

When the raid on the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) occurred at the end of September, the White House Press

#### B AHA'fs IN I RAN

Secretary again issued a statement of condemnation, as did Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. The government of the United Kingdom also expressed its support for the Institute through an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons.

The raid, which was preceded by the confirmation of death sentences against more members of Iran's Baha'i community, again attracted significant media attention. In late September and early October, the *Times* of London, the *Luxemburger Wort* and the *Journal*, and the *Irish Times* all reported on the death sentences. UPI in Washington and Reuters in Washington and Paris picked up the story, as did dpa.

The New York Times, the Chronicle of Higher Education, the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald, and the Iran Times all did stories on the raid, and the Washington Post published an op-ed piece protesting Iran's treatment of the Baha'is. The Times of London published a letter to the editor, signed by five senior professors at Oxford University, expressing their distaste at the actions of the Iranian government in relation to the BIHE. The Statesman in India published an article on the closure, as did Le Monde and La Chronique d 'Amnesty International. Several Brazilian newspapers also ran articles.

Wire service coverage came from UPI in Toronto and Reuters in Paris, which both reported on the action, while AP and dpa did dispatches based on U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin's statement condemning this latest suppression of the Baha'i community in Iran. The Voice of America broadcast an editorial report in support of the Institute and of Iran's Baha'is, which reached Iran, and the BBC World Service issued a press release based on the U.S. State Department's statement. An interview on the situation took place on German national radio.

Later, when prison sentences were pronounced against four faculty members of the BIHE in April 1999, AP in Washington again reported the story.

In response to the closure of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education, Baha'is around the world developed a campaign to bring the situation to the attention of university administrators, academics, students, and journalists, urging them to take action to publicize the denial of human rights to the Baha'is and to express

their support for the Institute. As a result, twenty-six university and college presidents, rectors, and deans took action; prominent academics and administrators wrote letters of support; influential academic and administrative unions wrote letters and informed their membership of the situation; student and faculty senates passed resolutions concerning the situation of Iran's Baha'is; and a number of media events took place. Other kinds of responses included candlelight vigils, petitions, open letters, information meetings, and interfaith expressions of solidarity. While the campaign involved many countries, Canada, the U.S.A., Australia, Brazil, Germany, Ireland, and Norway were particularly involved in it. At the United Nations, UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor wrote several responses to appeals directed to his office as a result of the campaign, assuring correspondents that the agency "is taking its responsibility very seriously in this matter," and the most recent report of the Special Representative on Iran to the UN Commission on Human Rights cited the "orchestrated raid" on the Institute as evidence of a deterioration of the situation of Iran's Baha'is.

EssAYS,  
STATEMENTS I

PROANFr1Es

Nancy Ackerman and Graham  
Hassall recount the historical  
connections binding the Baha' i  
Faith to Central Asia and,  
specifically, to Russia.

Russia AND THE  
BAHA' i FAITH  
A Historic Connection

Over the past decade, the world has watched with a mixture of fascination and dismay as the countries of the former Soviet Union have emerged from the yoke of totalitarian regimes, in most of which religion was either banned altogether or barely tolerated. Within those countries, the reaction which greeted the restoration of many religious communities was characterized at first by immense curiosity and excitement that was later replaced by a more wary skepticism. This article traces the historic relationship of the Baha' i community to the largest of these countries, Russia, which has enjoyed a special relationship to the Baha' i Faith from the religion's earliest beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century.

1. Both Russia before the October 1917 revolution and the Soviet Union from 1917- 1991 included many territories which are now independent countries. Several of them are mentioned in this brief sketch, although the detailed history of the development of the Baha' i communities in each of them has yet to be written.

The record of Russia's involvement has earned for her a rank in Baha' i history enjoyed by only three other countries of the world. Her role in the early history of the new religion may be seen as an index of her spiritual and cultural potentialities. In 1852, alone among the nations of that day, Russia offered refuge to the Faith's Founder, Baha'u'llah, when He was unjustly imprisoned; in the 1880s, a Russian court was the first to recognize the independent character of the Baha' i Faith and to defend the rights of its persecuted believers; a number of Russia's nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars and artists played a role in acquainting the West with the existence of the new religion; and it was under a Russian administration in Turkestan, in the first decade of the twentieth century, that the first Baha' i House of Worship in the world was erected, and one of the most outstanding early Baha' i communities enjoyed the freedom to develop.

Witnesses to the Persecution of Baha'is in Persia

It should not be surprising, given their proximity to Persia, the birthplace of the Baha'i Faith, that Russia and its territories should have been among the first areas of the world to be informed about the new religion. The presence of representatives of the Russian government in Persia during the ministries of both the Bab and Baha'u'llah meant that Russian observers were witness to crucial early episodes of the community's evolution.

In 1844, when the Bab declared His mission, the Russian legation was one of a very few European diplomatic missions in Teheran. <sup>3</sup> One diplomat, Prince Dmitri Ivanovich Dolgorukov, Russian Minister to the Persian court from 1846 to 1854, was well aware of the commotion which the Bab's teachings were creating in Persia as well as of the atrocities committed against followers of the new movement. Dolgorukov frequently included information about these historic events in his reports to his superiors in St. Petersburg.

2. The other three are Iran, the birthplace of the Faith, the Holy Land, where

its Founders are buried and the spiritual and administrative headquarters of the Faith are located, and North America, because of its special role in the establishment of the Baha'i pattern of administration.

3. For a list of Russian Ministers from 1839 to 1916, see Mooj an Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions, 1844-1944, Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), p. 483.

Dolgorukov was apparently aware of the religious nature of the movement, but as he lacked firsthand knowledge of the teachings of either the Bab or, later, Baha'u'llah, his accounts are frequently distorted, as were almost all early accounts of the Faith written by outside observers in Iran. As one historian explained:

Until the time when, in the early years of the twentieth century, Baha'i communities arose in the West and were able to publish accurate accounts of the new religion, it was rare to find an undistorted statement of its history and teachings, for the most part, because in the Persia of the latter half of the nineteenth century it was very difficult to obtain firsthand information about the religion. Severe persecutions had virtually driven the movement underground; even the words "Bab" and "Baha'i" could not be mentioned in public. Thus Westerners travelling or residing in Persia found it almost impossible to contact the Baha'is... the majority of writers were forced to borrow accounts from other writers. This resulted in fabrications and inaccuracies being perpetrated and through much repetition becoming regarded as the truth. <sup>4</sup>

Moved by a desire to avoid disturbances, real or imagined, within or near Russian territory, Dolgorukov made representations to the Shah asking that the Bab's place of imprisonment be

moved away from the borders of Russia. However, the interest of foreign observers in the new religious movement was growing and the Russian Consul in Tabriz was ordered by the Tsar (Nicholas I) to obtain as much information as possible about the Bab and His followers. However, this instruction could not be carried out, as the Bab was executed in 1850. The Russian Consul in Tabriz, perhaps sensing the historic significance of this dramatic event, himself went to view the Bab 's remains as they lay in a moat outside the city, bringing along with him an artist, whom he commissioned to make a drawing of them. This sketch was apparently later sent to the court in St. Petersburg and may still be kept in historical archives. It is clear from Dolgorukov's later actions that he deplored the torture and gruesome public executions of the Babis. In 1852, when Baha'u 'llah was sentenced to exile by the Shah of Persia,

4. Mom en , The Ba bi and Baha 'i Religions, p. 3.

Prince Dolgorukov, who "left no stone unturned to establish the innocence of Baha'u'llah," 5 offered Him refuge on Russian territory and every assistance for His safe removal from Persia. Baha'u 'llah chose instead exile to Iraq. On His three-month journey to Baghdad, He was accompanied, by order of Dolgorukov, by an official representing the Russian Legation.

While Baha'u'llah and His followers proceeded on their journey from Baghdad to Constantinople and Adrianople, and finally to the penal colony of Acre in Palestine, diplomats and orientalist continued to correspond on what they regarded as an intriguing contemporary religious movement. On rare occasions they even provided the Baha'is within Iran protection from the continuing persecution of the government and clergy. 6

Russian diplomats, among others, continued to extend protection to Baha'is in later years, prior to the revolution of 1906. In I-fahan in 1903, Baha'is took refuge from mobs in the Russian Consulate, and the acting Consul, M. Voronovskii, petitioned the Persian authorities on their behalf. 7 It was out of such humanitarian assistance to both Baha'u'llah and to the later Baha'is, that the accusation was made by religious authorities in Persia of "Russian support for the Baha'is." In an irony of history, this same false charge but more generally of "foreign support" - was adopted by the later Soviet regime against its own Baha'i community. When the Shah expressed his displeasure to Russian diplomats, blaming them for showing favoritism to the Baha' is, the official reply came that "the [Russian] government shows no favoritism to the Baha'is, but also does not persecute them."

Growth of the Early Baha'i Communities

The teachings of the Baha'i Faith spread into Russia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, brought largely by travellers, 8 pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land through Turkey, and by Persian Baha'is

5. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1970), p. 104.
6. For details and other instances, see Momen, *The Babi and Baha 'i Religions* , pp. 378- 85 .
7. Momen, *The Babi and Baha 'i Religions*, pp. 376, 378- 85 .
8. See H.M . Balyuzi, *Eminent Baha 'is in the Time of Bah6 'u 'llah* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), p. 180.

seeking refuge from the continuous persecution by the clergy and authorities in their homeland. By 1938, records show that Baha'i Assemblies had been established in at least fourteen cities, including Moscow, Bukhara, Ashgabat, Tashkent, Baku and Tiflis, although some ceased to exist during the Soviet era. Smaller groups of Baha'is had formed in at least twenty-two other localities, including Orel, Leningrad, Samarkand, Erevan and Batum. The most developed of these centers was , without doubt, Ashgabat, in what is today Turkmenistan.

In the 1880s, the newly established city of Ashgabat became the administrative center of the Russian-administered Transcaspian District. The first Baha'is to settle there, in 1882, were refugees from Sabzivar who were escaping religious persecution in Persia. Baha'u'llah Himself encouraged Baha'i settlement in Ashgabat, 9 and within a short time some four to five hundred Baha'is had emigrated from Iran. By 1890 that number had reached one thousand.

The Baha'i community established a cemetery and constructed buildings for community functions; one eminent Baha'i from Yazd, I:Iaji Mirza Mul).ammad-Taqi, who had for some time been a commercial agent in Yazd, bought a large tract of land, a part of which Baha'u'llah requested be reserved for a Baha'i House of Worship. Many of the Baha'is in the city were skilled masons and construction workers and so contributed not only to the construction of the Temple, but to the building of the rapidly growing city. In a relatively short period of time, they became known as hardworking, honest, and reliable.

In September 1889 an event occurred which was to be of great significance for members of the Baha'i community and for the Russian government under which they lived. Imitating the killings of Baha'is in Persia, a group of Shi'ite Muslims residing in Ashgabat

9. The existence of this settlement in neighboring Russia may be connected to one of the favorite early charges against the Baha'i Faith by its antagonists: that of supposed "favoritism" by foreign powers, first laid by the Faith 's enemies in Persia, and later imitated by other individuals and regimes. Baha'is were not favored by Russian authorities in the Romanov period, neither were they discriminated against. This neutrality of interest was quite possibly a major reason for Baha'u'llah's encouragement for this settlement; cited in Momen, *The Bab[ and Baha 'f Religions*, pp. 299- 300.

murdered a prominent Baha'i of the city, "stabbing him in 32 places, exposing his liver, lacerating his stomach and tearing open his breast," 10 in full view of a crowd of five hundred who cheered the murderers on. The Baha'is, with Mirza Abu'l-Fac, 11-i-Gulpaygini as spokesman, sought the protection of the authorities in the person of the governor, General Komarov, who gave orders to put down the disturbances caused by the attack and brought the ruffians to trial for the murder.

The reaction of the Baha'is must have been remarkably restrained, for Baha'u'llah Himself praised the actions of His followers,

who refused to seek revenge, adding that "none of the faithful transgressed My commandment, nor raised his hand in resistance." 11

The trial took place in November 1890. Recognizing the distinctness of the Baha'i religion, the judges at the trial required

the Baha'i and Muslim communities to sit in separate sections,

with the Baha'is receiving full recognition as an independent religious community. The court's verdict was death for two of

the accused and Siberian exile and banishment for the rest. The

Muslim community then begged the Baha'is to enter a plea for

clemency. The Baha'is agreed to intercede, and their appeal for clemency came as a great surprise to the authorities . 12 Over the

protests of the defendants, who were apparently unwilling to be

spared death on a plea by Baha'is, the sentences were commuted

to Siberian exile. Russia thus became the first country whose legal

system extended a measure of justice, recognition and protection

to the followers of the Baha'i religion.

This dramatic episode attracted the attention of Russian

orientalist-academicians Baron Viktor Rosen and Captain Alexander

Tumanskii, and its details appeared also in the correspondence of

British diplomats of the period. 13

In 1902, the Son of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, gave instructions

for the erection of a House of Worship in Ashgabat-the first in the

10. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 202-03.

11. Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1986), p. 338.

12. See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 202- 03.

13. Momen, *The Bab[ and Baha 'i Religions* , pp. 40-43.

world-on land which had been reserved by Baha'u'llah. 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself approved the design, and its final execution was carried out by a Russian architect named Volkov. The foundation stone was laid in November 1902, in the presence of General Subotich, the Military Governor of Transcaspia, who represented the Tsar at the ceremony.

Over the thirteen-year period between 1907 and 1920, before the completion of the dome, the exterior, and the interior, the temple was open for weekly prayers and Baha'i holy day observances. The

stories of devotion and sacrifice entailed in its construction became legend: ordinary believers sold their most precious possessions; a

General Subotich,  
Military Governor of  
Transcaspia, served  
as a representative of  
the Tsar at the laying  
of the foundation  
stone of the Bahá'í  
House of Worship in  
Ashgabat, November .  
1902. }~;

businessman committed his entire fortune; a widow in Persia lovingly offered half of the tiny daily sum she earned for herself and her children. 14 Erection of this temple ranked as "one of the most brilliant and enduring achievements in the history of the first Bahá'í century." 15

Ashgabat was one of the first Bahá'í communities anywhere in the world to achieve a high level of social development. By 1918 the Bahá'ís had not only erected a House of Worship, but had also planted extensive gardens, had built a meeting hall, a pilgrim house, medical facilities and a cemetery, and were operating two elementary schools, one for girls and another for boys , as well as two kindergartens . These schools, open to children of all religious backgrounds and giving special emphasis to the

14 .Star of the West, Vol. 13 , No. IO (January 1923), pp. 263- 64.  
15 . Shoghi Effendi , God Passes By, p. 300.

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á~ equal education of girls , eliminated illiteracy within the Bahá'í community and contributed significantly to raising the general ~ level of education among the , surrounding population, of which only fifteen percent of males and ~~~- virtually no women could read and write. There were also libraries and a public reading room, The community published the first Bahá'í magazine on the Asian continent, entitled Khurshid-i-Khavar (Sun of the East). There were active Bahá'í youth societies, open to all irrespective of belief and engaging in social and

humanitarian activities. Reflecting the fundamental Baha'i teaching of tolerance towards others, the Baha'is of Ashgabat showed respect for the traditions and customs of the local largely Muslim community, with which they enjoyed warm relations. In other centers where they were free to speak about their beliefs, 16 Ashgabat's Baha'is held open meetings where large numbers of people of various ethnic backgrounds could engage in vigorous dialogue on spiritual matters. Many of the community's younger members traveled to other cities and towns throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia to hold similar meetings with interested people of the region. And in the early years of the Revolution, Baha'is were active with others in the public defence of freedom of conscience which was coming under increasing attack by the authorities. Thus, for its outstanding philanthropists, for the early growth and maturation of its Baha'i institutions, the building of the first Baha'i House of Worship in the Baha'i world, the remarkable social and educational advancement of its members, the stimulation and promotion of youth and women's activities, the initiation of Baha'i publications, and for the contributions of leading Baha'i

16. Reported in *Star of the West*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 1924), p. 346.

scholars to the advancement of the society around them, Ashgabat, even in the early 1920s, could indeed be considered a leading center of learning and intellectual life in the Baha'i world. 17 Elsewhere in the region, for example in Tashkent, the Baha'is undertook projects somewhat more modest in scale, such as opening libraries and language schools and publishing literature. The members of these communities supported themselves through honest work and trade, practicing their spiritual and social principles in complete freedom.

Although personal memoirs abound and much archival material remains, little has been published about the detailed Baha'i

history in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the countries of Central Asia. But there is ample documentation that by the time of the passing of Baha'u'llah in 1892, there were adherents not only throughout Persia, the Ottoman territories and as far east as India and Burma, but that the number of Baha'is was increasing throughout Asiatic Russia as well. 18 In the 1880s Baha'is were living in Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan, and other communities, where they also had greater freedom than in Persia itself. The Baha'is in these regions, while not possessing a House of Worship and its dependent institutions, established Baha'i administrative bodies and maintained small facilities for publishing Baha'i materials.

Russian and Soviet Literary Figures and Orientalists

Along with the development of Baha'i communities within Russia's borders, knowledge of the Babi and Baha'i religions spread in Russian-speaking intellectual, literary, and artistic circles. This, in

tum, resulted in research papers, voluminous correspondence discussing the new religious movement, translations of Baha'i

17. For a detailed description of the Baha'i community of Ashgabat, its history and achievements, see Moojan Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad; its Social Basis and Importance in Baha'i History," in S. Akiner, ed., *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1991), pp. 278- 305.

18. This documentation is found in early newsletters, correspondence from 'Abdu'l-Baha, travelers' accounts, historical literature such as Walter Kolarz's *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1961) and in *The Bahri 'i World* volumes for the relevant years .

literature into Russian and other languages, and artistic interpretations of heroic episodes in Baha'i history. All these efforts played an important part in spreading information about the religion throughout Europe as well as within Russia itself. The excellence of some of this work is remarkable when one remembers that most source material on the Baha'i Faith during this early period originated with biased governments, antagonistic clergy and missionaries, inveterate enemies, and Western travelers who viewed events in Iran through the prism of their own prejudices and misconceptions. The distinction of being the first to have an entire book published on the Babi religion belongs to Mirza Aleksandr Kazem-Big, Professor of Persian Literature at the University of St. Petersburg from 1849 to 1860. 19 His work *Bab i Babidy* appeared in 1865 and

was printed one year later in French. 2 Kazem-Big recounted the experience of a learned man (a siyyid, descendant of the Prophet MuJ:iammad) who had become a Babi in Iraq and subsequently traveled in the Caucasus, attracting several individuals to the Faith. For this the Babi was arrested by the Russian government and exiled to Smolensk, as it was at that time against the law for Russian citizens to convert from Christianity. 21 Kazem-Big appears also to have inspired a later French writer, de Bellecombe, to write an article about the great Babi heroine Tahirih. 22

In 1869, after the young emissary named Badi' was tortured and executed at the order of Na~iri'd-Din Shah for having attempted to present him with a Tablet from Baha'u'llah, the document was acquired by Russian consular officials in Persia and sent to St. Petersburg, where the original is now preserved in the archives of the University's Department of Oriental Studies. Through the

19. Mirza Aleksandr Kazem-Big, 1802- 1870; Lecturer in Oriental Languages at Kazan University 1827- 1844; Professor of Persian Literature, University of St. Petersburg 1849- 1860; Dean, Faculty of Oriental Languages , University of St. Petersburg, which he helped found .

20. Published in *Journal Asiatique*, 1866, cited in Momen , *The Babi and*

Baha'i Religions, p. 26.

21. See Momen, "The Baha'i Community of Ashkhabad . . .," p. 284 .

22. A. de Bellecombe, "Une Reformatrice Contemporaine: La Belle Kourret oul Ain , ou La Lumiere des Yeux ," which appeared in *L'investigateur* in 1870; cited in Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 27.

diligence of Russian diplomats and the interest of contemporary scholars, notably M. Gamazov<sup>23</sup> and Baron Viktor R. Rosen,<sup>24</sup> the exact text of the letter conveyed by Badi' to the Shah was preserved and widely circulated. It was Rosen who forwarded a catalogue containing Baha'u'llah's Tablet to the Shah to the Cambridge orientalist Edward Granville Browne, one of the greatest early scholars of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths, further contributing to the English scholar's interest in the Babi movement. Browne was later to become one of very few Westerners ever to meet with Baha'u'llah.

Rosen also translated Baha'u'llah's "Bisharat" ("Glad-Tidings"),<sup>25</sup> among many other works,<sup>26</sup> and supervised the preparation of *Pervyi sbornik poslanii Babida Bekhaullakha*, a collection of sixty-three Tablets by Baha'u'llah, which was published in 1908, after Rosen's death, by the Oriental Department of the Russian Imperial University in St. Petersburg.

In the early 1890s, Captain Alexander Tumanskii<sup>27</sup> first learned of the Baha'is from a geography text he was studying during his officer's course at the military Oriental Languages Training Section. When he learned of the murder of Haji Mujiammad-Ricla in Ashgabat and of the intervention of the Baha'is on behalf of the murderers, he was inspired to investigate their Faith more closely. Having received special permission to proceed to Transcaspia, he met the Baha'is of Ashgabat and, after studying the Faith more intensively, began to publish Baha'i works, including the Arabic

23. Head of the Oriental Languages Section of the Asiatic Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

24. Baron Yiktor Romanovich Rosen, 1849- 1908; lecturer at the University of St.

Petersburg, 1872; Founder of the Oriental Section of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society and Editor of the Notes of the Oriental Division of the Russian Imperial Archaeological Archives, 1886-1908.

25 . "Blagiya Yesti," *Zapiski vostochnogo otdelenie russkogo imperatorskogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestvo*, Vol.7, 1892, pp. 183- 92.

26. See list in Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 42.

27. Captain Alexander G. Tumanskii, died 1920, soldier and orientalist; spent several years in Ashgabat, where he came into contact with some of the great early scholars of the Faith, including Mirza Abu'l-Facil-i-Gulpaygani; after a number of missions into Persia, he taught Arabic in Tbilisi.

text and a Russian translation of Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas*

(Most Holy Book), 28 with a forty-eight-par introduction, and the Kitab-i-Ahd (Book of the Covenant). 2 These represented the first translations of these works into any foreign language. The former was first presented to the faculty of the History and Philology Department of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1894. When Tumanskii visited the Baha'is in Ashgabat again, one month after the passing of Baha'u' llah in 1892, he touchingly described their sadness on this occasion, the moving memorial ceremony and readings and even their warm hospitality and delicious refreshments.<sup>30</sup>

Among the other noted orientalists in Russia who contributed descriptions of Babi and Baha'i historical events was a German, Professor Johann Albrecht Bernhard Dom, 31 Conservator of the Imperial Russian Library and Director of the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg in 1842. During his travels in Persia in 1860, he obtained firsthand accounts of the upheaval at Fort Shaykh Tabarsi. In his assessment of these documents, he describes the intricacies of weighing the testimonies of those trying to exterminate the Babis and of the victims themselves.

Professor V.A. Zhukovski not only wrote about the executions of a number of prominent Baha'is in Yazd, 32 but also produced an important article 33 about Consul F.A. Bakulin, the diplomat who served at the Russian missions in Astarabad and Tabriz at the time of the Bab's execution.

In 1904, the Russian writer S.I. Umanets made an important contribution by refuting the allegation of contemporary Russian

28. "Kitabe Akdes," Zapiski Akademii Nauk St. Petersburg, 8th ser., Vol. 3, No. 6, 1899.

29. "Poslednee slovo Bekha-ully," Zapiski, Vol. 7, 1892, pp. 193-203.

30. "Poslednee slovo Bekha-ully," pp. 1- 3.

31. Johann Albrecht Bernhard Dom, German orientalist, 1805- 1881, Professor of the History and Geography of Asia at the Oriental Institute at St. Petersburg in 1835.

32. "Nedavnaya kazni babidov v gorode Ezde," cited in Momen, The Babi and Baha 'i Religions, p. 43.

33. "Rossiskii Imperatorskii Konsul F.A. Bakulin v istorii izucheniya babizma," in Zapiski, Vol. 24, 1916, pp. 33- 90.

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and is couched in Marxist-Lenin- the Kitab-i-Aqdas, thefirst foreign transist  
ideological terms. He dis- lation of Baha 'u 'llah's Book oflaws.  
misses the Babi movement as an "uprising"- a characterization  
which, unfortunately, still persists in the work of some contemporary  
orientalists. Ivanov's work does, however, contain the text of

some important dispatches of Prince Dolgorukov. 35

Perhaps the only exception to this record is Evgenii E. Bertels (1890- 1957), whose 1925 review of a work by a Baha'i named Mirza 'Abdu'l-I:Iusayn Avarih<sup>36</sup> contains an unusually concise and unprejudiced description of the Baha'i Faith. A specialist in Persian language at the Oriental Institute in Moscow until his death in 1957 and a prolific author of works on Persian and Tadjik literature as well as an analysis of Sufism, Bertels writes with a combination of scholarly restraint and keen psychological insight about the motives of the enemies of the Baha'i Faith, who were jealous of the

34. Cited in Momen , *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, p. 59.

35. Mikhail Sergeevich Ivanov, *Babidskie vosstaniva v Irane 1848- 1852*, (Moscow: Akademia Nauk SSSR, 1939).

36. Evgenii E. Bertels, "A Baha' i on the History of Babism," in *Vostok, Zhurnal literatury, nauki i iskusstva*, Vol. 5, 1925 , pp . 202-07 .

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rising authority and influence of Baha'u' llah and later of ' Abdu'l-Baha, and urges his colleagues to undertake a dispassionate and fair analysis of all sources.

A prominent member of the early Russian Baha'i community was the St. Petersburg poet and playwright Isabella Grinevskaya, of the then fashionable Philosophical, Oriental and Biblical Society. In the early years of the twentieth century, already a poet of considerable reputation, she wrote two dramas based on episodes in the lives of the Bab and Baha'u'llah. With her keen interest in things Eastern, she had first learned of their teachings and about the dramatic early history of the Faith through the writings of Kazem-Big, Gamazov, and Tumanskii.

The first play in verse, entitled *Bab: Dramaticheskaya poema iz istorii Persii* (The Bab: A Dramatic Poem from the History of Persia), was published in 1903. <sup>37</sup> The second was called *Bekhaulla: Poema tragediia v stikhakh iz istorii Persii* (Baha'u'llah: A Tragic Poem in Verse from the History of Persia), <sup>38</sup> published in 1912. Although the play about Baha'u'llah was never performed, the somewhat shorter drama about the Bab was staged in the Imperial Theater in St. Petersburg in 1904 and 1917, and later, in translation, in both London and Paris.

Not only did the performance itself cause a stir-the author being called out onto the stage after each act and showered with flowersbut the work also caused something of a sensation in literary and dramatic circles both in St. Petersburg and other Russian cities, including Ashgabat. Dozens of newspapers and journals devoted lengthy articles to a detailed analysis of the style, subject matter, and dramatic presentation. Writers, playwrights, and critics wrote ecstatically about the "rare subject matter," the author's "originality,"

"beauty and refinement of humanitarian thought," and her "depth, seriousness and warmth of feeling," calling it a "work of rare artistic beauty," "the best play of the current season," "deserving of the attention of Western as well as our own theatregoers and critics."

37. Isabella Grinevskaya, Bab: Dramaticheskaya poema iz istorii Persii (St. Petersburg: Khudozhestvennoi Pechati, 1903), izd.2-e .

38. Isabella Grinevskaya, Bekha-ulla: Poema tragediia v stikhakh iz istorii Persii (St. Petersburg: I. G. Braude, 1912).

One Professor Khakhanov, writing in the Russian News, after praising the author's sensitive portrayal of a subject "foreign to her own culture and spirit," predicted that "when the wider public becomes familiar with the teachings of the Bab, they will discover the means by which Christians and enlightened Muslims can reach out to each other." Under the pseudonym "Homunculus," another writer responded warmly to the universality of the subject matter: "In the message of this as yet unknown hero--coming as he does from an unfamiliar people--in this passionate idealist, there is yet something close and common to us all, perhaps because he sought to lead us to that which is true for all people." In an Odessa newspaper, L.E. Obolenskii devoted a lengthy feature article to the play, in which he wrote: "I shall not speak about the idea of the play; but it is well able to raise the spirit of the reader or listener to such heights such as one rarely feels in recent times from literary or theatrical works." Gabriel de Wesselitsky, president of the Foreign Press Association, writing in English, French, German, and Russian, described how he was "accosted by a lady who begged to present me with a book of poetry" and that when he finally read it, he was "at once struck by the rare combination of philosophical thought with a great power of expression, beauty of imagery and harmony of verse. I keenly felt the delight of reading a new great poem and of discovering a new first-rate poet. .. Amidst the sorrows of disastrous war ...that book was my only happy impression, and it has remained since a permanent source of joy and comfort as a manifest proof of the vitality of Russia and its creative genius." 39 In 1914, Grinevskaya attended a research conference dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the opening of the play and spoke of a somewhat different reaction to her work: "One very well-known professor told me that the name of my poem, "Bab," is not suited to the Russian ear. I answered him that the names of people who teach the ideals of love and for which they have given their lives, should be suited to all who hear them. Noble ideals are so rare

39. All quotations are from Otzyvy pechati o dramaticheskoi poeme 'Bab' Jsabelly

Grinevskoi (Reviews in the press of the dramatic poem 'Bab' by Isabella Grinevskaya), compiled by I. Sh. (St. Petersburg, 1910). (Translation

N.A.)

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these days, that it has been necessary to stage the play again, so as to reawaken the memory of these ideals. We, the people of the West, awoken to such things too slowly and yet we know that it is in the East that the sun rises." 40

Leo Tolstoy was reported to have given the play "The Bab" to one of his visitors at Yasnaya Polyana for night-time reading, 41 and himself wrote to Grinevskaya that he was delighted with the play, adding "I have known about the Babis for a long time and have a long-standing interest in their teachings: Because (Babism) has set aside the old superstitions and not substituted new ones which divide people ... and because it strives to create one religion for all mankind ... and has as its main goal the transformation of people's world view, it has a great future: I wholeheartedly sympathize with Babism to the extent that it teaches people brotherhood and equality and the sacrifice of worldly life for the service of god .) ,,42

( SIC .

Her success brought Grinevskaya into contact with members of the Baha'i community, the first of whom was 'Ali-Akbar Nakhjavani of Baku. Through these contacts, she received permission from 'Abdu'l-Baha to visit Him in Alexandria in 1911. Later she wrote a memoir of her two-week stay, describing it as "the realization of my secret wish, my most cherished dream, to see with my own eyes those people about whom I had written and who love all humankind ... When I left Russia in December of 1910, I already had a draft of my manuscript for the poem 'Baha'u'llah' and my goal was to see the object of my dreams-to see Abdu'l-Baha!" After her departure, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote to Grinevskaya, praising her "services to the world of humanity" and expressing the hope that the seeds she was sowing would bear fruit. "Although the conditions may not be appropriate now," He continued, "no doubt they will be in the future."

Grinevskaya completed a five hundred-and-fifty page book about her meeting with 'Abdu'l-Baha, entitled Travels to the

40. The Baha 'i World, Vol. VI , p. 707.

41. The Bahil 'i World, Vol. VI, p. 6.

42. L. N. Tolstoy, letter to Isabella A. Grinevskaya, in *Po/nae sobranie sochinenii*

(PSS) , Vol. 74 (Moscow, 1954), pp. 207-08 .

Land of the Sun. But the war intervened, and then the Revolution, and the book was never published. She also had the good fortune to meet Shoghi Effendi,

with whom she corresponded devotedly for many years. Grinevskaya was the initiator of Baha'i activities in Leningrad well into the 1930s.

Both Russia's literary giants Ivan Turgenev<sup>43</sup> and Leo Tolstoy knew of the Baha'i Faith, but much more is known about the latter author's longstanding interest. Tolstoy first heard about the Babis in 1894 from O.S. Lebedeva. Isabella Grinevskaya edova. His correspondence and diaries over a span of sixteen years until his death in 1910 contain a number of references to his investigation of the Babi and Baha'i teachings, prompted by his fascination with spiritual matters and his search for a religion based on reason. Tolstoy's relationship to the Faith is only now becoming more clearly understood by contemporary researchers.<sup>44</sup>

With so few direct sources at his disposal, it is understandable that Tolstoy had difficulty differentiating the terms "Babi" and "Baha'i." Moreover, his own inner contradictions and philosophical attachments led him to make comments about the Faith ranging from high praise verging on personal commitment to outright dismissal, when he found it did not conform to certain of his own cherished beliefs. In one letter he calls the Baha'i Faith "the highest and purest form of religious teaching"<sup>45</sup> and in another says that he

43 . Turgenev, who was in Oxford in 1879 to receive an honorary degree, apparently mentioned the Faith "often" to the Countess of Wemyss, one of the European intellectuals who took an interest in the Baha'i Faith following the publication of Count de Gobineau's book *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale* in 1865. During his 1879 visit to Oxford, he conversed about the new religion to the head of Balliol College, Dr. Benjamin Jowett; cited in Momen, *The Babi and Baha'í Religions*, p. 52.

44. William P. Collins and Jan T. Jasion, "Lev Tolstoy and the Babi and Baha'í Faiths, A Bibliography," published in *The Journal of Baha'í Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1991), Association for Baha'í Studies, Ottawa, Canada.

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is "disenchanted with the teachings of Baha'u'llah."<sup>46</sup> Within one two-month period he extols the "pure and lofty teachings of the disciple of the Bab-Baha'u'llah"<sup>47</sup> and then tells another correspondent that the more he becomes acquainted with the Baha'i teachings, the less he "appreciates it."<sup>48</sup>

In his correspondence with a number of Baha'is as well as fellow investigators,<sup>49</sup> Tolstoy pursued an active discussion on many specific issues, such as the nature of God, patriotism, the station of the Messengers of God, the unity of religion and the relationship between reason and spirituality. He was spurred in his quest by the urgent conviction that a world religion was necessary for humanity, but one shorn of ritual and based on the individual

search for truth. As he stated in his reply to the Persian Ambassador in Russia, who had sent him one of his own poems, entitled "Peace," Tolstoy believed that "the cause of evil is selfishness and ignorance .. ignorance of the true religion ... I believe that everywhere, like the Babis in your homeland, Persia, there are people who profess the true religion and that, despite the persecutions to which they are always and everywhere subjected, their ideas will increasingly spread and triumph in the end over the barbarity and ferocity of governments ... " 50

One of the Baha'is who had the privilege of an interview with Tolstoy, describing it in minute and humorous detail, asked the famous author, at the end of their lengthy discussion, what his opinion was of Baha'u'llah, to which Tolstoy replied: "How could I deny him? ... Obviously this cause will conquer the whole world.

45. L. N. Tolstoy, Pisma (Fridun Khan Badalbekov), 1908, 12.28. PSS, Vol. 78, pp.

306--D7; cited in Collins and Jasion, "Lev Tolstoy and the Babi and Baha'i Faiths," p. 7.

46. To Hippolyte Dreyfus, an early French Baha'i, cited in Luigi Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Baha'i Faith (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), p. 34.

47. L. N. Tolstoy, Pisma (Fedor Alekseevich Zheltov), 1909, 10.12, PSS, Vol. 80, pp. 138-39; cited in Collins and Jasion, "Lev Tolstoy and the Babi and Baha'i Faiths," p. 2.

48. Letter to Na'avani ; cited in Collins and Jasion , "Lev Tolstoy and the Babi and Baha'i Faiths," p. 2.

49. This correspondence is reviewed in detail by Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Bahá'í Faith, chapters 3 and 4.

SO. Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Baha'i Faith, pp. 20- 21.

I myself have already accepted Muhammad" and ended with the request, "Send me more writings. " 51

Despite his own ambivalence, and because of his own stature among literary figures, Tolstoy can be credited, through this correspondence, with introducing a number of contemporary writers, philosophers, and fellow-seekers to the Baha'i teachings. He is recorded as having received a number of books on the Baha'i Faith, which he immediately read or sent to some of his correspondents who were also interested in religious subjects.

'Abdu'l-Baha was aware of Tolstoy's interest and knowledge of the Faith and encouraging a number of Baha'is to contact him.

'Ali-Akbar Nakhjavani from Baku, mentioned earlier, was one of those who entered into correspondence with him and sent him literature. In his reply to Nakhjavani, 52 Tolstoy mentions that he

was contemplating the publication of a book on the Babi-Baha'i religion. Through another Baha'i, Mirza Azizu'llah Jadhhab of Khurasan, 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself sent a message to Tolstoy in which He said, "Act that your name may leave a good memory in

the world of religion. Many philosophers have come, each one raising a flag, let us say five meters high. You have raised a flag ten meters high; immerse yourself in the ocean of unity, so that you may remain confirmed eternally." 53

Although never himself accepting the Faith, Tolstoy, toward the end of his life, came to the conclusion that the teachings of the Bab had found their fullest development in the works of Baha'u'llah, that they "present us with the highest and purest form of religious teaching," 54 and that "they are deep. I know of no other religion that is so deep." 55

Instead of seeing the range of Tolstoy's commentaries about

51. Report of Mirza Azizu' llah Jadhhab Khurasani in Stendardo, op. cit., p. 30.

52. L. N . Tolstoy, PSS, Vol. 80, p. 102; cited in Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Baha'i Faith, p. 50.

53. Cited in Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Baha'i Faith, p. 30.

54. L. N. Tolstoy, Pisma, Fridum Khan Badalbekov, 1908.12.28, PSS, Vol. 78, pp. 306- 07; cited in Stendardo, Leo Tolstoy and the Baha'i Faith, p. 7.

55. D. P. Makovitskii, "U Tolstovo (With Tolstoy): 1904-191 O," Yasnopolyanskiie zapiski (Notes from Yasnaya Polyana), Vol. 4 (Nauka, 1979), p. 255.

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the Baha'i Faith in the context of his own individual spiritual search, antagonists of the Baha'i Faith have tended to fasten on one or another of Tolstoy's negative remarks to lend weight to their charges, just as its proponents and friends have emphasized his more admiring statements. But whatever case may be made for his own commitment, which we will never know, it is clear that his view of the Faith as "prophetic" and "profound," and the span of his continuing involvement, indicate the depth of his fascination with the new religion.

### Mention of Russia in the Baha' i Writings

Beginning during His exile in Adrianople, and continuing through His incarceration in the barracks in Acre, Baha'u'llah addressed majestic letters to the individual kings and rulers of mid-nineteenth century Europe and America, among them Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Baha'u ' llah warns him, as He did the other sovereigns, not to ignore the Messenger of God and to arise with justice "in the name of this all-compelling Cause." But in contrast to His powerfully-worded exhortations to the other rulers , Baha'u'llah begins His Tablet to the Tsar in a more intimate tone : "We, verily, have heard the thing for which thou didst supplicate thy Lord , whilst secretly communing with Him," referring evidently to the Tsar's earnest prayer for military victory over the Ottomans. In another significant passage, Baha'u'llah warns him not to "barter

away" the "sublime station" which God has ordained for him as a result of the magnanimous offer of refuge made by his "minister" (Dolgorukov) when Baha'u'llah was unjustly imprisoned.

The Baha'i view of the explosive political and ideological ferment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in

which the early Baha'i communities were growing, bears close examination because of the insight it offers into contemporary events. Although the overwhelming majority of 'Abdu'l-Baha's writings and talks deal with explanations, interpretation, and the specific application of Baha'i teachings and principles, He was deeply concerned about the cataclysmic changes that were taking place in Russian society and in her political thinking.

However, it was the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, Shoghi Effendi, who wrote extensively over the next two decades about these events, including the fall of the Russian monarchy. His wide-

ranging analysis of the historical events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sets them in the context both of Baha'i teachings in general and of Baha'u'llah's stern warnings to the kings and rulers of His day and their responses to His communications. Shoghi Effendi observed with deep anxiety the impact of communism on religion and on the whole fabric of Russian (later Soviet) society.

In keeping with the universal nature and humanitarian goals of the Baha'i teachings, Shoghi Effendi's interpretation of events in both Tsarist Russia and the communist regime are unequivocal and consistent. He describes the later policies of Alexander II as "retrogressive," proving "fatal to both himself and his dynasty" and causing widespread disillusionment, giving rise to nihilism, terrorism of unexampled violence, leading ultimately to the several attempts on his life, and culminating in his assassination. 56

His successor, Alexander III, is characterized as having "assumed an attitude of defiant hostility to innovators and liberals." 57 The continuation of his repressive policies "paved the way for a revolution which ... swept away on a bloody tide the empire of the Tsars, brought in its wake war, disease and famine, and established a militant proletariat which massacred the nobility, persecuted the clergy, drove away the intellectuals, disendowed the state religion . . . and extinguished the dynasty of the Romanovs." 58

Outlining the progression of events that ultimately exploded in revolution, Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1944:

The tradition of unqualified absolutism, of extreme religious orthodoxy was maintained by the still more severe Nicolas II, the last of the Czars, who, guided by the counsels of a man who was "the very incarnation of a narrow-minded, stiff-necked despotism," and aided by a corrupt bureaucracy, and humiliated by the disastrous effects of a foreign war, increased the general

discontent of the masses, both intellectuals and peasants. Driven for a time into subterranean channels, and intensified by military

56 . Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* (Wilmette : Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1941 ), p. 56.

57 . Shoghi Effendi , *Promised Day is Come*, p. 57 .

58. Shoghi Effendi , *God Passes By*, pp. 226- 27.

reverses, it exploded at last in the midst of the Great War, in the form of a Revolution which, in the principles it challenged, the institutions it subverted, and the havoc it wrought, has scarcely a parallel in modern history.

A great trembling seized and rocked the foundations of that country. The light of religion was dimmed. Ecclesiastical institutions of every denomination were swept away. The state religion was disendowed, persecuted, and abolished. A far-flung empire was dismembered. A militant, triumphant proletariat exiled the intellectuals, and plundered and massacred the nobility. Civil war and disease decimated a population, already in the throes of agony and despair. And, finally, the Chief Magistrate of a mighty dominion, together with his consort, and his family, and his dynasty, were swept into the vortex of this great convulsion, and perished. 59

The decline of religion in society in general (and at the hands of the Revolution in particular) became one of Shoghi Effendi's enduring themes, reflecting and emphasizing the importance of Baha'u'llah's command to His followers to "uphold the cause of religion. " 60 During the Second World War the Guardian wrote about the condition of religious institutions, deploring the "steady deterioration of their influence, the decline of their power, the damage to their prestige, the flouting of their authority . . .the relaxation of their discipline, the restriction of their press, the timidity of their leaders, the confusion in their ranks, the progressive confiscation of their properties ... " 61

He noted the "dechristianization of the masses in many Christian countries" and held accountable the "forces which the Communist movement has unloosed, reinforced by the political consequences of the last war, accelerated by the excessive, the blind, the intolerant, and militant nationalism which is now convulsing the nations, and stimulated by the rising tide of materialism, irreligion, and . . .",62

pagansm . . .

In a passage vividly describing the effects of these forces

59. Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day is Come*, p. 57 .

60. Baha'u ' llah, *Tablets of Bahri 'u 'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Haifa : Baha'i World Centre, 1978), p. 63.

61. Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day is Come*, p. I 07 .

62. Shoghi Effendi , Promised Day is Come, p. I 08 .

throughout the world, Shoghi Effendi identifies the humiliation inflicted upon the religious institutions in Russia, the swift, conscious and organized assault launched against the Orthodox Church, the creed of "religious irreligion" which

precipitated the disestablishment of the state religion, that massacred a vast number of its members, ... that pulled down, closed or converted into museums, theatres and warehouses, thousands upon thousands of churches, monasteries, synagogues and mosques, that stripped the church of its six and a half million acres of property, and sought, through its League of Militant Atheists and the promulgation of a "five-year plan of godlessness," to loosen from its foundations the religious life of the masses. 63

Finally, in one of his most celebrated passages, the Guardian describes the communist creed, "which, by its negation of God, His Laws and Principles, threatens to disrupt the foundations of human society," 64 and names it one of "those false idols, untruths and half-truths, which are obscuring its religions, corrupting its spiritual life, convulsing its political institutions, corroding its social fabric, and shattering its economic structure." 65 Speaking of religion as the source of true civilization, he says:

This vital force is dying out, this mighty agency has been scorned, this radiant light obscured, this impregnable stronghold abandoned, this beautiful robe discarded. God Himself has indeed been dethroned from the hearts of men, and an idolatrous world passionately and clamorously hails and worships the false gods which its own idle fancies have fatuously created, and its misguided hands so impiously exalted. The chief idols in the desecrated temple of mankind are none other than the triple gods of Nationalism, Racialism and Communism, at whose altars governments and peoples, whether democratic or totalitarian, at peace or at war, of the East or of the West, Christian or Islamic, are, in various forms and in different degrees, now worshipping. Their high priests are the politicians and the worldly-

63. Shoghi Effendi, Promised Day is Come, p. 108.

64. Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, 1st pocket ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), p. 31 .

65. Shoghi Effendi, Promised Day is Come, p. 112.

wise, the so-called sages of the age; their sacrifice, the flesh and blood of the slaughtered multitudes; their incantations outworn shibboleths and insidious and irreverent formulas; their incense, the smoke of anguish that ascends from the lacerated hearts of the bereaved, the maimed, and the homeless.

The theories and policies, so unsound, so pernicious, which deify the state and exalt the nation above mankind, which seek to subordinate the sister races of the world to one single race, which discriminate between the black and the white, and which tolerate the dominance of one privileged class over all others these are the dark, the false, and crooked doctrines for which any man or people who believes in them, or acts upon them, must; sooner or later, incur the wrath and chastisement of God. 06

From the October Revolution of 1917 to 1928

The overthrow of the Tsarist government by the communists and the consolidation of Bolshevik power at first had the effect of assisting the growth of the Baha'i communities that were flourishing inside Russia's borders, but eventually led to their subjugation. With the victory of the Bolshevik forces and the end of the civil war, the Baha'is throughout the country found themselves in a period of unprecedented freedom. The Faith had already expanded outside of the Persian ethnic community and had now been embraced by ethnic Russians, Tatars, and others. Active communities had been founded in both Petrograd-Leningrad and Moscow, 67 the latter having a Local Spiritual Assembly.

In its early years, the new Soviet government did not interfere with the Baha'i community or oppose its organization and meetings, despite the early "anti-religious" decrees which nationalized, without compensation, all land, including that of churches, prohibited religious instruction in state schools, and denied recognition of religious marriage and divorce. In 1922, the Soviet Union's official gazette published an article stating that Baha'is were

66. Shoghi Effendi, *Promised Day is Come*, pp. 117- 18.

67. Documentation, in both reports and photographs, of the early communities may be found in the volumes of *The Baha'í World and Star of the West* covering the years in question.

turning the thoughts of Soviet youth away from Bolshevism and toward Baha'i beliefs and suggesting that Baha'i efforts be stopped. It was almost ten years, however, before the full impact of the communist regime's opposition was felt by the Baha'is. 68 The first indication came in 1926 when a Baha'i visited Moscow on a tour to speak to Baha'i and public audiences about the religion. The speaker was summoned by an official of the political bureau (the State Political Directorate or G.P.U.- the political police that conducted state terrorism against those the Bolsheviks regarded as enemies) and directed to cease all Baha'i meetings. The G.P.U. spokesman especially questioned why members of the public were attending. The visitor explained that Baha'i meetings are not secret and are open for all to inspect; therefore, the Soviet authorities

should have nothing to fear about Baha'is holding any secret meetings. Moreover, he explained, the Baha'is are expressly forbidden by the principles of their Faith to interfere in political matters, nor do they allow anyone to speak against government affairs . The official, nevertheless, insisted that the public be prohibited from attending any Baha'i meetings in Moscow. A few days later the police entered a Baha'i home and confiscated a printing press that had been placed in this house, with government permission, in order to print Baha'i books. Two people attending a Baha'i meeting were also arrested and sentenced to prison terms of four years. Beginning in 1926, Baha'is of Iranian background were expelled from the country on the charge of belief in the Baha'i religion. The systematic harassment and deprivation of the most basic rights of Baha'is throughout the territories under Soviet rule had begun in earnest. Meetings were broken up , and those attending were arrested and held for questioning. Prohibitions were placed on the raising of funds. Documents and books were confiscated by the G.P.U. Though the police found, after careful examination, that the Baha'is were not guilty of any subversive, anti-Soviet, or political

68 . Walter Kolarz, in *Religion in the Soviet Union* (London : Macmillan , 1961),

posits that what attracted the authorities' attention was not the threat of the Baha ' i communities ' numerical strength , but the fact that the characteristic tolerance, broad-mindedness and internationalism of the members of the community contradicted the prevailing communist view that religion is an outmoded remnant of the past.

activity, they nevertheless ordered that Baha'i meetings not be held without police permission. Ironically, the meetings at which the Baha'is were arrested had been held only after such government permission had been obtained.

The printing press belonging to the local Baha'i council in Ashgabat was confiscated. The magazine *Khurshid-i-Khavar*, printed in Ashgabat, was heavily censored and then finally suspended. Baha'i mail, both incoming and outgoing, was confiscated, read, copied, and then sent on to the addressees. Agents sent by the G.P.U. to pose as inquirers at Baha'i meetings would arrest the Baha'is for speaking about their religion with others.

In April 1928, after the election of Local Spiritual Assemblies in the Central Asian and Caucasian republics, the government unilaterally abrogated the Baha'i Assemblies' constitutions and substituted a text not in harmony with the responsibilities and functions of these councils as defined in the Baha'i teachings. After lengthy negotiations and the rejection by both sides of clauses deemed unacceptable, a constitution was imposed that dissolved all Baha'i committees, called for copies of all minutes and proceedings of

meetings to be submitted to the authorities, and required that Baha'i children not be instructed in their religion until the age of eighteen. 69 Baha'i schools were proscribed and all Baha'i teachers were gradually expelled and replaced, despite the fact that in the classes of the Baha'i schools, in accordance with the requirements of the law, there was no religious content or instruction.

During the same year, the government issued an order that all synagogues, churches and other places of worship must be considered state property. Subsequently, after lengthy negotiations, the Baha'is were permitted only to "rent" their House of Worship from the state, for five-year periods, with the Baha'i community forced to bear all the costs of upkeep and repair. 70

69. The closure of Baha'i schools in Ashgabat, Merv, and Qahqahih is described in detail, along with the effects on the general education in the area, in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. V (1932-34), pp. 41--43.

70. In 1930 Shoghi Effendi called on the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada to appeal to the Soviet authorities, stressing the international character of the House of Worship in Ashgabat, but their efforts had no effect on Soviet policy.

In February 1928, a devoted Baha'i, I:Iusayn Big Qudsi, who had corresponded with Shoghi Effendi and who in earlier years had taken the Baha'i teachings to many parts of Russia, was arrested. In October, two members of the Ashgabat Local Assembly were also arrested and held for three months; another twenty-four Baha'is were detained the following July. One of these, Ashraf Big, was not heard of again and was presumed murdered; a further sixteen were released after six months. During the same period, Baha'is from Tashkent, Baku and Burda were either interrogated or imprisoned. Two believers from Baku were banished for three years to the Arctic Circle, while Aqa I:Iabibu'llah Bagirov of Tashkent was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. 71 Numerous other believers were deported to Iran. 72

One might assume that under such oppressive conditions the Baha'is would simply dissemble their Faith or "go underground." However, even in this chaotic, unpredictable and unjust situation, the Baha'is were bound by the laws of their Faith, among which are non-involvement in politics (non-partisanship) and civil obedience. In accordance with these principles, the Baha'is were required to be law-abiding citizens, to be trustworthy and obedient to the civil authority of the country in which they lived, and to refrain from taking sides in or making statements on political matters. This principle applies even in situations where civil law restricts the observance of some aspect of the Faith, such as Baha'i burial laws or the holding of the Nineteen Day Feast, the regular monthly community meeting. Baha'is must abide by the requirements of civil law

so long as it does not require them to violate a fundamental spiritual principle. "Dissimulation," or recantation under conditions of danger or pressure, is forbidden by the Baha'i teachings as a violation of the principle of honesty. A fundamental distinction is made between the legitimate rights of governments to set necessary regulations, to ensure order and administer justice

71. Letters from survivors of this persecution were reproduced in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. IV ( 1928- 30).

72. The authors wish to express their grateful acknowledgement of the work of Feizullah Namdar in supplying valuable information covering the Soviet period .

within their jurisdictions, and the realm of individual conscience. In strict conformity with these principles, the Baha'is of the Soviet Union continued throughout this dark period to negotiate with the duly constituted local and national authorities for the right and permission to carry out their spiritual and humanitarian activities. When the authorities required that the Baha'is disband their administration and change the nature of meetings (or cease meeting altogether), the Baha'is obeyed the requirements of the law while seeking freedom, under the terms of the federal constitution, to function as a religious community. They abstained entirely from political activity and agitation, seeking redress instead through appeal to the legally constituted authorities. The Baha'i representatives in Ashgabat, Moscow, and Baku, for example, explained the nature of their organization and activities to these authorities, to no avail. 73

From 1928 to the Early 1960s

Throughout what he called the "momentous convulsions" of the early 1920s, Shoghi Effendi provided a steady stream of loving reassurance to the Baha'is that their patience and forbearance would ultimately "brighten the eyes of the faithful throughout the world." 74 He told the Baha'is of the world that in these disturbing current events there lay "mighty and consummate mysteries" which would be "revealed to men's eyes in the days to come," that Russia would in the future become a "delectable paradise," and that the Baha'i Faith would eventually continue to develop in that land "on an unprecedented scale." 75

With far-seeing confidence, he wrote in 1929 to the Baha'is of the West, that the persecuted Baha'is in Russia were possessed of a "hope that no earthly power can dim, and a resignation that is truly sublime" and that they had

73 . Shoghi Effendi , letter to the Baha' is of the West, 1 January 1928 ; cited in

*Baha 'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932* (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1974) , p. 160.

74. Shoghi Effendi, unpublished letter to the Baha'is of Ashgabat, 11 January 1923, quoted in a letter dated 21 November 1990 from the Universal House of Justice to a December 1990 Baha' i conference in Moscow.

75. Shoghi Effendi , letter to the Baha' is of Ashgabat, 2 January 1930, Australian Bahci 'i Bulletin (March , 1991 ), p. 4.

committed the interests of their Cause to the keeping of that vigilant, that all-powerful Divine Deliverer, Who, they feel confident, will in time lift the veil that now obscures the vision of their rulers , and reveal the nobility of aim, the innocence of purpose, the rectitude of conduct, and the humanitarian ideals that characterize the as yet small yet potentially powerful Baha'i communities in every land and under every government. 76  
But there were even darker days ahead. The Baha'i communities continued to operate, insofar as possible under these oppressive conditions, maintaining the very limited organization of Assemblies in Ashgabat and in Baku. It was apparent, however, during the 1930s, that plans were being laid to remove the Baha'is from these locations.

Official publications misrepresenting the Baha'i Faith as a bourgeois, anti-socialist movement began to appear. The first, in 1930, was *Bekhaizm-novaya religia vostoka* (Bahatism-New Religion of the East) by I. Darov, printed in Leningrad by the Oriental Institute, and "Bekhaizm," by A. Arsharuni, printed in *Bezbozhnik* (the "Atheist" newsletter) in Moscow. Later, in 1938, the same Arsharuni wrote "Babizm-Istorichesky Ocherk" (an historical essay) for the journal *Moskovskii rabochii* (The Moscow Worker). These pamphlets claimed, according to the authorized Marxist-Leninist interpretation, that Baha' i beliefs represented a "bourgeois" ideology, adding the fantastic allegation that Baha'is claimed their own teachings as the "source of socialism" and were camouflaging themselves as socialists! 77

The Small Soviet Encyclopaedia, published in 1933, repeated these same fabrications , adding an imaginative twist, to the effect that the "new religion" was a fashionable front in the fight against the ideas of socialism and communism. 78

The years 1934-1936 saw a brief respite from government intimidation. Religious buildings could be leased by their owners, and the Baha'is came into full possession once more of the Ashgabat

76. Shoghi Effendi, letter to the Baha' is of the West, 1January1929, in *Baha'i Administration*, p. 162.

77. Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 471 .

78 . *Small Soviet Encyclopaedia*, I st ed., Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1933), p. 895 ; cited

in Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 472 .

House of Worship, having first fulfilled the requirement that

extensive repairs be made within six months. Assembly elections and public activities also resumed.

However, this unexpected moment of leniency by the Soviet regime came to an abrupt end in 1936 with fierce new attacks against the Baha'is. By February 1938, all members of the central council in Ashgabat and about five hundred other Baha'is had been arrested, and their books and Baha'i records confiscated. All were detained on "political" charges of having "worked to the advantage of foreigners." Those arrested were ordered to sign confessions, which they refused to do. Some five hundred believers, including some women, were imprisoned and sent to camps. From the fact that large numbers of the men were never heard from again and no trace of them could be found, it appears that many died. The overwhelming majority of their wives and children were exiled to Iran.

Survivors of the period recount their experiences searching for those who disappeared. One such account tells of a promising young cellist at the Moscow Conservatory named Haji 'Abdu'l - Rasul Sarrafi, who was abducted from his residence. Years later, when his passport was finally discovered, it was learned from a fellow prison-camp inmate who survived that, in an effort to force him to confess his "crimes," his tormentors, before killing him, had broken each one of his fingers. 79

In order to petition authorities for official recognition, Soviet Jaw required any religious community to have fifty members of over the age of eighteen, and so the imprisonment and deportation of such great numbers of Baha'is left the community depleted . The Baha'i communities throughout the Soviet Union were, to all intents and purposes, reduced to remnants after 193 8, and little is yet known of their fate. An October 1939 report in Baha'i News stated:

The National Assembly (of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada) has learned with deep grief of the sufferings of the Baha'i communities in Turkestan (sic) and the Caucasus.

79. Private communication from Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh.

Some years ago their Assemblies and Committees were dissolved, as reported at that time, and their literature and records confiscated. At present many of the friends have been imprisoned, including women, and some have died in incarceration, while the majority have been deported to Iran, and a few to Siberia. Baha'i activities and teaching are forbidden. 80

In the post-World War II years, Baha'i principles continued to be attacked in Soviet literature. The Large Soviet Encyclopaedia now charged the Baha'is with denying the principle of national independence and state sovereignty, of advocating the abolition of

national boundaries and the creation of a "united world state." 81 In this article there appeared another novel invention, the charge that the Baha'is were supported by "British and American imperialists," that they received support in the form of "foreign subsidies," and, reflecting the political alliances of the period, that "Bahatism" was an "instrument serving the spiritual disintegration of the peoples of the Middle East." 82

The House of Worship in Ashgabat was seized in 1938 on the pretext of the Baha'is' failure to maintain the building, whereupon it was used, for the next ten years, as a museum of cotton culture. The violent earthquake of 1948 severely damaged the building, and yearly rains further weakened it. In the early 1960s, the Soviet authorities demolished the edifice and cleared the site. Shortly after its establishment in April 1963, the Universal House of Justice appealed to the then Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev, to set aside as a public park the land on which the House of Worship had stood and to erect a suitable marker pointing out the significance of the site to the worldwide Baha'i community. No reply was ever received, but the site is now a public park.

80. Bahci 'i News , October 1939, p. 2. For a more detailed account of the situation

of the Baha'is in the Caucasus and Russia, see the 1938-39 Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran, reprinted in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. VIII (1938--40), p. 181.

81. *Large Soviet Encyclopaedia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1950), Vol. V, p. 129.

82. N. A. Kuznetsova, "K istorii izucheniya babizma i bekhaizma v Rossii ," *Ocherki po istorii russkogo vostokovedeniya*, Vol. VI (1963), pp. 89- 133.

### The Restoration of the Baha'i Community in Russia

While the Baha'i communities inside Soviet Russia were being forcibly dispersed and repressed, the rest of the Baha'i world, from the late 1940s until 1963, was engaged in a coordinated universal effort to bring the Baha'i teachings to an increasing number of countries and to specific regions, cities and towns. In his letters to the North American Baha'is written during the First World War, 'Abdu'l-Baha had mentioned Russia, Byelorussia, and Asiatic Russia among those regions to which he hoped Baha'is would travel to share the message of Baha'u'llah with those interested in learning more about it. During the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, and under his guidance, Baha'i communities around the world continued systematically to implement 'Abdu'l-Baha's "Divine Plan," establishing new Local and National Spiritual Assemblies.

This worldwide undertaking required sustained and detailed planning and much sacrifice on the part of the members of existing Baha'i communities and their administrative institutions, which

were given specific international goals, and on the part of the individual "pioneers" who responded to this call and voluntarily settled in far-flung and remote parts of the world, thus opening new areas to the Baha'i Faith and strengthening earlier beginnings.

With a vision of world unity that transcended the limited political and socio-religious ideologies of the 1940s and 50s, as well as full confidence in the ultimate opening of the communist countries about which he had written with such clarity almost twenty years earlier, the Guardian included objectives within Soviet territory with the aim of establishing a nucleus, however small, in those republics and islands (all in Europe) where there were still no Baha'is. Because of the exceedingly precarious situation of the Baha'is living in countries under communist rule, their participation in this endeavor, deprived of all means of community sustenance, literature, fellowship, institutions, communication-and in the face of every conceivable external threat, called for extraordinary courage.

By 1963, isolated centers had been reactivated in Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia, in addition to the five remaining centers in

Turkmenia, as it was then known. Through the sacrificial efforts of the Persian Baha'i community, centers were also strengthened in Kirgizia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Despite the severe limitations placed on any religious activities during the period of the communist regime, opportunities to promote the Baha'i teachings were nonetheless explored during the

1970s in various republics of the Soviet Union. With the assistance of the Baha'i communities of Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Iran, Sweden, and the United States, Baha'is gradually returned to or settled in the Baltic States, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Ukraine.

The gradual relaxation of travel restrictions, beginning in the 1980s, and the dismantling of communist rule made possible the strengthening of many Baha'i communities throughout the Soviet Union. Citizens who identified themselves as Baha'is, some of them after decades of enforced silence, began to rebuild and form new communities, which then elected their Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The historic passage of the law on freedom of religion in August 1990 made possible the election of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the USSR in May 1991. The establishment of the new state boundaries of the Commonwealth of

Independent States following the coup attempt of August 1991 resulted in the formation in spring 1992 of four new regional bodies to administer the religious affairs of the Baha'is: one in Russia, Georgia, and Armenia; a second in the three Baltic States; a third for Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova; and a fourth in Central Asia. The fifth, a new National Assembly, was elected in Azerbaijan. In 1993, the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of

Russia, Georgia, and Armenia was duly registered under federal law as a recognized religious organization. It was in this year that all the members of this Spiritual Assembly participated for the first time in the International Baha'i Convention, during which the Universal House of Justice is elected every five years. The next year, 1994, saw the inauguration of separate National Spiritual Assemblies in each of the Central Asian republics. Over the succeeding three years, as the number of local Baha'i communities expanded sufficiently to permit the establishment of National Spiritual Assemblies, an additional four were elected in the remaining states of the former USSR, for a total of fifteen, which now take

The first National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Soviet Union, elected in April 1991.

their place alongside their sister National Assemblies in 164 other nations. What better witness to the promise, written by Shoghi Effendi, in 1923, that

There is no doubt that the day will come when the very people who are now engaged in destroying the foundations of faith in God and promoting this baseless doctrine of materialism will arise and, by their own hand, snuff out the flame of this commotion. They will sweep away the entire structure of their unrestrained godlessness and will arise with heart and soul, and with hitherto unmatched vigor, to atone for their past failures. They will join the ranks of the followers of Baba 'u 'llah and arise to promote His Cause ... If the friends remain steadfast ... the veils of God's inscrutable wisdom will be lifted and extraordinary events will be witnessed.<sup>83</sup>

In 1997, the Baha'i community of Russia faced the challenging task of reregistering its National Spiritual Assembly after the passage of a new law on "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," which replaced the law of 1990. In January 1999, the Baha'i community was accorded the status of a centralized religious organization, providing a continuation of the legal framework for the registration of its now fifty Local Spiritual Assemblies. At the time of this printing, there are approximately 3,500 Baha'is living in more than 330 localities across Russia, from

83 . Shoghi Effendi , letter to the Baha ' is of Ashgabat, 11 January 1923; cited

in the Australian Baha'i Bulletin, March 1991 , p.3.

the far east in Kamchatka, throughout the vast reaches

of Siberia, to the southern regions of the Caucasus, to the North Sea in the Murmansk region . 84 Almost sixty-three percent of the Baha'is of Russia are women and a wide variety of Russia's ethnic groups are currently represented in the Bahri 'i community of the Russian Federation with government officials, shortly after the Assembly s legal re-registration in January 1999. An interesting feature of its present growth (approximately six-and-a-half percent per year) is the fact that more than fifty-five percent of the Baha'i population is situated in the Asian part of the country, which represents more than seventy-five percent of its overall land mass but less than twenty percent of its entire population.

Gradually, the inherent cultural diversity of these national communities is becoming more and more apparent, as they each address in their own unique ways the major challenges of community development: the moral development of all its individual members, the strengthening of family life, the recognition and promotion of human rights and responsibilities, the implementation of the principle of equality of women and men, new processes of community decision-making and problem-solving, and the application of such spiritual principles as justice, trustworthiness and moderation to economics, agriculture and environmental protection. The opening up of the whole of Eastern Europe and Asia to communication with the wider world provides an unprecedented challenge to reinvigorate the spiritual life of Russia, with her rich diversity of peoples and cultures. Human sensitivity, responsiveness, concern for the common weal-such are the values cherished by many of her great thinkers, such as Berdyaev, Solovyev, Bulgakov,

84. It is estimated that fifteen thousand Bah a' is live in all countries of the former USSR.

Florensky, Leontiev, and others, whose works, long hidden, are taking their rightful place alongside the more familiar classics. The return of such spiritual values at the core of education and development will, no doubt, enable the peoples of Russia to make unique and long-awaited contributions not only to the rebuilding of this great nation, but also to the establishment of a global civilization.

Martha Schweitz and Bill Barnes examine the increasing use of codes of conduct among non-governmental organizations,

and compare this process of unitybuilding with the experience of the Bahci 'i community.

## DIMENSIONS

### of UNITY

#### in an Emerging Global Order

In the middle of the last century Baha'u'llah proclaimed that a new spirit of unity had entered the world, which would, paradoxically, as one of its effects, upset the world's equilibrium. <sup>1</sup>

Unification of the family, the tribe, the city, and the nation had been successfully achieved. The next stage in human social evolution must be, He announced, unity on a global scale: "The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective." <sup>2</sup>

These words, issued at a time when many imagined only enlightened peace and prosperity increasing through the spread of the great civilization of the West, must have sounded hollow and strange. They were, in fact, to prove prophetic.

1. Baha' u' llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u'llah (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 136.

2. Baha' u' llah, Gleanings, p. 216 .

## THE BAHAI WORLD

### The State System and Civil Society

Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, writing between the convulsions of two world wars, more specifically defined the fierce storm gathering on the near horizon of state relations and indicated what humanity had to do to protect itself from its sweeping, chaotic winds of despair:

World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. 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.

While it is difficult to foresee how humanity will mature to reach the condition of world unity, it is clear that current structures and values must change. It is also clear that people--ordinary citizens- must take a large measure of the responsibility for bringing about this change.

In its February 1999 statement, *Who Is Writing the Future ?*

Reflections on the Twentieth Century,<sup>4</sup> the Baha'i International Community concluded that unprecedented opportunities are opening to every individual, institution, and community to participate in shaping the collective future of humanity. In its 1995 statement, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, it identified the "efflorescence of countless movements and organizations of social change at local, regional, and international levels" as "likely the most important social phenomenon of our time."<sup>5</sup> It observed the "transformation in the way that great numbers of ordinary people are coming to see themselves" in the process of social change and further anticipated a recasting of present conceptions of what is natural in relationships between members of society and its institutions.

This essay first examines the role of "ordinary people" in

3. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Saha'u'llah*, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 202.

4. See pp. 255-68 of this volume for the full text of this statement.

5. Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 4-5.

## DIMENSIONS OF UNITY

governance in the context of the present moment in history, as the global system struggles to transcend narrowly conceived nationalism. It then considers one highly promising process, the adoption of codes of conduct by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in social and economic development. The codes—a useful window to understanding how people are "writing the future"—explicitly state the NGOs' chosen values, goals, and methods. Finally, the essay compares this code process to the approach of the Baha'i community by focusing on unity as its operating principle and describes how that community achieves, promotes, and expresses unity.

### Imperatives in a Disintegrating Order

In 1985, on the eve of the United Nations Year of Peace, the Universal House of Justice issued a statement entitled *The Promise of World Peace*. The document addresses many problems associated with global breakdown and refers to "the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the completion of the process of nation building ..."<sup>6</sup>

This statement implies not only that national statehood is finished as a socially integrating process, but, more threateningly, that the "anarchy inherent in state sovereignty" referred to by Shoghi Effendi has reached its climax or full measure of danger for destroying the human community. Humanity must move to the next stage in its collective social evolution—the stage of a global civilization—or suffer dire consequences. While the global

imperative is to build a world civilization that fully embodies the oneness of humanity, to construct a society on this ideal necessitates "an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced." 7 The upheavals affecting every aspect of human life today are symptomatic of that organic change and characteristic of times of rapid social evolutionary advance- the dying of an old order through the emergence of a new one.

The sovereignty of the nation state is under pressure from all

6. The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: Bah a' f World Centre Publications, 1985), p. I.

7. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha 'u '!!ah*, p. 43.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

sides, undermined from below by "nationalistic" forces in the form of ethnic or other groups asserting their desire for autonomy and pressured from above through participation in treaties, international organizations, and other transnational structures necessary for dealing with urgent global problems but that also impinge on a nation's independent decision-making power. Forces of economic globalization, both in trade and capital, also exert pressure, driven forward by the collective actions of transnational business, investors, and the governments of the major trading powers, but still immune to control or even direction by the publics most affected. Structurally, the state is at the same time both too large and too small to solve modern problems.

To relieve such pressures, the modern state system must evolve and develop structurally in two different directions.

It must grow upwards to encompass larger unities within one commonly accepted system. Similar developments have occurred in past epochs, but in each case the smaller entity had to cede some of its sovereignty and governing responsibility to a higher emerging entity in the name of a larger collective good.

The modern state must also grow in its connection to the people and communities it is intended to serve. The great surge in democracy during the 1990s, as measured by the number of relatively free and fair, multiparty electoral systems at the national level, is accompanied by increasingly strident demands for government at all levels to be more representative of and accountable to the electorate on a continuing basis-and accountable to all, not just the majority, the elite, or the influential.

Beyond these two directions of growth, the present state system faces the imperative of development on the inner plane. The system of nation states is more than the drawing of boundaries, the establishing of sovereign governments, or the creation and application of laws and economic regulations. More than the sum of its social

and material arrangements, it has a spiritual dimension of values, beliefs and principles—a cultural and religious dynamic that has reached exhaustion. Each nation and people has its own inner tradition, but, in their current form, these cannot co-exist in tolerance and separation in a globalizing world where interaction is forced on them. Through the resulting friction and mutual influence, a

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new consciousness of human rights has made old inequalities and discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or other grounds totally unacceptable. Values and ethical principles that respect humanity and promote the well-being of all people must be found or forged, agreed upon, and assimilated. Growth in consciousness and values can be achieved only if sustained attention is paid to articulating global goals and universal principles, that is, to promoting a unifying moral discourse.

Hence, to erect a new order, spiritual and material dimensions of life must be united, higher and lower pressures met, and smaller and larger problems solved. While it is impossible to predict the exact steps that need to be taken in our collective human social evolution, certain points are obvious.

First, it is unrealistic to expect that, acting on their own initiative, existing state structures and those centers of power associated with them in the cultural, economic, and social realms will respond soon to the challenges posed to their own power. The nation state system cannot forge a global order of peace and prosperity as long as it is also driven by the contradictory purpose of keeping national identity, sovereignty, and prerogatives intact in the process. As the Baha'i International Community has written, "It is obvious that, whatever its past contributions, the longer the nation state persists as the dominant influence in determining the fate of humankind, the longer will the achievement of world peace be delayed and the greater will be the suffering inflicted on the earth's population." <sup>8</sup> Yet, since sovereignty currently resides with the nation state, the task of determining the form and dynamic of the emerging world order is an obligation that rests in great part with heads of state and with governments.

Second, the failures of the present state system provide unprecedented opportunities for people to arise and shape their own future.

The world's peoples must seize these opportunities and take the initiative to transform the existing order.

8. Baha'i International Community, *Who is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Baha'i International Community, Office of Public Information, 1999), p. 8.

#### Civil Society Responds

Civil society refers to the totality of all the groups and organizations,

formal and informal, organized by people outside of government structures. 9 It has been described as a mosaic. Viewed at close range, all one can see are separate and irregular, sometimes peculiar, shapes and colors. Standing back, however, one sees designs and forms emerge that wholly transcend the sum of the parts. The depth of civil society has been linked to the strength of democratic traditions and has been identified as a nation's "social capital." 10 Because the work and activities of most civil society organizations are motivated by shared goals or shared needs, it is where most people pursue what matters most to them and where they develop the abilities for participating in collective efforts. For this reason, civil society has been described as comprising the character-forming institutions of human society. 11 Fueled by the aspirations of ordinary people working at the grassroots to create more responsive social programs, however small, multifarious independent groupings must at first organize themselves outside the centers of power of the present order, creating a kind of parallel community that impacts upon established society and whose goal is the establishment of a just human society. They create social pressure from below on established centers of power, stemming, in turn, from humanity's impulse to demand its right to dignity and respect, and knowing its own value irrespective of social or political position or status. Relationships between

9. in many contexts, "civil society" includes all commercial, for-profit enterprises; in others it may not. Civil society includes groups of every description:

bowling leagues, farmers' cooperatives, religious organizations, human rights advocacy groups, charities, academic institutions, professional associations, PTAs, labor unions. Many are created to serve a public purpose. Some can successfully bridge deep, traditional divisions in pluralistic societies. A few represent the worst elements in a society, such as racist or hate groups.

10. See the writings of Robert D. Putnam, including *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

11. Don E. Eberly, *America's Promise: Civil Society and the Renewal of American Culture* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, 1998), p. 128.

## DI MENS IONS OF U N I T Y

members of society and its institutions are being recast from the ground up as a result of this transformation in how great numbers of people are coming to see themselves.

Neither the concept of civil society nor its existence is new.

What is new is the rapid growth in developing countries in the number of CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) created to serve local or national development purposes, the increasing professionalism of many

CSOs created to serve a public purpose, the growth in the number of CSOs operating internationally, and the linkages and networks developing among CSOs within nations or internationally. Although some CSOs have a long tradition of being actively involved with governments through lobbying or other activities, a much wider range of organizations is now seeking some sort of "partnership" relationship with governmental bodies, from the local level through to the organs of the United Nations. They work on economic and social development, human rights and humanitarian assistance, relief of the hungry, and the rescue of refugees. CSOs (including what are often known as NGOs, voluntary or non-profit organizations, or humanitarian groups) are a major new force in global society. They represent a powerful initiative taken by citizens to structure their own lives and set their own goals.

This kind of social grassroots activity in so many places at the same time is unprecedented in human history, reflecting a deep desire on the part of individuals everywhere to take a hand in shaping their own destiny. It holds out the hope of the emergence of new moral vision and forms of leadership in human governance, through which new civil capacities can be built.

Yet this is not the whole picture, for these multifarious, energetic, and important movements often work at odds or in competition with each other, since each has its own agenda, goal, and vision. One danger in this situation is the potential for these groups simply to evolve into another form of that which they are attempting to replace. They are prey to many of the same shortcomings of the governments they criticize, as can be seen when large NGOs become increasingly politicized, or when conditions imposed by funders are allowed to dictate a CSO's policies. That is to say, to

the extent that CSOs come to resemble existing structures of power they, too, will become increasingly anarchic.

Nevertheless, as a whole, the proliferating roles of CSOs in public affairs represent experiments in governance with the potential to permanently reshape the way our governing processes are understood. One indication of the impending shift is the recent popularity of the term "governance" in place of "government." The latter, as generally (and rather narrowly) used in public discourse, refers to the hierarchical structure and set of institutions that wield political power in a nation, at the local, subnational, or national level, and how they function. The term "governance" includes this structure but focuses first on how public affairs are, in fact, managed. Such focus leads to a heightened emphasis on informal over formal structures and processes, on change over time, and on the participation and roles of non-governmental actors, such as private organizations, for-profit business, CSOs, media, academia, citizens'

movements, transnational corporations, and even the global capital market. 12 Using the term "governance" implies a change in perception, away from our government-centered way of imagining the world, which has never been entirely accurate and is becoming less so every day.

Forgoing preoccupation with governments and state sovereignty, people can open the way to promoting the evolution of the state system both upwards toward more inclusive structures and downwards towards the citizenry. CSOs are a major force in both of these processes, as they develop methods to hold governments accountable to the public and promote global arrangements to address urgent problems. They are also central to meeting the challenge faced by the state system on the inner, moral plane.

12. The Commission on Global Governance defines governance generally as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs." Our Global Neighborhood: The Report of the Commission on Global Governance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 2. Implicit in the term "governance" is a choice not to accord privilege to the formal, legal, and structural. In other words, when one discusses "governance" (at the local through global levels), one is looking at how an issue or a geographic area is managed or governed without assuming that the government is central to it.

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One can see how this challenge is being met in recent codes of conduct that have been adopted by NGOs working in social and economic development. Many NGOs have grown mature enough to start defining themselves in terms of codes of conduct that identify their aims, goals, and purposes, as well as their ethical standards of conduct. Principles and standards are agreed upon as the basis for bringing about desired social change, thereby creating civil structures that form character—perhaps initially a national character, but gradually a more universal, ethical character.

Currently, these codes are in a very early, transitional stage. They address concrete problems. Although there are many universal elements within them, they also retain much that is culture-specific or that reflects the local conditions against which they define themselves. This is inevitable at this stage in their evolution, but universal codes will gradually emerge as the world increasingly unites.

### Non-Governmental Codes of Conduct

#### Origins and Character

Recent non-governmental codes of conduct or codes of ethics have been developed primarily within national groups of organizations (national networks), but in some cases by transnational or sector-specific networks. They will be referred to here as "NGO codes," because most of the participating organizations define

themselves as non-governmental organizations dedicated to serving a development-oriented purpose. Codes currently in effect include the following: 13

Code of Conduct for Non-Government Development Organisations of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid;

Code of Ethics of the Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations ;

Code of Ethics of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation;

- Declaration of Principles of Non-Governmental Organizations of the NGO Confederation of Colombia;

13 . The codes are listed here alphabetically by the name of the country of the adopting NG Os or, in the case of the last three, by the name of the transnational organization. They will be referred to hereafter simply by the country or organization name.

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Voluntary Development Organisation: The Guiding Principles of the Voluntary Action Network India;

Code of Conduct of the Japanese NGO Center for International Cooperation;

Code of Conduct of the Lesotho Council of Non-governmental Organizations;

- NGO Code of Conduct of the NGO Federation of Nepal;
- NGO Code of Ethics for Social Development Organizations in the Philippines;

Code of Ethics for NGOs of the South African National NGO Coalition;

- InterAction PVO [Private Voluntary Organization] Standards of the American Council of Voluntary International Action in the United States;

- NGO Guidelines for Good Policy and Practice of the Commonwealth Foundation;

- Relations Between Southern and Northern NGOs: Policy Guidelines of the International Council for Voluntary Organizations; and

Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief.

Similar codes are in various stages of preparation by other networks, including the Arab Network for NGOs and emerging groups in the former Soviet Union.

It should be noted that these codes have all been adopted by NGO networks, that is, by established organizations whose members themselves are NGOs. They are not codes adopted by a single NGO for its own purposes (although those also exist in various forms) but have been drafted and negotiated among the member organizations of a particular network. In all cases, the negotiating process has been highly participatory, generally lasting at least a couple of years, and involving repeated discussions among the member organizations followed by redrafting and further discussion. After a code has been adopted, in most cases the member

organizations are requested to certify that they are complying or bringing their practices into compliance with the code. In many cases, complying with the code has become a requirement of membership in the network. Some codes, such as that of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, include highly developed implementation procedures by which a standards committee can review the practices of a member organization or even receive complaints that a particular organization is not complying.

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The experience with the Philippine code is notable, in that a few member organizations have been expelled from the network for noncompliance.

As evident from the names of some of the adopting networks listed above, they are generally networks of NGOs dedicated to "social development." The networks adopting codes in Australia, Canada, Japan and the United States are composed of NGOs that work primarily in overseas aid and development. In developing countries, the organizations in the adopting networks are, generally speaking, more diverse in their aims and purposes, but are mostly working on domestic social and economic development issues, including human rights and environmental problems. Many of the member organizations are themselves networks or associations of much smaller, local, grass roots "people's organizations."

Traditional charitable organizations have a long history of self-regulation, dating back to the post-World War I era. For example, standards for charities in the United States were developed to assure the public that charitable contributions for the benefit of veterans were being put to their intended use and were not being wasted or diverted. The recent NGO codes, most of which have been adopted within the past ten years, are also intended to increase public confidence in the non-profit sector and thus encourage financial contributions. NGOs are dependent on financial support from the public, from foundations, and from other donors, sometimes including governments. The codes all include standards for responsible use of funds and disclosure of financial records. These range from the simple statement "We shall exercise scrupulous management of goodwill donations from fellow citizens and finances from public sources, make effective use thereof and report on their use properly" (Japan), to extremely detailed accounting forms and requirements (Australia).

While in some cases building on this experience with self-regulation of charities, the recent NGO codes go far beyond this purpose in directions that reflect the rapidly evolving role of the non-profit sector in public service, both domestically and internationally, and in policy-making. As non-governmental actors increasingly seek to participate in activities and processes that

have in the past been the exclusive domain of government, they are being called upon to identify themselves more fully and to justify their participation. The legitimacy of the governing process in an era of increasing democratization requires as much. NGOs have typically been very reluctant to risk compromising their own individual missions and identities by entering into close association with other organizations and have been very protective of their right of independent decision and action. For many, circumstances are now requiring that this change. While continuing to capitalize on their uniqueness as separate organizations, and still entirely free to choose and pursue any legal purpose or mission, NGOs are coming to understand the necessity for and means to achieve common positions, strategic alliances, coordinated action, and proof of accountability in order to work effectively as "partners" of governments and intergovernmental organizations. 14

The recent codes are an exercise in self-identification for the groups subscribing to them. Some also begin to describe desired types of relationships between governmental and non-governmental actors and set forth substantive principles and goals for directing collaborative development work. As a whole, these codes represent an early attempt to define the nature and purpose of non-governmental participation in governance in the development field. In the long term, they may also be seen as early steps to advance governance generally by promoting moral values and approaches to decision making and institutional development that mark a substantial improvement over current practices.

#### Common Themes

The way in which a number of common themes are treated illustrates the foregoing conclusions about the nature and significance of the NGO codes. Such treatment varies, of course, from code to code. What is more surprising, and highly promising in terms of establishing patterns for a new era in governance, is that they are often so similar. 15

14. The code in Colombia stresses that NGOs should join "NGOs of higher rank" (network and umbrella organizations) for the sake of "higher cohesion, cooperation, and projection."

15. The codes were not, of course, developed in isolation from each other. NGO networks learned from each other in the process of developing the( cont.)

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##### Nature of the Development Process

The NGO codes present a view of social and economic development that is participatory, people-centered, sustainable, and focused on both the immediate and long-term needs of the poorest and most marginalized segments of societies. In other words, development is not something that is done "to" a "target population" but

"by" people for themselves , in cooperation with others, as they develop over time both individual and group capacities for responsible decision making and joint action. The codes in Japan and Nepal, for example, emphasize the goal of promoting self-reliance rather than dependency among the socially disadvantaged. The code in Canada has an extensive section on development principles that address "the urgent demands of fundamental human rights, the natural environment and the peaceful management of conflict," that focus on the "root causes of global inequality and not merely its symptoms," and that aim to "promote social justice through the equitable distribution of power, wealth and access to resources." The code in the United States provides that even when material assistance is given in emergencies, the goal should be to avoid creating dependencies and to lay the basis for longer term development.

#### Value of NGOs in Development

The NGO codes are founded on the assumption that NGOs are critical in achieving the goals of development. The code in South Africa states that "South African society is characterized by inequality" and that "the government will not be able to implement effective reconstruction and development without strong, informed and effective NGOs." More explicit than most of the others, the code in India states:

India, as a nation, is firmly committed to Democracy, and Voluntarism is an essential pillar for Democracy ... There is a visible erosion of ethics in public life and within the institutions of governance. This distressing situation, compounded with the large scale of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, demands

15. (cont.) present codes. A few are very closely related to each other and use some similar language, but even these have significantly distinctive features .

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proactive social action to ensure the advancement of the deprived sections in particular and the well being of the people in general. At this juncture, Voluntary Organisations, upholding the basic principles for the general good of the common people, would be able to play a very crucial role in safeguarding public interest and advancing human development. Such organisations with the power of conviction, knowledge and ability, [have] already demonstrated the viability of voluntary development action and are dedicating themselves to the task and the challenge of building a nation based on values such as transparent and accountable governance, social justice, equity and dignity and respect for diversity.

The code in Nepal defines a social development organization as a "process of systematic initiatives carried out by the people with

their own decision and desire to improve their quality of life utilizing the human potential to the fullest extent." The guidelines of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies states that "creation and strengthening of development institutions at the grass-roots and national level should be one of the major priorities in development today."

#### Accountability

Most of the NGO codes make some reference, brief or extensive, to the concept of "accountability." An "unaccountable" organization would be, for example, one in which decisions are made behind closed doors by the founders or hereditary leadership, who in turn are under no duty to the members or anyone else to justify or explain their actions, use of funds, etc. While this may be acceptable with members' consent in a private organization that serves only the interests of its members, it is not acceptable in an organization that is seeking to participate in governance in some way. NGOs dedicated to development are making a claim on the public trust, not only for financial support but also as they help communities organize and participate in all aspects of development work. Publics are entitled to demand-and they are demanding-that such NGOs be accountable for their actions . The most basic requirements of accountability are that the organization have a clearly specified purpose or mission and a transparent internal management system, free of conflicts of interest,

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discrimination, favoritism, secrecy, corruption, and all other unethical practices . Some of the codes explicitly require an elected, independent board of directors and specify its responsibilities . Another critical aspect of accountability is proper, complete, and open financial accounting which, as mentioned above, is stressed in all of the codes but with varying degrees of specificity. Beyond these questions of how an organization is managed, accountability refers to duties owed by the organization to all "stakeholders," that is , to everyone who has an interest in or is affected by the organization's work. The code of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, for example, says that, "We ... hold ourselves accountable to both constituencies," meaning those who wish to assist during disasters and those who need assistance. The code in Bulgaria states that "accountability due to society goes beyond the narrow requirements of the laws ." The Commonwealth Foundation guidelines state that an NGO is accountable to the public, to its members , to its beneficiaries, and to its funders .

In practical application, accountability to all of these stakeholders generally means that the NGO must report regularly on its activities, publish its financial information, have a system for evaluating the results of its work, hold meetings where all aspects of its functioning can

be discussed, and employ other means as necessary so that its operations will be transparent to all concerned. Over time, if an organization is seen to be conducting itself ethically, remaining true to its mission, managing its funds responsibly, and making progress towards achieving its purposes, trust will be established. As trust grows, an organization will usually find itself presented with opportunities to expand its responsibilities and influence. The converse will be true if an organization is held to account and is consistently found lacking.

#### Relationship to Governments

It is quite common for NGOs to be "implementers" of government programs, that is, to receive government funds to carry out a designated project. Beyond this role, many NGOs wish to have a say in project design and to participate in general policy-making

as well. The code in the Philippines states that, in relation to governments, the member organizations will "strive to create an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect based on the perspective that people's organizations and non-government organizations are important components of any democratic society, ... foster a continuing dialogue ... [and] insist on mutually agreed upon objectives and methodologies for specific projects." Some of the codes specifically include advocacy (lobbying or trying in other ways to influence government decisions or policy through persuasion) as an appropriate NGO activity. The code in Colombia includes, as a duty of NGOs, "to respect legitimately constituted authorities" and "to participate in the design of public policies at all levels, in order to solve the problems of the country." The Commonwealth Foundation guidelines, 16 in a section on "good policy and practice on the part of governments," state that "Governments should at all times endeavor to work in partnership with NGOs." They suggest several governmental structures to facilitate government/ NGO consultation "in the general policy making process and in the planning and design of relevant government programmes," such as desk officers for NGO/government relations in each ministry and NGO representation on advisory committees.

#### Participation

"Participatory development," in its broadest sense, means that people should be in control of their own course of development at all stages, from determining goals and priorities to actually carrying out development work. At a minimum it means that the people most affected by a particular development project should participate in decision making, as protagonists rather than as a "target population." This generally requires building the capacity of local people's groups, which, as mentioned, should itself be a priority goal of development. As the code in the United States says, "Participants

16. The Commonwealth Foundation is not in itself an NGO but a government-funded organization. It convenes a Commonwealth NGO Forum every four years—an NGO "summit" attended by representatives of NGOs in all Commonwealth countries. In 1995, this Forum "endorsed" the guidelines, intended not only for NGOs but for governments and funding organizations as well.

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from all groups affected should, to the maximum extent possible, be responsible for the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and programs ... A member should give priority to working with or through local and national institutions and groups, encouraging their creation where they do not already exist, or strengthening them where they do." The code in India, in its footnote defining "beneficiary participation," explains that "Participation refers to power and can be acquired through training. Merely being present in a decision-making process cannot be called Participation. One has to contribute to its formulation. Similarly, doing an activity is not Participation. Taking responsibility for an effective action will be Participation." The guidelines of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies recognize that "Participatory development takes a long time, it is unpredictable, and the long-term impact is difficult to measure. Donor and intermediary NGOs must allow sufficient time, funds and flexibility to enable community groups to carry out their own needs assessment, programme formulation, implementation and evaluation."

#### Diversity and Intercultural Relations

Most of the codes include the principle of respecting the diversity of the peoples with whom the organizations work, including their culture, religion, values, traditions, and history. Many codes aim for a model of "partnership" among groups, as well. Several focus on the messages and images conveyed in communications to the public. The code in South Africa aims to build an organizational culture that will "recognise all cultural groups as equal Partners in developing the organisation." The Commonwealth Foundation guidelines require that agencies operating in countries other than their own "avoid acting in paternalistic, sexist, racist or elitist ways." The code in Japan aims to "establish equal partnership with people and NGOs of developing countries and elsewhere." It continues, "Cognizant that we in the North share responsibility for the problems faced by the people in the South, we shall promote the learning to be global citizens, so as to deepen our understanding of the problems of global scale, including the North-South issues, and reexamine the way we live and [think]."

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The code in Canada requires organizations to avoid, in their public

communications, "messages which generalize and mask the diversity of situations; messages which fuel prejudice; messages which foster a sense of Northern superiority; [and] messages which show people as hopeless objects for our pity, rather than as equal Partners in action and development." The code in Lesotho adds to a similar list "idyllic messages (which do not reflect reality, albeit unpleasant) or 'adventure' or exotic messages; ... apocalyptic or pathetic messages."

#### Potential of the Code Process

Admittedly, the NGO codes are not purely an exercise in enlightened governance.

In some cases the motivation for adopting them has been the hope of forestalling restrictive government regulation or redeeming the reputation of the non-governmental sector after highly publicized incidents of embezzlement or other unethical and/or illegal conduct. Many of the codes use vague terms without defining them, few are written as carefully or specifically as a law, and the adopting organizations may well have varying interpretations of the same code. Although some codes may be enforced through the sanction of loss of membership in the NGO network, this is more likely to occur for violating financial reporting requirements than for ignoring a more vague injunction concerning, for example, participatory decision making or respect for other cultures.

In spite of all of this, however, the NGO codes remain highly promising. Since most have been in effect for only a few years, it is too early to evaluate their impact on the member organizations or on the non-governmental sector as a whole, let alone any more far-reaching effect. But the pace at which new codes are being drafted and adopted is accelerating, and the older codes such as the one in the United States, now almost ten years old, are spawning efforts by their networks to raise performance standards further. At least in the near future, it seems highly likely that efforts toward non-governmental self-regulation in the development field will continue to spread, deepen, and produce increasingly enforceable standards.

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In the longer term, the evolution of NGO codes may signal both the beginning of maturation of certain segments of civil society and a new stage in relations between government and civil society organizations. Instead of dismissing CSOs as "special interest groups" (in a pejorative sense) "lobbying" for their own particular cause, some governmental institutions at the local, national, and international levels are coming to view CSOs as vital and indispensable actors in the democratic process. CSOs link people with their governments and with international institutions in ways that can ultimately serve the public good. They give voice to public

concerns and priorities that they feel governments are not addressing adequately. The perception, backed by the reality, that the CSOs are conducting their affairs ethically, openly, for a declared public purpose and based on explicit human values cannot help but raise their credibility and strengthen their influence. CSO self-regulation through codes of conduct may also be seen as staking a claim to the moral high ground, placing human well-being above private interests and all ideologies, a claim that cannot be ignored indefinitely by governments and business. 17

It is not suggested, of course, that the present NGO codes will themselves lead the world to a new era of humane governance. It is suggested, however, that the perceived need in every region to adopt such codes, the ability of networks of diverse NGOs to negotiate and adopt them successfully, and the similar visions and principles enunciated in codes in radically different societies signify that a new era is already upon us.

#### Unity as Operating Principle

Baha'is believe that this new era is one in which old structures are collapsing and new ones conducive to world unity are being born.

17. At the February 1999 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged the business community to enter into a Global Compact to embrace core values in human rights, labor standards, and environmental practices. The International Chamber of Commerce, which has taken upon itself the role of the "voice of business" at the UN, responded in July 1999 in a meeting with Annan that the business community had taken up this challenge.

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The Baha'i writings state that the coming of Baha'u'llah has imbued humanity with "a new and regenerating Spirit" that "is manifesting itself with varying degrees of intensity through the efforts consciously displayed by His avowed supporters and indirectly through certain humanitarian organizations." 18 Given the impending "organic change in the structure of present-day society," 19 it is not surprising to see in the NGO codes indications of things to come and striking conceptual parallels to Baha'i teachings.

It is also instructive to explore how the codes and the Baha'i teachings differ, focusing the analysis on the principle of unity.

#### Unity First

The one word that stands most closely associated with the Baha'i Faith, its beliefs, principles, and institutions, is unity. The Baha'i Faith proclaims that there is one God, that all religions are one in essence, and that humanity is one people. As Shoghi Effendi wrote in 1931 :

Let there be no mistake. The principle of the Oneness of Mankind-the pivot round which all the teachings of Baha'u'llah

revolve-is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good-will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. 20

18. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahci 'u'l/ah*, p. 19.

19. *World Order of Bahci'u'llah*, p. 43.

20. *World Order of Baha 'u '!!ah*, pp. 42-43.

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In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Baha'u 'llah wrote, "So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth .. .This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations. " 21 Most who promote peace would agree that unity in some form is the goal towards which humanity is striving. But Baha'u'llah also made this startling declaration: "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." 22 How can unity be both the precondition and the goal?

The Universal House of Justice has written that the "oneness of mankind ... is at once the operating principle and ultimate goal" of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. 23 In *Who Is Writing the Future?*, the Baha'i International Community wrote that one of the most deeply entrenched, unexamined assumptions of the twentieth century is that

unity is a distant, almost unattainable ideal to be addressed only after a host of political conflicts have been somehow resolved , material needs somehow satisfied, and injustices somehow corrected. The opposite, Baba 'u' llah asserts, is the case. The primary disease that afflicts society and generates the ills that cripple it, He says, is the disunity of a human race that is distinguished by its capacity for collaboration and whose progress to date has depended on the extent to which unified action has, at various times and in various societies, been achieved. 24

Unity, then, is the primary quality that must characterize any successful effort to overcome political conflict, material need, injustice, and other ills of society. Any collective effort at any level, from the family through international affairs, must be grounded in unity as its "operating principle" if the effort is to contribute to the healing of the "primary disease that afflicts society and generates the ills that cripple it."

21. Cited in World Order of Baha 'u 'I/ah , p. 203.

22 . Cited in World Order of Bahci 'u 'I/ah , p. 203.

23 . Universal House of Justice, Letter to the Baha'is of the World, October 20,

1983 , reprinted in Helen Hornby (ed.), Lights of Guidance, 4th rev. ed.

(New Delhi: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1996), # 1848, pp . 545--46 .

24. Wh o ls Writing the Future? , p. 7.

### Dimensions of Unity

To the extent that collaborative action in the past has led to lasting human progress, at least some degree of one or more of the following dimensions of unity has been present:

- Knowledge of unity: participants know that they are somehow connected, interdependent, or sharing a fate.
- Feeling of unity: participants feel unified on some level due to group identification (family, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, gender, etc.), common interests, geography, the presence of other dimensions of unity in the group, or other circumstances.
- Ethical unity: participants share their most fundamental values (ethical, moral, spiritual).
- Unity of purpose: participants are agreed on the purpose of their joint effort.
- Unity of methods: participants subscribe to common methods for making decisions and resolving conflict.
- Organizational unity: participants are joined in some agreedupon institutional structure.

All of these dimensions of unity are interrelated, but they are also distinct from each other and one can exist without another. It is instructive to look again at the NGO codes with this framework in mind.

An essential aim of the codes is to create or strengthen the basis for unified, collective action, not only by the adopting NGOs themselves but by the communities and other groups and institutions with which they work. A Baha'i view would suggest that the most meaningful measure of the value of the NGO codes is the extent to which they effectively promote these dimensions of unity. They are all evident to some extent.

Organizational unity within the existing NGO networks gives the member groups the institutional framework within which to

create the codes. Unity of purpose and unity of methods are evident in the codes' nearly unanimous espousal of certain essential goals for development and a participatory approach, broad as these may be. The essentials of a rudimentary ethical unity are

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also apparent, necessarily beginning with primary human virtues: honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and respect for others who are different. The value system is dominated by concern for the wellbeing of those most in need.

The feeling of unity is strong within, and sometimes among, certain NGOs, due to the deep sense of shared commitment to a noble purpose, which is at once the source of strength and energy of effective NGOs and which often distinguishes them from other sectors or groups in society. Some civil society organizations have had remarkable success-relative to typical experience in our fractured world-in overcoming traditional barriers between groups in societies through their focus on a shared purpose that transcends those differences. Feelings of unity derived from common purpose may also have a longer term effect in wearing down prejudice and creating habits of cooperation across barriers.

As for knowledge of unity, the codes' injunctions to respect other cultures and traditions, to work on a basis of partnership rather than paternalism, and to present realistic but not pitying or prejudicial images of those in need all support a world view in which every individual and group is to be respected, valued, and treated as an equal. This approach is generally within the stream of the "multiculturalism" movement, which consists of developing personal character traits, social values, and human relations that reflect the idea of globalism and can bridge gaps between cultures. Again, given the experience of our fractured world, this is a tremendous stride towards creating a climate of mutual tolerance and respect.

The potential for extending all of these dimensions of unity is evident in the codes, as NGOs carry out their work in countless communities and endeavor to influence governmental policies. Development work that does not promote unity within families and communities, among social groups and organizations, or across cultural and national lines, may temporarily ameliorate some of the suffering but will not be able to heal the "primary disease that afflicts society and generates the ills that cripple it." Future generations will owe a great debt of gratitude to those who now have grasped this reality and are struggling to transcend prejudice, hatred, and suspicion.

Another observation that can be made in looking at the NGO codes in light of Baha'i principles is that the world is "backing into"

the dimension of unity that the Baha'i Faith places before all else: consciousness of the oneness of humanity. States and peoples are willingly or unwillingly being drawn into ever-increasing contact, with resulting conflict or cooperation, by the forces of environmental interdependence, technological progress, economic globalization, and armed threats. Isolation is no longer an option. Excessive competition is destructive to all, and the effects of severe conflict cannot be contained. One need not be especially prescient to realize that people need to get along with each other on both a domestic and a global scale, but this is not possible if a group maintains its superiority to others, its inherent right to special privileges, or its entitlement to exercise disproportionate or unaccountable authority. Because the fate of each nation and group is intertwined with that of all others and with the fate of humanity as a whole, initiatives like multiculturalism, world citizenship movements, people-to-people diplomacy, and interfaith dialogues have emerged that generally deserve high praise and broad support and participation.

From a Baha'i point of view, these initiatives must culminate in a still more all-encompassing and transforming conviction in the oneness of humanity, as described above by Shoghi Effendi.<sup>25</sup> While the Baha'i community itself can as yet only partially grasp the implications of this principle, all of its efforts are directed towards understanding it, living it, and building institutions to embody it.

"The bedrock of a strategy," writes the Baha'i International Community in *The Prosperity of Humankind*, "that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must be the consciousness of the oneness of humankind."

The statement continues:

Deceptively simple in popular discourse, the concept that humanity constitutes a single people presents fundamental challenges to the way that most of the institutions of contemporary society carry out their functions. Whether in the form

25. See quotation in text at note 20 above.

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of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life, conflict is accepted as the mainspring of human interaction. It represents yet another expression in social organization of the materialistic interpretation of life that has progressively consolidated itself over the past two centuries. 2

Consciousness of the oneness of humanity is the only basis for

unity that cannot itself generate disunity. Many forms of the dimensions of unity mentioned above—in particular, unity based on group identification—can divide people, creating "us" and "them," "self" and "other." Some groups and organizations even find their primary identity in defining themselves in opposition to others. It is only by recognizing and living the oneness of humanity that all divisions and all prejudices can be permanently obliterated.

Moreover, the "watchword" of the law of Baha'u'llah is "unity in diversity,"<sup>27</sup> which "distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity."<sup>28</sup> While an individual can no more live apart from humanity than a cell can from the body, cells are differentiated, and it is their distinction that enables the body as a whole to become something transcending a collection of parts. This is the organic unity of humankind.

The Bahá'í Approach

Because it incorporates all the dimensions of unity discussed earlier, the Bahá'í community provides an unusually developed model of unity from the grassroots to the global level. The Bahá'ís' world-wide unity in all the essential dimensions makes their community a powerful society-building force that addresses the outer and inner challenges posed by the crumbling nation-state system.

Bahá'ís understand that humanity's great task is to transform by stages the separate nations and peoples of the earth into an organically and spiritually unified world. But while Bahá'ís share many

26. Prosperity of Humankind, p. 6.

27. Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 42.

28. Prosperity of Humankind, p. 7.

goals and principles with other people striving to advance society, the Bahá'í approach to realizing these goals stands in contrast to their approaches, which start from some point within the increasingly anarchic state system and attempt to weld disparate interests together. While the work of these groups is highly laudable, internal and inter-group clashes often occur over methods, organization, procedures, values, and purposes because the participants are not fully unified in essentials.

In contrast, the Bahá'í community's approach begins from a state of internal unity and seeks, by developing its understanding of the Bahá'í message and administrative order, to extend the range and strengthen the bonds of the unity that characterizes it. In terms of the dimensions of unity listed previously, the Bahá'ís' knowledge of unity stems from their shared belief in Baha'u'llah and His vision of world unity.<sup>29</sup> Their feeling of unity flows from this belief and vision but also, at the most profound personal level, from nurturing a love for each person as a spiritual creation and expression of God's love for us all. Their ethical unity results from

following the universal values enshrined in Baha'u'llah's teachings. Their unity of purpose comes from their common plan of development for the global Baha'i community, which each local Baha'i community helps construct and carry out. Their unity of method, which allows them to act in concert to realize their vision and plan, originates from the same fundamental principles of action and decision making found in every Baha'i community. The source of their organizational unity is the global Baha'i administrative order. Thus, the Baha'i community's precondition for action is an established internal unity, its operations are united and unifying, and its goal is a greater, more developed unity.

The difference between approaches that do not put unity first and the Baha'i approach is analogous to the difference between making a necklace by placing pearls in a row and attempting to string a thread through them, or stringing the pearls one by one

29. Wendy Heller, in her article "Covenant and the Foundations of Civil Society" (*The Baha'i World 1995- 96*, pp. 185- 222) explains the historical and potential role of the religious covenant in organizing "civil society," there meaning non-religious social institutions.

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along the thread. While the goal and final product of each approach is the same, the organization of the two efforts to complete the necklace is vastly different. The first method engenders conflict and frustration and will likely fail, while the second will certainly end in success.

Global unity must be built in every area in which the existing nation state system is disintegrating. Shoghi Effendi stated that in order to stem the anarchy resulting from the breakdown of the state system, the oneness and wholeness of human relationships must be established. These relations, being a "fundamental principle of life," create a new dynamic in all areas of social life. Such a dynamic motivates a broadbased rebuilding of civil society's character-forming institutions in such a way that they will embody the oneness of humanity, the pivot of all Baha'u'llah's teachings. 30

These relationships are not new. Social advances never occur in the absence of unity, and previous societies obviously valued some form of oneness and wholeness in their relationships. The oneness of human relationships, arising out of the urge of human beings to form groups, unifies individuals in a purposeful collective social experience. The wholeness of human relations allows full play to humanity's creative drive and fosters expression of the entire range of human potentialities, because these relations develop in response to the challenges of novel situations. While there are now and have been relationships within all societies that meet these definitions, today, for the first time, the scale is global.

What, then, would the oneness and wholeness of human relationships look like and how would they operate on a global scale?

Though no complete answer to this question can be given, certain aspects of these relations can be understood because they are already functioning embryonically within the social order established by Baha'u'llah.

30 . " 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." Shoghi Effendi, from his statement prepared for presentation to the United Nations Special Palestine Committee in 1947, cited in  
The Bah*i* World 1992-93, p. 294.

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### The Emergent Baha'i Model

At the foundation of the Baha'i administrative order are the stable, unchanging forms of the Local Spiritual Assembly, elected everywhere by the same direct method, and the Baha'i Nineteen Day Feast, which is the common institution of Baha'is around the globe. National Spiritual Assemblies and the Universal House of Justice are elected by indirect representation. Members of the appointed institutions-the Continental Boards of Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members-serve in their individual capacities as advisors to Baha'i communities and to the elected institutions at every level, fulfilling a critical role in the moral education and development of the community as a whole. Universality of values within this system (e.g., absence of prejudice, equality of the sexes, truthfulness, trustworthiness) and purposes (e.g., spiritual development, unity of all human beings, justice) are essential elements of each part of this order and its functioning, and the touchstone of its stability and simplicity. Yet, because each level of the order has its own sphere of jurisdiction and individuality, it can also continually modify its secondary aspects to respond innovatively to change. Besides these formal institutions of the Baha'i administrative order, 31 a number of experiments in social organization, such as social and economic development projects, are being organized by Baha'is on the local, national, and international levels to serve the needs of their larger communities. Yet this diverse growth occurs within what the Universal House of Justice calls "a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles." 32 The diversification that results from experimentation within social structures shows the dynamic aspect of oneness and wholeness. The Baha'i community is one example of this process. 33 But there is more to the concept.

31 . While these are not the only institutions of the Baha ' i administrative

order,

others such as the annual Convention and the Baha' i fund are subsidiary to our discussion.

32. Promise of World Peace, p. 19.

33. The work of building civil society, particularly as exemplified in the rise of

NGOs, can be seen to complement the efforts of the Baha'i community.

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Creating the oneness and wholeness of human relations marks, historically, the end of an era when separate societies evolved more or less independently of each other, and the dawn of a global society that will advance as one unit. The oneness and wholeness of human relations means that all human beings will be incorporated within a single framework of social relationships, without sacrificing expression of the diversity of cultural influences. Thus, the primary identity of every individual will be as a member of the human race, and all cultural, national, ethnic and racial identities will be subordinated to and derive their meaning from this. The Baha' i administrative order exemplifies this aspect of the oneness and wholeness of human relationships since it is part of the world order of Baha'u' llah, which "encompasses all units of human society; integrates the spiritual, administrative and social processes of life; and canalizes human expression in its varied forms towards the construction of a new civilization." 34

For example, the Baha' i Nineteen Day Feast "may well be seen in its unique combination of modes as the culmination of a great historic process in which primary elements of community lifeacts of worship, of festivity, and other forms of togetherness--over

vast stretches of time have achieved a glorious convergence. The Nineteen Day Feast represents a new stage in this enlightened age to which the basic expression of community life has evolved." 35

Another primary element of these relations, the incorporation of spiritual reality into social relations, is conspicuous by its decline in culture everywhere. Relationships without a spiritual foundation developed by acts of prayer and meditation as expressions of devotion to and worship of a Sacred Reality cannot nurture the whole human being. If human relations are truly whole, the inner world of individual searching for spiritual transcendence, the collective human world of social interaction, and the natural world of the body must all be found in them.

At the basic level of Baha' i society, the Baha' i Feast, with its devotional, administrative and social components, embraces all of

34. Compilation on the Nineteen Day Feast, compiled by the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill, Ontario: Baha' i Canada Publications, 1990), p. 1.

35. The Nineteen Day Feast, p. 2.

these worlds. Likewise, the Local Spiritual Assembly, operating as the fundamental unit of the Baha'i administration, is a focal center of the community's spiritual, social, and material activity.

Since the relationship between the individual and society is a reciprocal one, entering into social institutions that embrace the spiritual, social and material worlds of human existence entails an enlargement of individual social responsibilities. Few societies today aside from the Baha'i community give individuals so much responsibility or educate them in the requirements of participation in these new responsibilities. It is their "divine" institutions that make the Baha'is an organized moral force. The Feast, for example, because of its threefold purpose and through the process of community consultation,

links the individual to the collective processes by which a society is built or restored ... the Feast is an arena of democracy at the very root of society, where the Local Spiritual Assembly and the members of the community meet on common ground, where individuals are free to offer their gifts of thought, whether as new ideas or constructive criticism, to the building processes of an advancing civilization. Thus it can be seen that aside from its spiritual significance, the common institution of the people combines an array of elemental social disciplines which educate its participants in the essentials of responsible citizenship.<sup>36</sup>

Fuelling these institutions to function effectively as communitybuilders in every part of the world are three closely related and unifying operative principles of unity: the right of every individual to an unfettered search for truth; consultation on any and all problems; and universal participation.

While the independent search for truth implies the right of each person to his or her own opinion based on that search, these differences must be harmonized if unity of perception, purpose and action is to be achieved. Thus, "[c]onsultation, frank and unfettered, is the bedrock of this unique Order."<sup>37</sup> But consultation is not just a

36. The Nineteen Day Feast, p.3 .

37. Shoghi Effendi, cited in Consultation. A Compilation, in The Compilation of Compilations: Prepared by the Universal House of Justice 1963- 1990 (Mona Yale: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991 ), Vol. 1, # 192.

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forum for exchanging thought and opinion, facts and ideas; it is both a means to and a form of decision making.

As a means of decision making, consultation brings different individual perspectives together in a spirit of collective search to discover the whole truth in any situation. The consultative environment is created within an atmosphere of mutual trust and regard on

the part of the participants, regardless of their age and experience. In true consultation there are no individual leaders and private interests, because the well-being of everyone is the real object of discussion. With open discussion welcomed, people can more easily agree on the true nature of any problem, the desired solution, and the approach to this end. Hence the Baha'i writings state that "the shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions." 38 In full and frank consultation, which is nevertheless courteous in tone and spirit, individuals find their common mind, united upon the truth. Thus, consultation is a process of collective transformation, turning individual insights and perceptions into the common possession of all.

In short, the consultative process harmonizes the rights of individuals to express their opinions and the requirements of the collectivity for the stability of a working consensus. It brings out the cooperative side of human nature, yet does not sacrifice individuality in the process. Baha'u'llah states: "No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation," and "Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth." 39 The intellectual dynamics of coming to an understanding and agreement about truth have profound social effects within Baha'i communities. The process of consultation produces people with an understanding of public tasks and facilitates their involvement in larger public affairs because it develops the skills required to participate in solving social problems. Moreover, since each local Baha'i community sees itself as one part of the world order of

38. 'Abdu 'l-Baha, cited in Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 21.

39. Baha' u'llah, cited in *Consultation: A Compilation*, Vol. 1, # 167, p. 168.

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Baha'u'llah and applies to the local situation His universal ethical and social principles, the work of all communities easily interconnects, thereby developing the collective capacity to solve problems beyond the local level as well.

The third principle, universal participation, implies that every individual, regardless of age, social position, educational or family background, has a right to contribute whatever he or she can to the community's development, while for its part the community has the obligation to create opportunities for individuals to contribute. It also implies that every individual has a spiritual and moral obligation to be of service to the community, for the spiritual strength of any community is measured by the breadth of

participation in the services performed within it.

The last point to be made about the Baha'i model of the oneness and wholeness of human relationships is its global integration.

Organizational and spiritual unity is achieved structurally and purposively because everywhere in the world, at the local, national and international levels of Baha'i society, the interconnected institutions of the Baha'i social order function according to like practices, are constituted by the same set of procedures and make and communicate decisions through similar channels. Like every cell and organ of the human body, every Baha'i institution is itself a ground plan of the complete order. This unity of structure and harmony of function in Baha'i social institutions both enable and define new kinds of collective action. From the local through the regional and national to the global levels of organization, there is a transfer, accumulation and reorganization of energy, making an increasingly powerful moral force for unity that seeks to find greater social expression, while from the global Baha'i institutions flow the coordinating vision, the inspired guidance and detailed plans that link and combine every Baha'i purpose with every other. In light of this organizational structure and purpose, Shoghi Effendi describes how the Baha'i community's "world-embracing, continually consolidating activities constitute the one integrating process in a world whose institutions, secular as well as religious, are for the most part dissolving."<sup>40</sup> This community is weaving an orderly

40. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 194.

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world polity that "constitutes the one hope for a stricken society."<sup>41</sup>

#### Conclusion

More than one hundred years ago, Baha'u'llah wrote that the "prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective."<sup>42</sup> Today this has become obvious. The defects and limitations of the nation-state system are generating ethical and structural challenges to governance and spawning numerous attempts to either repair the rifts or create a new order.

The next stage in the collective social evolution of humanity is world unity- as yet only a dimly foreseen system of governance in which diversity is protected and valued, centralization is kept to the necessary minimum, and human loyalties and identities are world-embracing. To move in that direction from our present anarchic nation-state system, current governments need to evolve upwards into larger functional structures, downwards into stronger association with the public, and inwards by shifting their ethical foundation to one that can support global unity. Groups of citizens dedicated to promoting human well-being are actively responding to these needs and contributing immensely to both structural and

ethical transformation. Networks of NGOs involved in this work around the world have matured to the point of being able to agree on codes of conduct articulating shared goals, values, operating principles, and ethics. The striking similarities among these codes and the global outlook and perspective they embrace are promising signs of a new global order struggling to be born.

Recently, the positive and well-publicized contributions of civil society to better governance have generated tremendous enthusiasm for the potential of NGOs to remedy the ills of humanity in the face of state governments' incapacity and too-narrow perspective. This confidence in civil society should not, as some cynics say, be regarded as a passing fad, but neither should it be espoused without deep consideration of the reasons for non-governmental success to date. Establishing unity is the prerequisite to solving humanity's problems at any level, and the more profound and encompassing

41 . World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 194-95 .

42 . Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 216.

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the unity, the more successful any effort for human progress. This is the fundamental standard by which to evaluate the worth and potential of modern social movements.

Organizations of civil society will succeed in their efforts to the extent that they create unity among diverse participants in order to promote the public good. Since the concept of unity is susceptible to so many understandings, the six dimensions of unity outlined in this essay are offered as a way to make the idea more tangible and to identify degrees and types of unity relevant to building stable and just social structures. Ultimately, it is the consciousness of the reality of the oneness of humankind that can inform the social institutions and patterns of behavior necessary for a new global order. In contrast, efforts that lack an encompassing framework of unity threaten to dissolve into the same chaos that characterizes the nation-state system. Evaluating the NGO codes of conduct from this perspective shows that, to their great credit, the adopting organizations have generally committed themselves to achieving broader and more inclusive levels of unity than exist otherwise in their societies.

Examined from the same standpoint, the experience of the worldwide Baha'i community shows that its teachings require and are in fact inspiring an unparalleled global system, unified in all of its essential aspects, both structural and ethical. Each local, or national, Baha'i community is not an independent social entity with its own self-defined code of conduct, attempting to link with others who have undergone a similar process of development. Each Baha'i community sees itself, and identifies its essential

nature, as constituting one part of the collective reality of the world order of Baha'u'llah through the local application of the universal ethical, social and organizational principles of the Baha'i teachings. The unifying power of Baha'u'llah's principles enables the Baha'i community to exhibit perhaps a greater diversity than any other group in the world .43 It demonstrates a new paradigm of unity that connects inner spiritual reality with outer social relations and

43 . Baha 'is live in more than 127,000 localities worldwide, and include members of over 2,000 tribes, races, and ethnic groups. See pp. 317-20 of this volume for complete statistical information .

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harmonizes the purposes of the individual with those of the community. Stretching from the grassroots to the global level, the Baha'i order provides a powerful model of the kind of social structure and action required to build a new global order upon a comprehensive ethical foundation .

It is due largely to this tight link between the local and the global that individual Baha'is put such priority on attending Local Spiritual Assembly meetings and the Nineteen Day Feast, that they study the Baha'i writings together, that they are committed to applying Baha' i consultation in all community endeavors, and that they reach out to the community at large to collaborate in efforts to promote gender equality and to overcome racism. They know that their efforts to build and strengthen the Baha'i administrative institutions and to live according to their ethical principles are directly related to writing humanity's future.

The work of Baha'i individuals and communities is still a quiet drama, operating at the level of essentials, but it is so indispensable that the Universal House of Justice has stated: "A Baha'i community which is consistent in its fundamental life-giving, life-sustaining activities will ... exert irresistible influence, will set a new course in human evolution."44 Baha'is seek opportunities both to learn from and to teach others in this great endeavor.

44. The Universal House of Justice, 1984 Rivian Message to the Baha'is of North America.

Ann Boyles looks at issues surrounding the entrance of women into leadership roles at the local, national, and international levels around the world.

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Although they continue to face many extremely serious problems, it is clear that women have made great progress

towards achieving equality with men during the twentieth century. It is remarkable to think that less than a hundred years ago women still did not have the right to vote and had only recently entered the realm of higher education, while today women comprise half of the undergraduates in Western universities and in 1993 earned fortyfour percent of doctoral degrees in American universities. They have moved in large numbers into many professions, such as medicine, law, and scientific research, that were not previously open to them. Between 1983 and 1996, the percentage of women lawyers and judges in the U.S . doubled to twenty-nine percent, and the percentage of female physicians rose from sixteen to twentysix percent. Yet there is still much progress to be made . While women now vote in most of the world's countries, women politicians are still vastly outnumbered by men; in business, only one in ten corporate officers is a woman, and fewer than three percent of all chief executive positions are held by women. The exclusion of women from these influential areas of civil life means that their voices and views are still not widely heard.

In many places in the world, however, such problems would be enviable. While the economic, social, and political situations of women have improved in some countries, the global picture is sobering. Of the more than one and a half billion people on the planet identified as the "rural poor," women comprise at least seventy percent of this number. And while women make up approximately half of the world's population and perform twothirds of the work, they earn only one-tenth of the world's income and hold in their own names less than one-hundredth of the world's property. 1 Girls make up sixty percent of the 140 million children around the globe who never attend primary school, and two-thirds of the 100 million school dropouts.

Addressing the challenges women face at the close of the twentieth century is central to the well-being of all, whether the challenge be the "glass ceiling" in a business corporation or the means to feed their children even one meal. As Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), has said:

The current international system has constructed a world of inequality, instability and conflict. To change this, the international community must generate new development thinking and practice, a new ethics of governance and new processes of leadership. Women must be part of this new process in order for it to work. Women have a high stake in creating new mechanisms and systems that are equitable and sustainable. Until they are present at the decision-making table, their concerns will remain marginalized 'special interests'. 3

This observation recalls 'Abdu'l-Baha's words in 1912, when

1. Janet Momsen, *Women and Development in the Third World* (London: Routledge, 1991 ), pp. 1-2.
2. John Rowley, "Judgement Day," *People and the Planet*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1998), p. 3.
3. Noeleen Heyzer, "Bringing a Gender Perspective to Global Governance: An interview with Noeleen Heyzer," in *Development 1995 :4 Journal of SJD*, pp. 44-45 ; p. 45.

He stated unequivocally, "Women have equal rights with men upon earth; in religion and society they are a very important element. 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." 4 It is a grave mistake, then, to relegate women's concerns to the realm of "special interests." In 1985 the Universal House of Justice wrote of the pernicious effects of inequality, saying:

The denial of. . . 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. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge. 5

Following from this statement, we may well ask what form women's greater involvement in wider society will take in order to create such a moral and psychological climate, and how they will change the way that society and its institutions function. Central to such questions is the role of women as peacemakers.

Since the early years of this century, when women struggled to gain the vote, the expectation has always been that their participation in politics would usher in a new era of peace. Francis Fukuyama takes up this issue in his essay "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," published in the September/October 1998 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Women, he asserts, have made a difference in the political sphere, but the "feminization" of politics in developed countries is not necessarily a good thing. But while feminization has made these nations less aggressive, violent, competitive, and adventurous ,

4. ' Abdu ' l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, 10th British ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1961 ), p. 133 ; cited in *Women.á Extracts from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah, 'Abdu 'l-Bah6, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House ofJustice*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Thornhill: Baha' i Canada Publications, 1986), No. 20, p. 11.

S. The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: Baha ' i World Centre Publications, 1985), pp . 11 - 12 .

Fukuyama worries that "even if the democratic, feminized, postindustrial world has evolved into a zone of peace where struggles are more economic than military, it will still have to deal with those parts of the world run by young, ambitious, unconstrained men." Thus, "in anything but a totally feminized world, feminized policies could be a liability," 6 and "masculine policies will still be required, though not necessarily masculine leaders." 7 At the base of Fukuyama's argument is the premise that men are inherently more violent than women, a trait that socialization cannot eliminate and that dominates leadership paradigms in developing countries. But are women, in fact, "hardwired" to be less violent and aggressive than men? And do women, if given the opportunity to lead, lead differently than men? Discussions about the gendered brain and evolutionary psychology have occupied a central place in many contemporary discussions about women, the nature of equality, and leadership. While the subject is hotly debated, Karin Klenke, a scholar in the field of leadership studies, explains the difficulties in drawing conclusions on this question from the studies that have been conducted:

Some traits like aggression or dominance which have been linked to leadership are also believed to be sex-linked. In other words, American men presumably are more aggressive than American women. The biological basis of aggression is derived from the presence of the Y chromosome and the sex hormone testosterone, both of which convey maleness. However, behavioral manifestations of aggression in boys and girls, or men and women, can also be explained culturally and socially, since both sexes display a variety of aggressive behaviors ranging from aggressive verbal acts to criminal behavior. 8

Katha Pollitt, in her response to Fukuyama's article, notes that even for supposedly sex-linked traits, each gender falls along a bell curve, and the curves mostly overlap. (In the case of aggression

6. Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 5 (September/October 1998), p. 36.

7. Fukuyama, p. 37.

8. Karin Klenke, *Women and leadership: A Contextual Perspective* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1996), p. 137.

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and dominance, which are believed to be genetically based and which have been linked consistently to male-female differences, some studies have found that biology or sex accounts only for five percent of the variability between people.) Such findings, Pollitt

points out, contradict Fukuyama's argument that men are violent and competitive and women are not. 9 With genetic differences between men and women in regard to aggressiveness under question, she contends, there is no basis for the conclusion that men and women, inherently, lead differently. While Fukuyama may worry "that the girls are about to seize power and turn the United States into an international wimp," Pollitt says:

American women have had the vote for nearly 80 years. So far, they have not even won paid maternity leave or affordable daycare, things taken for granted in other industrialized countries. In light of these failures, the assertion that women will be transforming American foreign policy anytime soon, against the will of those now in control, strikes me as a fantasy second only to the notion that genetics will bring it about. It is more likely that as women become more enmeshed in politics and business, with all their compromises and rewards, whatever modest inclination they may now possess toward nonviolent conflict resolution will be swamped by other factors: vanity, greed, fear, perceptions of national interest, lust for cheap oil. 1

In some ways her argument, with its speculative assumptions about women's easy capitulation to forces such as vanity and greed, is as unsatisfactory as Fukuyama's. Her view of the future, while different from his, is equally pessimistic.

A much more positive view of the future and women's role in shaping it can be found in a great deal of the popular literature recently published on the topic of women and leadership, including titles such as *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* by Sally Helgesen and Helen Fisher's 1999 best-seller *The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World*. These books are based on the premise that women possess special qualities

9. Katha Pollitt, "Father Knows Best," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 1 (January/February 1999), p. 124.

10. Pollitt, p. 125.

that will be a great advantage to them in assuming leadership roles in the coming era. Fisher's take on the gendered brain is that women think contextually, take a more holistic view of problems and issues, gather pertinent information and connect various details more quickly, weigh more variables and points of view in their decisionmaking process, and see more options for action than men. Men, on the other hand, tend to focus on one thing at a time, compartmentalize their attention, tune out extraneous stimuli, channel their thinking, focus on the immediate situation rather than the larger picture, and move in a linear path towards the solution to a dilemma. Fisher characterizes the women's process as "web thinking" and the men's as "step thinking." 11

To see how such differentiation translates into "the female advantage," one need only browse through the business section of any bookstore. Much of the popular business literature is based on the premise that effective organizations in the coming century will abandon the hierarchical pyramidal structure, in which most of the real control resides at the top. Instead, organizations will be composed of a web of interlaced systems in which power is diffused and there are many centers of decision making. Fisher, Helgesen, and others contend that women are ideally suited to this new environment and will, in fact, bring further change as they assume more positions of authority, both in business and in wider society. 12 While this view makes for best-selling books, support for the argument of women's superior leadership qualities based on the gendered brain argument (like the argument about male aggressiveness) is unproven. Again, factors such as culture, environment, and societal norms must be considered in discussions of men's and women's leadership characteristics. Klenke contends that gender differences in actual leader behavior are "few and negligible" and that "the scientific evidence fails to support the notion of a distinctive 'feminine' leadership style portrayed by the popular literature." 13 An alternative to dwelling on gender differences, she suggests, is

11. Helen Fisher, *The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 5-6.

12. See, for example, Fisher, p. 53.

13. Klenke, pp. 159-60.

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the active pursuit of equality, which will lead us towards making changes in the social values and organizational structures that comprise the leadership fabric. 14

Here, then, we have a broad spectrum of positions on male/female leadership differences: Fukuyama argues that there is difference in male and female leadership styles, arising incontrovertibly from biology. Fisher and others also affirm genetic differences underlying distinctive masculine and feminine leadership styles, but see the world evolving to a state that accommodates "the female advantage." Pollitt, on the other hand, argues that no real sex-based differences have been proven to exist in behavioral traits such as aggressiveness, so there is no basis for the assumption that men and women will lead differently, and if put in leadership positions, women will quickly become as corrupt as the men who now occupy them. Finally, Klenke contends that it is impossible to disentangle genetic, social, and cultural factors in the development of behavioral traits. Furthermore, it is more important to move beyond arguments about them, which ultimately result in new gender stereotypes, towards the pursuit of equality.

Klenke's emphasis on pursuing equality between women and men is a welcome contribution to the leadership discussion. The promotion of equality is a central principle of the Baha'i Faith, originating from Baha'u'llah's statements that "women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God" 15 and that God "hath conferred upon all a station and rank on the same plane." 16 Thus, the Baha'i belief in equality of the sexes rests on a spiritual foundation, which forms the basis of all efforts made within the Baha'i community to promote the advancement of women. Believing that women and men are equal before God, Baha'i communities the world over strive to practice that spiritual reality on the material plane. It is important to understand that, for Baha'is, equality does not mean "sameness." In their efforts, Baha'is promote recognition of the complementarity, rather than sameness, of men's and women's roles. Differences in biological functions of the sexes are obvious,

14. Klenke, pp. 162-63 .

15 . From a previously untrans lated tablet, in *Women*, No. 54, p. 26.

16. From a previously untranslated tablet, in *Women*, No. 2, p. 2.

but Baha' is believe that such differences in no way imply inferiority or superiority of one sex or the other. Women's roles, functions, and views must be valued in any society that hopes to achieve full, meaningful participation of both sexes in its affairs. Social structures that value qualities such as nurturing and caring in both women and men play an important role in promoting equality and avoiding the limitations that gender stereotyping has imposed on human advancement. Equality is not an end in itself, after all; the goal of achieving "full partnership" of women and men is, ultimately, the progress of all of humanity-"an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced." 17

"Feminine elements" identified by 'Abdu 'l-Baha include moral courage and the ability "to govern in moments of danger and crisis." 18 And while women should "strive to show in the human world that women are most capable and efficient," they should also not cease to demonstrate "that their hearts are more tender and susceptible than the hearts of men, that they are more philanthropic and responsive toward the needy and suffering, that they are inflexibly opposed to war and are lovers of peace." 19 'Abdu'l-Baha stated many times that men are more inclined to war than women and that "a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and

efficiency in the establishment of universal peace." 2 Furthermore, He said, "as woman advances toward the degree of man in power and privilege, with the right of vote and control in human government, most assuredly war will cease." 21

Whether, in the final analysis , these qualities are innate or

socialized is less important than the assertion that the entrance and acceptance on the world stage of women who manifest these qualities will "assuredly" bring peace.

Education and training on various levels are key in effecting the kinds of changes that will create a climate in which peace can

17. Women, No. 25 , p. 13 .

18. Cited in Women, No. 87, p. 40 .

19. 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 284; cited in Women, No. 84, p. 39.

20. Promulgation, p. 284; cited in Women, No. 84, p. 39.

21. Women, No. 85 , p. 39 .

emerge. A key element in such a process is the education of girls, which is given great emphasis in the Baha'i teachings. 'Abdu'l-Baha said, "there must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation."<sup>22</sup> He absolutely rejected arguments against equality based on women's supposed inferiority of capacity, saying, "Even granted that woman is inferior to man in some degree of capacity or accomplishment, this or any other distinction would continue to be productive of discord and trouble. The only remedy is education, opportunity; for equality means equal qualification."<sup>23</sup>

Taken in a contemporary Western context, 'Abdu'l-Baha's statement could well be interpreted as referring to women's access to higher education or their entrance into "male" professions in greater numbers. In the context of developing countries, however, the practice of such a principle might entail widespread literacy training and family planning, as smaller families allow women opportunities to better their own lives and those of their families, and to contribute in arenas from which they have traditionally been excluded.

The urgent need for basic education for women is borne out by the fact that, according to the 1995 World Education report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults, or some 565 million people, are women. And the gap between male and female literacy rates seems likely to widen, as almost 25% of primary-school-aged girls compared to 16.4% of boys in developing countries do not attend school. In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than half of primary-school-aged girls attend school, and the rate drops dramatically for older girls.<sup>24</sup> The reasons for non-attendance vary, whether they arise from the family's inability to pay for school fees, uniforms, or books, or from the need for daughters to work in the home to assist the mother or in the fields to help support

22. Women , No. 79, p. 37.

23 . Women, No. 78, p. 37.

24. Cited in Learning: The Treasure Within , Report to UNESCO of the international Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1996), p. 75.

the family. In many instances, however, the basic fact is that parents regard daughters as a liability. In China, for example, since government subsidies for schools were removed some ten years ago, the dropout rate in poor rural areas has risen exponentially, and in some locations three-quarters of the dropouts are girls. One mother states categorically, "In our village, girls are not as important." 25 And since, according to tradition in rural China, girls become part of their husband's family when they marry, parents see little point in investing in their futures , when their sons are the ones who will stay at home and support them. In contrast, the Baha'i teachings stress the importance of educating the girl child, since she will be the first educator of the next generation. In fact, if parents lack the means to educate both sons and daughters, the Baha'i writings say that priority should be given to the education of the girls.

Campaigns around the globe specifically set up to send girls to school and keep them there as long as possible have begun to address the basic problem of illiteracy, as experts acknowledge the correlation between women's educational levels and such societal improvements as health and nutrition and smaller family size. 26 The UNESCO report asserts: "The vicious circle linking poverty to inequality between men and women has to be broken. In more general terms , the education of girls and women would appear .. .to be the basic precondition for active participation by the population at large in development activities." 7 Such campaigns address the issue of women and leadership development at the most basic level. But even where illiteracy rates are high, other options exist for training women to be leaders. In India, for example, authorities have instituted a quota system for women's participation in village-level governance. 8 In 1993 , a constitutional amendment set aside one-third of all village council seats and village chiefs ' positions for women. Of those, a certain percentage is reserved for women from

25 . See " In China, School Fees Keep Many Children Away," in the New York Times Web edition <[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)>, 1 November 1999 .

26. Learning: The Treasure Within , p. 75.

27. Learning: The Treasure Within , p. 76.

28. See " In India, Lower-Caste Women Turn Village Rule Upside Down," in the New York Times Web edition , 3 May 1999.

the lowest castes, according to their percentage of the population. More than five hundred thousand villages and more than six hundred million people are affected by this change, designed to help break down the traditional hierarchical caste system. Women who

had never previously been given the opportunity to participate in determining the affairs of their villages have been given a voice and a forum to bring their concerns to their local councils- an innovation that Noeleen Heyzer of UNIFEM has called "one of the best innovations in grassroots democracy in the world."

While the system is not working in all cases-estimates indicate that about one-third of the women council members are simply obeying their husbands' directions-the other two-thirds are gaining valuable experience in governance, seeking funds for community halls, lobbying for medical clinics, fixing hand pumps to ensure a clean water supply, overseeing the installation of streetlights, and other projects to improve community life. Many of the lower caste women serving on the councils are illiterate, but they are gaining confidence and are not afraid to ask others for assistance, whether in reading documents, speaking to the men of the village, dealing with officials, or keeping record books.

While some people object to such affirmative action quotas, it is clear that in the case of the lower caste women in India, there is no other means by which they would be able to serve as village council members or chiefs. The quota system can thus be credited for pushing villages far ahead of where they would be otherwise on the path to achieving equality of the sexes. Other countries, including Peru, Argentina, Germany, and Belgium, are also experimenting with quotas to achieve more participation by women in the public sphere.

But even in countries where the basic educational needs of girls and women are met and where women can pursue education to the highest levels, barriers still remain to positions of leadership. Looking at the culture of Western business corporations, and the "glass ceiling" women find blocking their advancement to the upper echelons of power, a growing number of observers see a need to change the way that leaders are trained, to promote greater acceptance of different leadership styles. Klenke writes:

Corporations, educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations must be responsive to the development needs, including leadership development, of both women and men, and incorporate diversity into training programs. They must make a commitment to identify, encourage, and develop individuals with the desire and motivation to lead, and promote new and different thinking about leadership so that women and men can discover pathways to lead themselves and others effectively. 29

In her view, "women's only" leadership training programs, while well intentioned, are off the mark. The real issue is "challenging the dominant cultures in our organizations and institutions" to the point where both men and women leaders will be comfortable in

affirming the humanitarian values that have long been associated with women, as well as demonstrating "male" qualities of toughness and drive when appropriate. In such a culture, emphasis on gender stereotypes will be replaced by a genuine consideration of individuals. One writer describes it as developing a leadership that "thinks globally, seeks to embrace all of humanity socially, and acts to create a future out of the particular situation in which it finds itself." 30

It is a small step from the kind of training described above to that based on the concept of "stewardship," which introduces the moral element into the leadership discussion. Most notable of the volumes written on this theme are Robert K. Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership and On Becoming a Servant-Leader*, and Stephen R. Covey's *Principle-Centered Leadership*. Covey, for example, identifies aligning oneself with "correct principles," or "self-evident, self-validating natural laws," as central to one's life and actions "at all times in all places." To Covey, "principle-centered leadership is based on the reality that we cannot violate these natural laws with impunity." 31 Furthermore, he argues, "profound, sustainable

29. Klenke, p. 260.

30. R. Burnside, "Leading creatively into the 21 st century," paper presented at the International Conference on Creativity and Leadership, Lappeenranta, Finland, August 22- 24 1990, p. 3; cited in Klenke, p. 264.

31. Stephen R. Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), p. 19.

## WORLD WATCH

cultural change can take place within an organization ... only when the individuals within the organization first change themselves from the inside out. Not only must personal change precede organizational change, but personal quality must precede organizational quality." 32 Such value-focused approaches to leadership promote a new organizational culture -in which a "principle-centered compass" and a sense of stewardship can guide leaders' actions. 33

Just as education and training play an important role in the advancement of women and thus in changing perceptions of leadership, economic issues are also key. Without economic means, how can women advance? The question raises a matter of increasing concern. Women in developing countries have been most adversely affected by the changes in the world economic system that have resulted from changes in technology and industry, the rise of market economies and global financial markets, and trade deregulation. All of these factors have contributed to the growing "feminization of poverty." 34

The Baha'i teachings place great importance on the principle

that everyone-both men and women-should acquire the means to become economically independent. Baha'u'llah wrote in one of His tablets, "It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation," 35 and 'Abdu'l-Baha urged women to "assist mankind in that which is most needful," thereby demonstrating capability and ensuring "recognition of equality in the social and economic equation." 36 It is then clear that efforts in this area must go beyond the mere means to earn a living, as important as that is, and must address the whole relationship between material and spiritual well-being.

In the 1995 statement *The Prosperity of Humankind* the Baha'i International Community identified "a commitment to the establishment of full equality between men and women, in all departments of life and at every level of society" as "central to the success of

32 . Covey, p. 265.

33. See Covey, pp. 20 and 22.

34. Heyzer, p. 44.

35. *Women* , No. 76, p. 36.

36. *Women* , No. 83 , p. 39.

efforts to conceive and implement a strategy of global development. "37 While the extent to which women have access to "all avenues of economic endeavor" is an obvious indication of whether or not a global development strategy is working, it is not the ultimate goal. "In a world motivated by ideals of unity and justice," the statement continues,

Society will find itself increasingly challenged to develop new economic models shaped by insights that arise from a sympathetic understanding of shared experience , from viewing human beings in relation to others, and from a recognition of the centrality to social well-being of the role of the family and the community. Such an intellectual breakthrough-strongly altruistic rather than self-centered in focus-must draw heavily on both the spiritual and scientific sensibilities of the race, and millennia of experience have prepared women to make crucial contributions to the common effort. 38

Some small steps have already been taken in the direction.

Recent development initiatives such as the microfinance movement and the promotion of entrepreneurship have helped women to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty. At the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, founded in 1976, for example, ninety-four percent of the clientele are women who borrow small amounts of money to invest in some asset capable of generating immediate income.

Borrowers repay their loans in small weekly installments; when one loan is paid off, a client is free to take out another. The bank's founder, Dr. Muhammad Yunus, finds that "lending to women,

who traditionally have the least economic opportunity in Bangladeshi society, was much more beneficial to whole families ; and that women were more careful about their debts." 39 By achieving the financial means to feed their children and provide for their families, the women served by the Grameen Bank experience enhancement of their feelings of self-worth.

37. Baha' i International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind* (1995), p. 15.

38. *Prosperity*, p. 16.

39. Alan Jolis, "The Good Banker," in *The Independent on Sunday Supplement* 5 May 1996; available on the Grameen Bank website at <[www.grameen-info.org](http://www.grameen-info.org)>.

The Baha'i community has also initiated microfinance projects and has found that in these, as well as in other development initiatives, women have consistently demonstrated their capacities to use resources wisely- in investment, repayment of credit, savings, and particularly the use of money, which goes to educate their children, and provide their families with food, medical care, and better housing. As a result, the women have not only improved their sense of self-worth and standard of living but have also raised their status in the eyes of their families, their communities, and the world. 40 A unique feature of a microfinance project begun by FUNDAEC (Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias, or the Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences), a Baha'i-inspired development agency in Colombia, is its emphasis on community solidarity. One drawback of many programs is that "the primary focus of most implementing agencies remains on the progress of the individual rather than community. They tend to laud the success of each woman, each borrower, rather than seeing the individual within the context of community."41 FUNDAEC, on the other hand, has developed training modules on unity, solidarity, responsibility, honesty, conflict resolution, and the attitude of service to family and community. These are required pre-credit training for potential borrowers, and since their inception repayment rates have improved significantly. In this project, women and men are accorded equal status, according to the Baha'i principle, and are learning to work together both for their own individual betterment and for that of the community.

Another facet of the contribution of women to the community is their "confident" and "capable" entrance into "the great arena of laws and politics." The Baha'i writings are filled with passages exhorting women to enter with men into "full partnership in all fields of human endeavor," to "participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world," to "advance and fulfill their mission in all departments of life." 'Abdu'l-Baha foretold, "They will enter all

40. For a Baha' i perspective on microfinance, see "Microfinance: A Powerful

Tool for Social Transformation , " One Country 8.3 (October- December 1996), pp. 2- 3.

41 . "Microfinance," p. 3.

## THE BAHAI WORLD

the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs." 42 In some parts of the world women's emergence in the field of governance has occurred through the efforts of women's groups, as in the women's movement in the West. In other places it is occurring through the intervention of the government, as in the village councils in India. In even other areas of the globe, circumstances-often tragic-have dictated women's increased political involvement.

Such is the case in the villages of the Ayacucho Province of Peru, where the "Shining Path" guerilla movement was bom. 43 The traditional lifestyle of the villages was disrupted with the abduction or murder of great numbers of the men; as a result the women have become the de facto heads of thousands of families, assuming much more responsibility than had traditionally been their lot. Taking part in local government, farming the fields, and playing a central role in village life, the women have banded together to form "mothers' clubs," which grow food communally, distribute donated food, form village banks that provide small loans to farmers and entrepreneurs, and refer women to government medical clinics where they are learning about family planning. They are reconstructing their destroyed villages in a tightly organized grid so that health, sanitation, and educational services can be delivered more easily.

The fact that the women took the lead in resisting the terrorists has changed men's attitudes and shifted the balance of power in the region. Women now serve in greater numbers on village councils, where they can lobby for tougher laws against family violence and more job opportunities for their female constituents. More than ten thousand women were widowed during the Shining Path struggle, but they have acquired confidence and have taken action to provide for their families and better their communities.

While changes are occurring slowly at the grassroots level of governance in countries throughout the world, progress is also apparent at the national level in a number of countries. Throughout

42. Women, No. 91, p. 42.

43. See "A Revolution Peru 's Rebels Didn't Intend," in the New York Times Web version, 29 August 1999.

## W O R L D W A T C H

the twentieth century, only twenty-two women have served as heads of state or government around the world; 44 the world's first woman

prime minister, Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, was elected only in 1960. Other women who have risen to top positions in their national communities in the years since include Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, Isabel Peron, Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, Corazon Aquino, Vigdis Finnbogadottir, Gro Harlem Bruntland, Mary Robinson, and Mary McAleese. The number, while small, continues to grow, and women are assuming other senior government posts as well. As of 1999, for example, some fourteen foreign ministers of various countries were women, and leaders of both parties in New Zealand's Parliamentary elections were women.

Of all the regions of the globe, Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands have the highest percentage of female politicians in their legislatures, averaging more than twenty-five per cent. In contrast, figures in the United States are much lower. Even after "The Year of the Woman" in 1992, when a record number of female candidates sought elected office, women held only six of one hundred Senate seats and 47 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives.

One explanation for such low numbers is that even in countries where more women are entering the political arena, they are still perceived as not "tough enough" to hold office, not as good as men at handling crises, and not as capable at handling big budgets. On the more positive side, voters do regard women as more in touch with and caring about people, better listeners, and better negotiators.<sup>45</sup> It is, perhaps, not surprising that advances are slowest to occur on the national level. National institutions are more entrenched than newly evolving international structures, and the smaller size of local-level structures makes them more adaptable to grassroots-inspired change. The uncertainty of nation states regarding their role in the emerging new international order may also result in greater conservatism as they attempt to maintain the status quo.

At the international level, women have had somewhat more success in rising to higher-level positions in organizations such as the

44. Fisher, p. 152.

45 . C. Lake and L. DiYall, "Voter cynicism is a boon for women," USA Today (18 November, 1993), p. 15A ; cited in Klenke, p. 209.

United Nations, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the International Labour Organization, where they have been instrumental in pursuing women's issues.<sup>46</sup> Why have women been able to rise more quickly in these fora? Some writers posit that where women depend on the broad support of the public for election to public office, it is more likely for their aspirations to be frustrated by an electorate still under the sway of gender-based stereotypes. On the other hand, women stand a greater chance of success in organizations where people are appointed to senior positions on the basis of their abilities and experience. Another factor in women's advancement

in this arena is that international organizations are generally perceived as lacking power, and so have been less attractive to men.

This was seen clearly in a 1980 study focusing on the significant number of women in high-level positions in the European Parliament, where they have had success in raising issues of concern to them and have influenced policy in the EU institutions.<sup>47</sup>

At the United Nations, a 1999 survey revealed that women direct the agencies responsible for human rights, health, refugees, children, population growth, and food aid. Women also serve as representatives in troubled areas such as Cyprus and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as Deputy Secretary-General. <sup>48</sup> And while even in the United Nations organization women lag behind men in top administrative positions, the situation is better than in business organizations or the political sphere around the world. Whatever the shortcomings of its staffing, the vital role of the United Nations in fostering the advancement of women at the grassroots level throughout the world, and thus in promoting the well-being of all the world's peoples, is widely recognized. Noeleen Heyzer notes: "Sustainable human development cannot even be conceptualized, much less implemented, when the costs and benefits of development are borne

46. Klenke, p. 215.

47. H. Horburger and F. Rath-Horburger, *Europa's Frauen Gleichberechtigt? Die Politik der EG Lander: Gleichberechtigung der Frau im Arbeitsleben* (Hamburg: Verlag Otto Heinvetter, 1980); cited in Klenke, pp. 220-2 1.

48. See Nina Darnton, "It's a Woman's World," *Civilization magazine Web edition* (June 1999) at <[www.civmag.com](http://www.civmag.com)> for brief profiles of each of these women.

inequitably by men and women. The UN has a key role to play in advocating for global policies that benefit women and in building consensus for the implementation of such policies. " <sup>49</sup>

Civil society, which is exerting an increasingly strong influence upon governments and international organizations such as the UN, provides another new leadership context for women, as Helen Fisher points out:

Governments are being supplemented, even somewhat undermined, by new social forces . Extragovernmental entities such as multinational corporations, the global financial marketplace, the Internet, international judicial tribunals, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly able to control huge sums of money, sway public opinion, and influence the policies of national governments ....

Of all these forces that challenge the state, the one that will give women the most access to power and leadership is the growth of nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations: civil society. <sup>50</sup>

The rise in influence of organizations of civil society, particularly NGOs, has provided a globally networked forum in which women can effectively present their views and promote action on issues of concern, powerfully extending their range of influence. Says Fisher: "With their people skills, their compassion, their penchant for web thinking, and their networking abilities, female leaders in civil society will bring hope to children, minorities, the disadvantaged, the sick, the elderly, and other women. And they will focus their attention on far-reaching societal and environmental illsconcerns of the female mind." 51

It is a truism to say that today the stage of the world is set for a new social order based on values such as the global recognition and protection of human rights, freedom, democracy, free trade, privatization of industry, sustainable development, and protection of the environment. In such order, women must both contribute to and benefit from such development on an equitable footing to men,

49. Heyzer, p. 45 .

50 . Fisher, p. 140.

51. Fisher, p. 166.

and their role in bringing about the development of all peoples, without regard to gender, ethnicity, race, social class, or religion, is critical.

The Baha'i writings are clear about the effects consequent to the participation of women in human affairs. During His travels in the West, 'Abdu'J-Baha said, " ... it is well established in history that where woman has not participated in human affairs the outcomes have never attained a state of completion and perfection.

On the other hand, every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance." 52

At this stage in our evolution, what is more urgent than achieving sustainable human development?

In 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha commented that "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 evenly balanced." 53 From the lowest to the highest levels of human society, in all walks of life and professions, we are slowly moving towards the achievement of such a balance. It is clear that women, with, as The Prosperity of Humankind says, their "millennia of experience" in caring for family and community, are making a profound difference, as they are welcomed as equals at all levels in the global forum.

52. Women, No . 80, p. 37 .

PROFILE: NOR  
UNIVERSITY,  
BOLIVIA

Nur University, a private, non-profit university located in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, not only gives its students the intellectual tools to reach the top of their fields, but it transforms them into agents of social change by teaching them about the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the community. Nur teaches that in order to better society, each person must be committed to a process of personal transformation. Through this process, individuals will have an impact on the social groups to which they belong. Conversely, participating in a group in which the majority of the members are committed to the twin processes of individual and collective transformation strengthens people's resolve to better themselves.

Nur University was founded to serve the rural needs of Bolivia. Established in Santa Cruz because the city has a population base large enough to support a private university, Nur has always had the goal of expanding its programs into rural areas. Currently, in collaboration with public and private institutions, the university provides services that respond to the needs of rural communities. Initiatives include training in moral leadership, youth leadership, public administration and just governance; literacy programs; the Latin American Master's Program in Social Development; and the training of rural schoolteachers as community development agents. In reflection papers written by students in Nur's program that trains rural schoolteachers to be community development agents, participants share their perceptions of the course's positive impact on their personal transformation, family life, approach to leadership, and attitude to people from different cultures. One student writes:

I used to consider that women were specialists in raising children, taking care of the house, cooking, and caring for their husbands. They could also work professionally, but their first obligation was to fulfill these traditional responsibilities, which I considered as predetermined from time immemorial, as if established by the will of God. My relationship with my wife and children was based on extreme machismo. As husband and father I considered that I was always right and should always make the decisions in the family ... Now I consider that women are equal in potential to men and that the relationship between

Students outside Nur University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

NUR UNIVERSITY

the two is interdependent. I try to relate to my wife and children

horizontally. I consider my wife as my companion and as a person that has her own needs and feelings that should also be considered. As a family, we make decisions using consultation and have elaborated a 'Covenant of Shared Responsibilities' in which we have tried to equitably distribute family responsibilities. As a result of these changes in my attitudes, our home is much happier and united. I am currently trying to encourage my wife to develop her own potentialities, but sometimes it is hard because of the dependency and lack of self-esteem which my former attitudes have engendered in her.

Nur was founded, in large part, to help create leaders who would be grounded in this process of self and social transformation. Having opened its doors to just ninety-seven students in 1985, it is now the second largest private university in Bolivia and the first to be granted a Presidential Decree authorizing it to function as a degree-granting institution.

In addition to providing community college and undergraduate university programs, Nur has gained a reputation for taking bold educational development initiatives in response to regional and national needs. In 1986, the university opened Bolivia's first graduate

Nurs flexible curriculum allows students who cannot study full-time to continue their studies at a manageable pace.

school. It has also led the way in alternative methodologies in higher education in Bolivia, including modular format master's degrees, distance education, virtual education, and seminars combining cooperative learning groups with practical field work. Fourteen years after its founding, Nur has more than 2,600 undergraduate and 500 graduate students working towards formal degrees or certification in fields such as accounting, education, social communications, agricultural economics, commercial engineering, computer science, administration, public relations, international relations, international commerce, business administration, public health administration, marketing, social development and sustainable development. Forty-four percent of Nur's students are women, a figure rare in Bolivia's system of higher education. Nur's philosophy advocates the integration of academic knowledge with both practical experience and the teaching of basic moral principles, while emphasizing community service, social justice, global development, and a respect for human diversity. This educational philosophy is based on universal principles found in the Baha'i teachings, such as the individual's duty to independently investigate truth, the need for the elimination of prejudice, the equality of women and men, the unity of humankind, and the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty.

This philosophy is evident in the curriculum structure of Nur's

undergraduate program, which integrates four complementary elements that it considers central to professional development: Degree Specific Studies, which are courses that pertain specifically to the students' fields of study; Development Studies, which are courses taken by students in all faculties and provide a perspective

Since 1990, undergraduate students have been required to complete 120 hours of community service prior to graduation. The UNIRSE program has the objective of fostering an attitude of service.

#### NUR UNIVERSITY

on personal, community, and societal development; Transdisciplinary Studies, courses in which students work in interdisciplinary teams that focus on resolving complex social problems associated with development; and a community service component that requires students to complete a minimum of one hundred and twenty hours of community volunteer work as part of their degree requirements .

Nur 's moral leadership program teaches participants that they have the obligation to search for, adopt, and live by moral principles, by which they should also shape their communities' institutions. Leadership is shown to be a responsibility that is exercised by all members of society and requires the development and exercise of moral capabilities. This program has been made available to public health workers, management and field staff of non-governmental workers, and women's organizations. It has expanded to reach many rural communities in Bolivia and more than a dozen Latin American countries, including Argentina, Paraguay, and Honduras. In 1998 Nur signed an agreement with the Mayor of Santa Cruz to train 4,800 public high school students in youth leadership over a three-and-a-half-year period, with the goal of diminishing growing trends of gang activity, prostitution, violence , juvenile crime, and alcohol and drug consumption. Like the moral leadership program, this project is directed specifically towards youth in order to prepare them for active community service and the promotion of the good of humanity.

The goal of Nur's public administration and just governance training program is the strengthening of administrative capacities at different government levels, creating a shared vision for the future development of the state and developing decision-making capacities

in the public sector. Most of the municipalities and subdivisions of the Santa Cruz state government have already taken part in this program.

In conjunction with institutions in eight other countries, Nur has developed and is carrying out the Latin American Master 's Program in Social Development. This program, which has been in operation for the past five years , has involved three hundred students and faculty from eleven countries.

The training of school teachers as community development agents began in 1993 with the concurrent goals of training school teachers to fulfill the role of community development agents and to improve the quality of teaching in the classrooms in rural communities.

The program consists of twenty courses offered in a distance education format. To date, more than two thousand schoolteachers from Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina have participated in this program, which has received positive feedback from its participants. One student wrote,

The study of this course has helped me, above all, to understand the importance of guiding my life according to principles. I now try to serve those in need without expecting recognition, to forgive those who may have offended me without holding grudges and to share with others what I have learned, and thereby contribute to my own happiness and theirs .

This statement explores the implications of 'Abdu 'l-Baha :S characterization of the twentieth century as the "Century of Light. " It was released by the Bahit 'i International Community s Office of Public Information in February 1999.

WHO is  
WRITING  
THE FUTURE?

Reflections on the Twentieth Century

On May 28, 1992, Brazil's Chamber of Deputies met in special session to commemorate the centenary of the passing of Baha'u'llah, whose influence is becoming an increasingly familiar feature of the world's social and intellectual landscape. His message of unity had clearly struck a deep chord with the Brazilian legislators. During the course of the proceedings, speakers representing all parties in the Chamber paid tribute to a body of writings which one deputy described as "the most colossal religious work written by the pen of a single Man," and to a conception of our planet's future which, "transcending material frontiers," in the words of another, "reached out to humanity as a whole, without petty differences of

nationality, race, limits, or beliefs." 1

The tribute was all the more striking because of the fact that, in the land of His birth, Baha'u'llah's work continues to be bitterly

1. Remarks by Deputy Luis Gushiken and Deputy Rita Camata. "Sessao Solene da Camara Federal em Homenagem ao Centenario da Ascensao de Baha'u'llah," Brasilia, 28 May 1992.

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condemned by the Muslim clergy who rule Iran. Their predecessors had been responsible for His banishment and imprisonment in the middle years of the nineteenth century, and for the massacre of thousands of those who shared His ideals for the transforming of human life and society. Even as the proceedings in Brasilia were under way, refusal to deny beliefs that have won high praise throughout most of the rest of the world was bringing the three hundred thousand Baha'is living in Iran persecution, privation, and, in all too many cases, imprisonment and death.

Similar opposition characterized the attitudes of various totalitarian regimes over the past century.

What is the nature of the body of thought that has aroused such sharply divergent reactions?

I

The mainspring of Baha'u'llah's message is an exposition of reality as fundamentally spiritual in nature, and of the laws that govern that reality's operation. It not only sees the individual as a spiritual being, a "rational soul," but also insists that the entire enterprise that we call civilization is itself a spiritual process, one in which the human mind and heart have created progressively more complex and efficient means to express their inherent moral and intellectual capacities.

Rejecting the reigning dogmas of materialism, Baha'u'llah asserts an opposing interpretation of the historical process. Humanity, the arrowhead of the evolution of consciousness, passes through stages analogous to the periods of infancy, childhood, and adolescence in the lives of its individual members. The journey has brought us to the threshold of our long-awaited coming of age as a unified human race. The wars, exploitation, and prejudice that have marked immature stages in the process should not be a cause of despair but a stimulus to assuming the responsibilities of collective maturity.

Writing to the political and religious leaders of His own day, Baha'u'llah said that new capacities of incalculable power- beyond the conception of the generation then living-were awakening in the earth's peoples, capacities which would soon transform the material life of the planet. It was essential, He said, to make of these

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coming material advances vehicles for moral and social development. If nationalistic and sectarian conflicts prevented this from happening, then material progress would produce not only benefits, but unimagined evils. Some of Baha'u'llah's warnings awaken grim echoes in our own age: "Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth," He cautioned. "These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal." 2

## II

The central spiritual issue facing all people, Baha'u'llah says, whatever their nation, religion, or ethnic origin, is that of laying the foundations of a global society that can reflect the oneness of human nature. The unification of the earth's inhabitants is neither a remote utopian vision nor, ultimately, a matter of choice. It constitutes the next, inescapable stage in the process of social evolution, a stage toward which all the experience of past and present is impelling us. Until this issue is acknowledged and addressed, none of the ills afflicting our planet will find solutions, because all the essential challenges of the age we have entered are global and universal, not particular or regional.

The many passages of Baha'u'llah's writings dealing with humanity's coming of age are permeated by His use of light as a metaphor to capture the transforming power of unity: "So powerful is the light of unity," they insist, "that it can illuminate the whole earth." 3 The assertion places current history in a perspective sharply different from the one that prevails at the end of the twentieth century. It urges us to find- within the suffering and breakdown of our times- the operation of forces that are liberating human consciousness for a new stage in its evolution. It calls on us to reexamine what has been happening over the past one hundred years and the effect that these developments have had on the heterogeneous mass of peoples, races, nations, and communities who have experienced them.

2. Baha' u' llah , Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 69.

3. Baha' u ' llah , Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 14.

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If, as Baha'u'llah asserts, "the well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established,"<sup>4</sup> it is understandable why Baha'is view the twentieth century- with all its disasters- as "the century of light. " 5 For these one hundred years witnessed a transformation in both the way the earth's inhabitants have begun to plan our collective future and in the way we are coming to regard one another. The hallmark

of both has been a process of unification. Upheavals beyond the control of existing institutions compelled world leaders to begin putting in place new systems of global organization that would have been unthinkable at the century's beginning. As this was occurring, rapid erosion was overtaking habits and attitudes that had divided peoples and nations through unnumbered centuries of conflict and that had seemed likely to endure for ages to come. At the midpoint of the century, these two developments produced a breakthrough whose historic significance only future generations will properly appreciate. In the stunned aftermath of World War II, far-sighted leaders found it at last possible, through the United Nations organization, to begin consolidating the foundations of world order. Long dreamed of by progressive thinkers, the new system of international conventions and related agencies was now endowed with crucial powers that had tragically been denied to the abortive League of Nations. As the century advanced, the system's primitive muscles of international peacekeeping were progressively exercised in such a way as to demonstrate persuasively what can be accomplished. With this came the steady expansion throughout the world of democratic institutions of governance. If the practical effects are still disappointing, this in no way diminishes the historic and irreversible change of direction that has taken place in the organization of human affairs.

As with the cause of world order, so with the rights of the world's people. Exposure of the appalling suffering visited on the victims

4. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 286.

5. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 74, 126.

of human perversity during the course of the war produced a worldwide sense of shock-and what can only be termed deep feelings of shame. Out of this trauma emerged a new kind of moral commitment that was formally institutionalized in the work of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its associated agencies, a development inconceivable to the nineteenth century rulers to whom Baha'u'llah had addressed Himself on the subject. Thus empowered, a growing body of nongovernmental organizations have set out to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is established as the foundation of normative international standards and is enforced accordingly.

A parallel process took place with respect to economic life.

During the first half of the century, as a consequence of the havoc wrought by the great depression, many governments adopted legislation that created social welfare programs and systems of financial control, reserve funds, and trade regulations that sought

to protect their societies from a recurrence of such devastation. The period following World War II brought the establishment of institutions whose field of operation is global: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and a network of development agencies devoted to rationalizing and advancing the material prosperity of the planet. At century's end-whatever the intentions and however crude the present generation of tools-the masses of humanity have been shown that the use of the planet's wealth can be fundamentally reorganized in response to entirely new conceptions of need. The effect of these developments was enormously amplified by the accelerating extension of education to the masses. Apart from the willingness of national and local governments to allocate greatly increased resources to this field and the society's ability to mobilize and train armies of professionally qualified teachers, two twentieth century advances at the international level were particularly influential. The first was the series of development plans focused on educational needs and massively financed by such bodies as the World Bank, government agencies, major foundations and several branches of the United Nations system. The second was the information technology explosion that has

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made all of the earth's inhabitants potential beneficiaries of the whole of the race's learning.

This process of structural reorganization on a planetary scale was animated and reinforced by a profound shift of consciousness. Entire populations found themselves abruptly compelled to face the costs of ingrained habits of mind that breed conflict-and to do so in the full glare of worldwide censure of what were once considered acceptable practices and attitudes. The effect was to stimulate revolutionary change in the way that people regard one another.

Throughout history, for example, experience seemed to demonstrate- and religious teaching to confirm-that women are essentially inferior in nature to men. Overnight, in the historical scheme of things, this prevailing perception was suddenly everywhere in retreat. However long and painful may be the process of giving full effect to Baha'u'llah 's assertion that women and men are in every sense equal, intellectual and moral support for any opposing view steadily disintegrates.

Yet another fixture of humanity 's view of itself throughout past millennia was a celebration of ethnic distinctions which, in recent centuries, had hardened into various racist fantasies. With a swiftness that is breathtaking in the perspective of history, the twentieth century saw the unity of the human race establish itself as a guiding principle of international order. Today, the ethnic

conflicts that continue to wreak havoc in many parts of the world are seen not as natural features of the relations among diverse peoples, but as willful aberrations that must be brought under effective international control.

Throughout humanity's long childhood, it was also assumed again with the full concurrence of organized religion—that poverty was an enduring and inescapable feature of the social order.

Now, however, this mind-set, an assumption that had shaped the priorities of every economic system the world had ever known, has been universally rejected. In theory at least, government has come to be everywhere regarded as essentially a trustee responsible to ensure the well-being of all of society's members.

Particularly significant—because of its intimate relationship with the roots of human motivation—was the loosening of the grip of  
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religious prejudice. Prefigured in the "Parliament of Religions" that attracted intense interest as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, the process of interfaith dialogue and collaboration reinforced the effects of secularism in undermining the once impregnable walls of clerical authority. In the face of the transformation in religious conceptions that the past hundred years witnessed, even the current outburst of fundamentalist reaction may come, in retrospect, to be seen as little more than desperate rear-guard actions against an inevitable dissolution of sectarian control. In the words of Baha'u'llah, "There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God." 6

During these critical decades the human mind was also experiencing fundamental changes in the way that it understood the physical universe. The first half of the century saw the new theories of relativity and quantum mechanics—both of them intimately related to the nature and operation of light—revolutionize the field of physics and alter the entire course of scientific development. It became apparent that classical physics could explain phenomena within only a limited range. A new door had suddenly opened into the study of both the minute constituents of the universe and its large cosmological systems, a change whose effects went far beyond physics, shaking the very foundations of a world view that had dominated scientific thinking for centuries. Gone forever were the images of a mechanical universe run like a clock and a presumed separation between observer and observed, between mind and matter. Against the background of the far-reaching studies thus made possible, theoretical science now begins to address the possibility that purpose and intelligence are indeed intrinsic to the nature and operation of the universe.

In the wake of these conceptual changes, humanity entered an era in which interaction among physical sciences- physics, chemistry, and biology, along with the nascent science of ecology opened breathtaking possibilities for the enhancement of life.

6. Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahir'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 217.

The benefits in such vital areas of concern as agriculture and medicine became dramatically apparent as did those brought about by success in tapping new sources of energy. Simultaneously, the new field of materials science began providing a wealth of specialized resources unknown when the century opened- plastics, optical fibers, carbon fibers.

Such advances in science and technology were reciprocal in their effects. Grains of sand- the most humble and ostensibly worthless of materials- metamorphosed into silicon wafers and optically pure glass, making possible the creation of worldwide communications networks. This, together with the deployment of ever more sophisticated satellite systems, has begun providing access to the accumulated knowledge of the entire human race for people everywhere, without distinction. It is apparent that the decades immediately ahead will see the integration of telephone, television, and computer technologies into a single, unified system of communication and information, whose inexpensive appliances will be available on a mass scale. It would be difficult to exaggerate the psychological and social impact of the anticipated replacement of the jumble of existing monetary systems- for many, the ultimate fortress of nationalist pride- by a single world currency operating largely through electronic impulses.

Indeed, the unifying effect of the twentieth century revolution is nowhere more readily apparent than in the implications of the changes that took place in scientific and technological life. At the most obvious level, the human race is now endowed with the means needed to realize the visionary goals summoned up by a steadily maturing consciousness. Viewed more deeply, this empowerment is potentially available to all of the earth's inhabitants, without regard to race, culture, or nation. "A new life,"

Baha'u'llah prophetically saw, "is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive." 7 Today, more than a century after these words were written, the implications of what has since taken place begin to be apparent to thoughtful minds everywhere.

7. Baha' u' llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 196.

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### III

To appreciate the transformations brought about by the period of history now ending is not to deny the accompanying darkness that throws the achievements into sharp relief: the deliberate extermination of millions of helpless human beings, the invention and use of new weapons of destruction capable of annihilating whole populations, the rise of ideologies that suffocated the spiritual and intellectual life of entire nations, damage to the physical environment of the planet on a scale so massive that it may take centuries to heal, and the incalculably greater damage done to generations of children taught to believe that violence, indecency, and selfishness are triumphs of personal liberty. Such are only the more obvious of a catalogue of evils, unmatched in history, whose lessons our era will leave for the education of the chastened generations who will follow us.

Darkness, however, is not a phenomenon endowed with some form of existence, much less autonomy. It does not extinguish light nor diminish it, but marks out those areas that light has not reached or adequately illumined. So will twentieth century civilization no doubt be assessed by the historians of a more mature and dispassionate age. The ferocities of animal nature, which raged out of control through these critical years and seemed at times to threaten society's very survival, did not in fact prevent the steady unfoldment of the creative potentialities which human consciousness possesses. On the contrary. As the century advanced, growing numbers of people awakened to how empty were the allegiances and how insubstantial the fears that had held them captive only short years before.

"Peerless is this Day," Baha'u'llah insists, "for it is as the eye to past ages and centuries, and as a light unto the darkness of the times." <sup>8</sup> In this perspective, the issue is not the darkness that slowed and obscured the progress achieved in the extraordinary hundred years now ending. It is, rather, how much more suffering and ruin must be experienced by our race before we wholeheartedly accept the spiritual nature that makes us a single people, and

8. Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Baha'f Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 79.

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gather the courage to plan our future in the light of what has been so painfully learned.

### IV

The conception of civilization's future course laid out in Baha'u'llih's writings challenges much that today imposes itself on our world as normative and unchangeable. The breakthroughs made during the century of light have opened the door to a new kind of world. If

social and intellectual evolution is in fact responding to a moral intelligence inherent in existence, a great deal of the theory determining contemporary approaches to decision-making is fatally flawed. If human consciousness is essentially spiritual in nature- as the vast majority of ordinary people have always been intuitively aware-, its development needs cannot be understood or served through an interpretation of reality that dogmatically insists otherwise. No aspect of contemporary civilization is more directly challenged by Baha'u'llah 's conception of the future than is the prevailing cult of individualism, which has spread to most parts of the world. Nurtured by such cultural forces as political ideology, academic elitism, and a consumer economy, the "pursuit of happiness" has given rise to an aggressive and almost boundless sense of personal entitlement. The moral consequences have been corrosive for the individual and society alike- and devastating in terms of disease, drug addiction and other all-too-familiar blights of century's end. The task of freeing humanity from an error so fundamental and pervasive will call into question some of the twentieth century's most deeply entrenched assumptions about right and wrong. What are some of these unexamined assumptions? The most obvious is the conviction that unity is a distant, almost unattainable ideal to be addressed only after a host of political conflicts have been somehow resolved, material needs somehow satisfied, and injustices somehow corrected. The opposite , Baha'u'llah asserts , is the case. The primary disease that afflicts society and generates the ills that cripple it, He says, is the disunity of a human race that is distinguished by its capacity for collaboration and whose progress to date has depended on the extent to which unified action has, at various times and in various societies, been achieved. To cling to the notion that conflict is an intrinsic feature of human

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nature, rather than a complex of learned habits and attitudes, is to impose on a new century an error which, more than any other single factor, has tragically handicapped humanity's past. "Regard the world," Baha'u'llah advised elected leaders, "as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies." 9 Intimately related to the issue of unity is a second moral challenge that the past century has posed with ever increasing urgency. In the sight of God, Baha'u'llah insists, justice is the "best beloved of all things." 10 It enables the individual to see reality through his or her own eyes rather than those of others and endows collective decision making with the authority that alone can ensure unity of thought and action. However gratifying is the system of international order that has emerged from the harrowing experiences of the twentieth century, its enduring influence will depend

on acceptance of the moral principle implicit in it. If the body of humankind is indeed one and indivisible, then the authority exercised by its governing institutions represents essentially a trusteeship. Each individual person comes into the world as a trust of the whole, and it is this feature of human existence that constitutes the real foundation of the social, economic and cultural rights that the United Nations Charter and its related documents articulate. Justice and unity are reciprocal in their effect. "The purpose of justice," Baha'u'llah wrote, "is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance." 11 As society commits itself-however hesitantly and fearfully to these and related moral principles, the most meaningful role it will offer the individual will be that of service. One of the paradoxes of human life is that development of the self comes primarily through commitment to larger undertakings in which the self-

9. Baha ' u ' llah , Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u ' llah (Wilmette: Baha ' i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 254- 55 .

10. Bah a ' u ' llah , The Hidden Words of Baha ' u ' llah (Wilmette: Baha ' f Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 3.

11. Baha' u ' llah , Tablets of Bahii ' u ' llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette: Baha ' f Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 67 .

even if only temporarily-is forgotten. In an age that opens up to people of every condition an opportunity to participate effectively in the shaping of the social order itself, the ideal of service to others assumes entirely new significance. To exalt such goals as acquisition and self-assertion as the purpose of life is to promote chiefly the animal side of human nature. Nor can simplistic messages of personal salvation any longer address the yearnings of generations who have come to know, with deep certainty, that true fulfillment is as much a matter of this world as it is of the next. "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in," is Baha'u'llah's counsel, "and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements." 12

Such perspectives have profound implications for the conduct of human affairs. It is obvious, for example, that, whatever its past contributions, the longer the nation-state persists as the dominant influence in determining the fate of humankind, the longer will the achievement of world peace be delayed and the greater will be the suffering inflicted on the earth's population. In humanity's economic life, no matter how great the blessings brought by globalization, it is apparent that this process has also created unparalleled concentrations of autocratic power that must be brought under international democratic control if they are not to produce poverty and despair for countless millions. Similarly, the historic breakthrough in information and communication technology, which

represents so potent a means to promote social development and the deepening of people's sense of their common humanity, can, with equal force, divert and coarsen impulses vital to the service of this very process.

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What Baha'u'llah is speaking of is a new relationship between God and humankind, one that is in harmony with the dawning maturity of the race . The ultimate Reality that has created and sustains the universe will forever remain beyond the reach of the human mind . Humanity's conscious relationship with it, to the

12 . Baha ' u ' llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha ' u ' llah (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 213.

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extent that one has been established, has been the result of the influence of the Founders of the great religions, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus , Muhammad and earlier figures whose names are, for the most part, lost to memory. Through responding to these impulses of the Divine , the earth's peoples have progressively developed the spiritual , intellectual, and moral capacities that have combined to civilize human character. This millennia-long, cumulative process has now reached the stage characteristic of all the decisive turning points in the evolutionary process, when previously unrealized possibilities suddenly emerge: "This is the Day," Baha'u'llah asserts, "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." 13

Viewed through Baha'u'llah's eyes, the history of tribes, peoples, and nations has effectively reached its conclusion. What we are witnessing is the beginning of the history of humankind, the history of a human race conscious of its own oneness . To this turning point in the course of civilization, His writings bring a redefinition of the nature and processes of civilization and a reordering of its priorities. Their aim is to call us back to spiritual awareness and responsibility.

There is nothing in Baha'u'llah 's writings to encourage the illusion that the changes envisioned will come about easily. Far otherwise. As the events of the twentieth century have already demonstrated, patterns of habit and attitude which have taken root over thousands of years are not abandoned either spontaneously or in response simply to education or legislative action. Whether in the life of the individual or that of society, profound change occurs more often than not in response to intense suffering and to unendurable difficulties that can be overcome in no other way. Just so great a testing experience, Baha'u'llah warned, is needed to weld the earth's diverse peoples into a single people. Spiritual and materialistic conceptions of the nature of reality

are irreconcilable with one another and lead in opposite directions.  
As a new century opens, the course set by the second of these

13 . Baha' u' llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahci'u 'llah (Wilmette:  
Saha' f Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 6.

two opposing views has already carried a hapless humanity far  
beyond the outermost point where an illusion of rationality, let  
alone of human well-being, could once be sustained. With every  
passing day, the signs multiply that great numbers of people everywhere are  
awakening to this realization.

Despite widely prevalent opinion to the contrary, the human  
race is not a blank tablet on which privileged arbiters of human  
affairs can freely inscribe their own wishes . The springs of the  
spirit rise up where they will, as they will. They will not indefinitely  
be suppressed by the detritus of contemporary society. It no  
longer requires prophetic insight to appreciate that the opening  
years of the new century will see the release of energies and aspirations  
infinitely more potent than the accumulated routines, falsities,  
and addictions that have so long blocked their expression.

However great the turmoil, the period into which humanity is  
moving will open to every individual, every institution, and every  
community on earth unprecedented opportunities to participate  
in the writing of the planet's future. "Soon," is Baha'u'llah's confident  
promise, "will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new  
one spread out in its stead." 14

14. Baha' u' llah, Gleanings fro m the Writings of Bahci 'u 'llah (Wilmette:  
Baha' i Publi shing Trust, 1982), p. 7.

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12- 14 January 1999.

## RELIGIOUS

### VALUES

and the Measurement of  
Poverty and Prosperity

T he processes of change now shaping hwnan affairs portend an  
inevitable transition to a global society. A major challenge  
inherent in this transition is creating conditions of social and economic  
equity among and within the nations of our global community.  
Lifting the burden of poverty from the world will require a deep  
moral commitment and a fundamental reordering of priorities. But  
perhaps most importantly, the materialistic criteria now guiding  
development thinking must give way to a new conceptual framework that  
explicitly acknowledges the spiritual, cultural, and social  
forces that define individual and community identity. In this regard,

the World Faiths and Development Dialogue held at Lambeth Palace in February 1998 and similar initiatives examining the roles of religion and spirituality in advancing human well-being represent important contributions to the discourse on social and economic development. 1

I. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has been exploring the relationship between religion and science and its impact on development. The Centre recently brought together Dr. Farzam Arbab, a theoretical (cont.)

Over the past several decades workers in the development field have gradually become cognizant of the complexity of the development process. This evolution in development thought can be seen in the shift in focus from capital-intensive programs aimed at promoting industrialization, to programs emphasizing health care, new agricultural methods, traditional technology and environmental preservation, to initiatives promoting participation and community organization. Yet, despite this growing awareness of the many interrelated factors underlying development, the international development agenda continues to be governed by a limited set of assumptions and approaches that fail to take into account much of what has been learned.

It is clear that another dimension of complexity must now be incorporated into the development equation. Attention must now be focused upon that which lies at the heart of human purpose and motivation: the human spirit. In the Baha'i view, nothing short of an awakening of the human spirit can create a desire for true social change and instill in people the confidence that such change is indeed possible. While pragmatic approaches to problem solving obviously play a central role in development initiatives, tapping the spiritual roots of human motivation provides the essential impulse that ensures genuine social advancement. When spiritual principles are fully integrated into community development activities, the ideas, values, and practical measures that emerge are likely to be those that promote self-reliance and safeguard human dignity, thus avoiding patterns of dependency and progressively eliminating conditions of gross inequality. Broadening the development process to take into account people's spiritual perceptions and aspirations represents an essential step toward creating the conditions necessary for global stability and prosperity. !. (cont.)

physicist and a Baha'i; Dr. Azizan Baharuddin, a biologist, philosopher of science and a Muslim; Dr. Gregory Baum, philosopher, social ethicist and a Roman Catholic; Dr. Promilla Kapur, a sociologist and a Hindu; and Father Bill Ryan, a Jesuit priest working in economics and labor relations, to begin a consultative process to examine the effectiveness of current working models and the possibility that religion is a critical missing factor in the development process. The ideas presented herein are in consonance

with the substance of these consultations.

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Through the teachings and moral guidance of religion, great segments of humanity have learned to discipline their baser propensities and to develop qualities that conduce to social order and cultural advancement. Such qualities as compassion, forbearance, trustworthiness, generosity, humility, courage, and willingness to sacrifice for the common good have constituted the invisible yet essential foundations of progressive community life. Recognition and cultivation of humanity's spiritual nature have ennobled and enriched the lives of peoples everywhere, and have engendered cohesion and unity of purpose within and across societies. <sup>2</sup> True civilization does not arise merely from material progress, but rather is defined by and based upon the transcendent values that hold society together. Religion, then, in a very real sense provides the bricks and mortar of society—the shared beliefs and moral values that unite people into communities and that give tangible direction and meaning to individual and collective life. "In truth," Baha'u'llah avers, "religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world ... Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine." <sup>3</sup>

Individual progress and community development require both spiritual awareness and material resources. Material advancement is, therefore, best understood not as an end in itself, but rather as a vehicle for moral, spiritual, and social progress. Meaningful social change results not so much from the acquisition of technical skills as from the development of qualities and attitudes that foster cooperative

2. It may be argued that, since spiritual and moral issues have historically been bound up with contending theological doctrines which are not susceptible of objective proof, these issues lie outside the framework of the international community's development concerns. To accord them any significant role would be to open the door to precisely those dogmatic influences that have nurtured social conflict and blocked human progress.

There is doubtless a measure of truth in such an argument. To conclude, however, that the answer lies in discouraging the investigation of spiritual reality and ignoring the deepest roots of human motivation, is untenable.

3. Baha' u' llah , Tablets of Bahli'u 'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette : Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 125 .

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and creative patterns of human interaction. In short, the material and spiritual aspects of daily life are inseparably connected and must both be addressed.

This understanding of development anticipates the emergence of communities in which the application of spiritual values such as justice, trustworthiness and kindness will enhance material wellbeing. At the same time, material resources and advances will make possible new avenues of spiritual endeavor that will promote both the development of individual potential and the collective good.

#### Religion, Science, and Capacity Building

How then can spiritual principles be infused into our understanding, practice and assessment of development? The challenge is not a new one. Throughout past decades, development thinkers have repeatedly encountered issues related to values and beliefs. Too often, however, they have backed away from a thorough examination of the subject.

If the development discourse is to address properly the issue of values, a rigorous dialogue will be required between the work of science and the insights of religion.<sup>4</sup> Such a dialogue is crucial to the enterprise of building human capacity, an enterprise that is increasingly recognized as the fundamental purpose of development. When viewed as capacity building, development is concerned

4. That both science and religion have roles to play in the development process can no longer be a matter of debate. Sociological and organizational questions relating to social and economic development must, of necessity, refer to spiritual perspectives and values. However, the manner in which spiritual perspectives are integrated into development activities must involve the same logical and rigorous methods employed by science. This will ensure that development efforts are anchored to tangible and objective outcomes. Indeed, if religion is to be the partner of science in the development arena, its specific contributions must be carefully scrutinized. It is unfortunately the case that established religion is often burdened by doctrines and practices that militate against efforts to improve material conditions. Sectarian teachings that encourage passivity, acceptance of poverty, social exclusion or inequality between the sexes must be weighed against more universal spiritual concepts that emphasize the importance of justice and service to others. Therefore, a new approach to development must also seek to identify traditions of paternalism and other patterns of behavior that serve to undermine development initiatives.

#### RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PROSPERITY

principally with the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge. If it is accepted that knowledge is both spiritual and material, religion and science can be understood as two interacting knowledge systems that provide the fundamental organizing principles by which individuals, communities and institutions function and evolve.<sup>5</sup> Placing the generation and application of knowledge at the center of development planning and implementation makes it possible to study the practical implications of religious values, including

the role that such values have in alleviating poverty.

It is generally accepted that the materially poor must participate directly in efforts to improve their own well-being. But the nature of that participation has yet to be fully explored. From the Baha'i perspective, this participation must be substantive and creative; it must allow the people themselves access to knowledge and encourage them to apply it. Specifically, it is not sufficient for the people of the world to be engaged in projects as mere beneficiaries of the products of knowledge, even if they have a voice in certain decisions. They must be engaged in applying knowledge to create well-being, thereby generating new knowledge and contributing in a substantial and meaningful way to human progress. 6

The ability of any group to participate fully in its own development process depends on a wide range of interrelated capacities at the personal and group level. Among the most important are the capacities to participate effectively in the planning and implementation of development activity ; to use methods of decision making

5. Collaboration between religion and science in the development field can take many forms. One obvious example is in the area of moral education. Since moral behavior is a concrete expression of humanity 's spiritual nature, the formulation of educational theories and methods that systematically promote moral development is of particular importance. Learning to apply moral and spiritual concepts to achieve material progress could, in fact, be regarded as the essential prerequisite of all social and economic initiatives. 6. A first important step in this direction is to foster awareness and respect of

the existing knowledge base of a community or culture. This will assist the community to develop confidence in its ability to conceive and implement innovative solutions to difficult problems. When such confidence exists, science and technology can more readily be used as tools for preserving and extending cultural identity.

that are non-adversarial and inclusive; to think systematically about problems and search for solutions; to deal efficiently and accurately with information rather than respond unwittingly to political and commercial propaganda; to take initiative in a creative and disciplined manner; to make appropriate and informed technological choices; to organize and engage in ecologically sound production processes; to contribute to the effective management of public programs and projects; to promote solidarity and unity of purpose, thought, and action; to replace relationships based on dominance and competition with relationships based on reciprocity, collaboration, and service to others; to interact with other cultures in a way that leads to the advancement of one 's own culture and not to its degradation; to encourage recognition of the essential nobility of human beings; to put into place and to participate in educational processes conducive to personal growth and to the transformation of

society; to maintain high standards of physical, emotional and mental health; to imbue social interaction with an acute sense of justice; and to manifest rectitude in private and public administration.

Incomplete as it is, this list is suggestive of the constellation of capacities necessary for building up the social, economic, and moral fabric of collective life. The list highlights the vital role of both religious and intellectual resources in promoting development. It also points us to the types of indicators that might provide useful insight into the overall well-being of communities.

#### Measuring Poverty and Prosperity

If development is primarily a process in which individuals and communities become the principal actors in promoting their own physical, spiritual and social well-being, how can it be measured? Is it even reasonable to expect to be able to measure an ongoing process of action, evaluation, and adjustment: one in which communities gradually improve their ability to define, analyze, and meet their own needs? In the Baha'i view, the answer is "yes." While concrete action in any project should be directed toward visible, and therefore measurable, improvement in some aspect of life, the capacity of a community to address development issues at increasingly higher levels of complexity and effectiveness can also be measured, although perhaps not by traditional means.

#### RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PROSPERITY

One vital measure of a community's progress is the extent to which participation and cooperative methods of decision making are used to guide the development process. As an illustration, Baha'i development activities have, from their inception, emphasized collective decision making and collective action at the grassroots level. Improvement in the ability of all the members of a community to consult is a primary measure of success in every Baha'i development project. Both the process and the outcomes are observable and, therefore, in some way measurable. The use of consultative methods of decision making can lead to novel solutions to community problems; they can result in greater fairness in the distribution of community resources; and they tend to involve and uplift those who have historically been excluded from decision making, such as women and minorities. Experience has shown that consultation enables communities to sustain and modify development initiatives, contributing, thereby, to self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life. The ability of people to come together in these new and constructive patterns of participation and interaction is, in some respects, a more important outcome-and, therefore, more important to measure-than the quantifiable goals traditionally associated with development projects.

Development initiatives might be assessed on the basis of concrete application of a number of spiritual principles to individual

and community life: among them, unity in diversity; equity and justice; equality of the sexes; trustworthiness and moral leadership; and independent investigation of truth. While these are by no means the only principles to consider, these five contain a sufficient diversity of concepts to allow a broad overview of community progress. In their full expression, these spiritual precepts capture many of the intangible factors that conduce to social and economic advancement. For example, the principle of unity in diversity as applied to the area of education could lead to curricula that foster concepts of tolerance, understanding, compassion and world citizenship. The principle of the equality of women and men could lead to policies that unlock capacities of both women and men that have been hitherto suppressed. The principle of the independent investigation of truth as applied to development projects could ensure that problems are correctly identified and defined and that solutions

reflect the true needs of the people involved. A detailed discussion on how these principles might form the basis of tangible indicators of development can be found in the concept paper, "Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development." This paper was presented by the Baha'i International Community to the World Faiths and Development Dialogue at Lambeth Palace in 1998. <sup>7</sup> The creation of broad qualitative measures of development progress will have direct implications for the types of projects that get funded. Experience has shown that innovative projects are often deprived of needed funding when evaluation formulas emphasize a few specific economic or physical parameters. For example, before pursuing income generating activities, it may be more important to first engage in goal setting and consultations regarding community needs and well-being. The adoption and application of rigid evaluation criteria cannot be considered scientific, especially if they prematurely prescribe optimal outcomes.

In a given community or cultural setting, there may, in fact, be a variety of pathways that could achieve the same material ends while promoting other goals such as social cohesion or moral development.

Clearly the design and evaluation of development projects must give consideration to a broad set of parameters that go beyond simple categories of economic performance. Conventional indices of such factors as economic growth, health, or education are capable of conveying only a very narrow snapshot of community wellbeing. The most important indicators of successful development activity might well be whether the views and talents of all members of a community are utilized, whether consultative processes are used to formulate and implement community projects, or whether an atmosphere of dignity, optimism and commitment characterizes

the lives of the people involved. Although such qualitative factors may, at first, prove difficult to measure, the participants in development endeavors will no doubt be able to assist development specialists in creating meaningful benchmarks that take account of these qualitative variables.

7. See The Baha'i World 1997-98, pp. 233- 59, for the full text of this paper.

## RELIGIOUS VALUES AND PROSPERITY

In the final analysis, the measurement of poverty and prosperity can best be determined by those who are most directly affected. Certainly, traditional measures can offer valuable insights and can be used to help identify where resources should be deployed, but by themselves they are insufficient. Existing development indices fall far short of bringing into relief the essential spiritual and social dimensions of life, so fundamental to human welfare. Without a way to identify and track these essential elements of prosperity, our development efforts will continue to be dictated by mainly material considerations and true progress will prove to be illusory. It is, therefore, not only timely but critical that organizations of civil society and religious communities be engaged with development agencies in charting new measures of social progress.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva 22 March- 30 April 1999.

## CURRENT SITUATION OF THE BAHAI'S IN IRAN

With approximately three hundred thousand members, the Baha'i Faith, Iran's largest religious minority, is not recognized as a religion by the Iranian Constitution. The Islamic regime refers to it as a heresy and a conspiracy and designates its followers "unprotected infidels," who have no legal rights, although Iran is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which guarantees freedom of religious belief. A secret Iranian Government document published by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1993 confirms that Iran's anti-Baha'i actions reflect deliberate government policy. Produced by Iran's Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council on 25 February 1991 and approved by the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, this document sets forth specific guidelines for dealing with "the Baha'i question" so that Baha'i "progress and development

shall be blocked." It is no less than a blueprint for the slow strangulation of the Baha'i community.

The Baha' i community in Iran poses no threat to the authorities.

The principles of the Baha'i Faith require Baha'is to be obedient

to their government and to avoid partisan political involvement, subversive activity, and all forms of violence. The Baha'i community in Iran is not aligned with any government, ideology or opposition movement.

The Baha' is seek no special privileges. They desire only their rights under the International Bill of Human Rights, of which Iran is a signatory.

#### Recent Changes in the Situation

The most recent and notable change in the situation of the Baha'is in Iran has occurred in Mashhad, the capital of the Khurasan province. On 21 July 1998 a Baha'i prisoner, Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani, was executed; shortly thereafter the death sentences of two other Baha'i prisoners in Mashhad were confirmed.

Furthermore, there has been a widespread assault on Baha'i educational activities in Iran, including the arrest of more than thirty-six faculty members of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education and confiscation of materials, records, and educational equipment. More than five hundred Baha'i homes throughout Iran were also recently raided.

In September 1996 we were informed that Baha'i students had been barred from the final year of high school, which had been designated a pre-university year. We are now able to report that this discrimination against Baha'i youth appears to have been lifted, and they are now able to register for the pre-university year at their high school.

#### Executions, Death Sentences and Imprisonment

Since 1979, more than two hundred Baha'is have been killed, and fifteen others have disappeared and are presumed dead.

Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani, executed by hanging on 21 July 1998 after having served nine months in solitary confinement, stood accused of converting a woman to the Baha'i Faith. The woman concerned refuted the accusation, stating that her mother was a Baha'i and she herself had been raised as a Baha'i. There is no evidence that Mr. Rawhani was accorded any legal process or access to a lawyer, and no sentence was announced prior to his execution.

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Moreover, we have been informed that the death sentences of two prisoners recently condemned in Mashhad, Messrs. Sirus Dhabih-Muqaddam and Hidayat Kashifi-Najafabadi, have been confirmed, and that they may very soon meet the same fate as

Mr. Rawhani. When confronted by the international community, the Government of Iran declared these cases to be crimes concerning national security, charges which had not been raised before the public condemnation of these sentences.

Arbitrary arrests of Baha'is continue, with a marked increase in the number of short-term arrests in various areas of the country. During the past three years more than two hundred Baha'is have been arrested and detained for periods ranging from fortyeight hours to six months.

The seventeen being held in prisons because of their religious beliefs, as of December 1998, are as follows:

Name	Date of Arrest	Charge	Sentence
Mr. Bihnam Mithaqi	29 April 1989	Zionist Baha'i activities	Death
Mr. Kayvan Khalajabadi	29 April 1989	Zionist Baha' i activities	Death
Mr. Musa Talibi	7 June 1994	Teaching the Faith, apostasy	Death
Mr. Dhabihu ' llah Mahrami	6 September 1995	Apostasy	Death
Mr. Mansur Haddadan	29 February 1996	Holding children's art exhibition	3 years
Mr. Arman Damishqi	Early 1996	Misconduct (refused to recant)	8 years
Mr. Kurush Dhabihi	Early 1996	Misconduct (refused to recant)	8 years
Mr. Nasir Qadiri	5 November 1997	Continuing "Family Life" Meetings	3 years
Mr. Sirus Dhabihi- Muqaddam	Oct.IN ov. 1997	Continuing "Family Life" Meetings	Death
Mr. Hidayat Kashifi- Najafabadi	Oct.IN ov. 1997	Continuing " Family Life" Meetings	Death
Mr. Ata'u ' llah Hamid Nasirizadih	Oct.IN ov. 1997	Continuing " Family Life" Meetings	10 years
Mrs. Sonia Ahmadi	1May1998	Holding youth meetings	3 years

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Dr. Sina Hakiman Early October Related to the BIHE- u nknown I  
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### Denial of the Right to Organize as a Peaceful Religious Community

Since 1983 the Baha'i community has been denied both the right to assemble officially and the right to maintain its administrative institutions, those democratically elected governing bodies which in other countries organize and administer the religious activities of the community. Since the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the denial of the right to elect these institutions threatens the very existence of a viable religious community. These sacred institutions perform many of the functions reserved to clergy in other religions and are the foundational element of Baha'i community life.

The latest events in Khurasan suggest an intensification of efforts to terrorize members of the Faith and to suffocate the spiritual life of the Baha'i community in the region by further curtailing activities aimed at providing education to Baha'i children and youth. A recent example of this abuse was the arrest, detention, and summary sentence of two teachers in Mashhad, the capital of Khurasan, to three years' imprisonment, while their students were given suspended sentences, to be carried out should the young people again commit the "crime" of participating in such classes. In the middle of September, three more Baha'is, Mrs. Nahid Sabeti, Mr. Manouchehr Sharifi and Mr. Hushrnand Sanani, were arrested, this time in Bujnurd, northern Khurasan, for participating in Baha'i "Family Life" gatherings. After spending six days in prison, they were released, having also been given suspended sentences of five years' imprisonment.

### B AHA'FS I N I RAN: C URREN T SITUATION

#### Confiscation and Destruction of Community Properties

Baha'i cemeteries, holy places, historical sites, administrative centers and other assets were seized shortly after the 1979 revolution. No properties have been returned and many have been destroyed.

Seizure of cemeteries throughout Iran has created problems for Baha'is, who have difficulties burying their dead and identifying gravesites. They are permitted access only to areas of wasteland, designated by the Government for their use, and are not permitted to mark the graves of their loved ones.

#### Confiscation of Properties Belonging to Baha'is

The property rights of Baha'is are generally disregarded. Since 1979, large numbers of private and business properties belonging to Baha'is, including homes and farms, have been arbitrarily confiscated.

Recently over five hundred Baha'i homes throughout Iran have been raided at the hands of intelligence officers. When queried about the seizure of personal household effects like television sets and pieces of furniture, these officers claimed that they had been authorized by the Attorney General to take anything they wished.

#### Denial of Employment, Pensions and Other Benefits

The confiscation of property is only one of the ways in which the government is systematically weakening the economic base of the Baha'i community. Many Baha'is in Iran have also been deprived of the means to earn a living. In the early 1980s more than ten thousand Baha'is were dismissed from positions in government and educational institutions because of their religious beliefs.

Many remain unemployed and receive no unemployment benefits.

The pensions of Baha'is dismissed on religious grounds were terminated; some of the Baha'is have even been required to return salaries or pensions paid to them. Baha'i farmers are denied admission to farmers' cooperatives, which are often the only sources of credit, seeds, pesticide and fertilizer.

#### Denial of Access to Education

An entire generation of Baha'is has been systematically barred from higher education in legally recognized public and private institutions of learning in Iran.

Having been denied access to higher education for years, in 1987 the Baha'is established their own higher education program to meet the educational needs of as many of their young people as resources would allow. Since 1987 almost a thousand young people have been enrolled and a number have graduated with the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Several are presently pursuing graduate studies in Western colleges and universities.

In late September, more than thirty-six faculty members of the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) were reported to have been arrested in cities across the country. It is understood that most of these have now been released, but that four in Isfahan remain in

custody. The arrests were carried out by officers of the Iranian Government's intelligence agency, the Ministry of Information, and also involved the seizure of textbooks, scientific papers and documentary records, some seventy computers, and items of furniture useful to students, including tables and benches. Those arrested were asked to sign a document declaring that BIHE had ceased to exist as of 29 September and undertaking that they would no longer cooperate with it. The detainees refused to sign any such declaration.

#### Denial of Civil Rights and Liberties

Unlike Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, the Baha'i Faith is not recognized in the Iranian Constitution; therefore, Baha'is fall into the category of "unprotected infidels," whose rights can be ignored with impunity. In general, the pressures placed on Baha'is by the judicial system have increased.

Neither Baha'i marriage nor divorce is legally recognized in Iran, and the right of Baha'is to inherit is denied. For example, a Baha'i was recently prevented from receiving her rightful share in the inheritance following the death of her daughter. The Ministry of Justice, Tehran Civil Court, issued a Certification of Inheritance which states that the only heir of the deceased is her husband, a Muslim, "because the other inheritors are Baha'is, and subject to Article No. 881 of the Civil Law." On appeal, the Central Public Court ruled that this woman's objection to the previous verdict "is unfounded because she has frankly admitted to the court that she is a Baha'i." Until 1995, attempts to gain probate were permitted

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if carried out in a special way; however, since 1996, Baha'is have been strictly forbidden to seek probate.

The freedom of Baha'is to travel outside or inside Iran is often impeded by Iranian authorities and sometimes denied. Although the last year has witnessed an increase in the number of Iranian Baha'is given passports, it is too soon to judge whether there has been a change of policy on the part of the Iranian government on this issue.

Such treatment is not confined to Iran itself. Baha'is applying to Iranian embassies abroad to renew their passports or to obtain visas to return to Iran have often found officials similarly uncooperative. However, the Iranian embassies in some countries do not require the applicants to state their religious affiliation; in such countries, Baha'is are more likely to be able to obtain visas or to renew their Iranian passports. Passport application forms which require applicants to declare their affiliation with a "recognized religion" have been used to pressure Baha'is to recant their religious beliefs.

Furthermore, in a number of communities the practice of summoning Baha'is to the security offices on various specious pretexts

and insulting and belittling them, so as to create fear in their families and weaken their spirits, continues unabated.

#### No Improvement in Situation Since the Election of President Khatami

Regrettably, since President Mohammad Khatami took office, there has been no discernible improvement in the situation of the Baha'is in Iran. Recent events in Mashhad indicate that the persecutions of Baha'is have indeed intensified. With the execution of Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani on 21 July 1998, and subsequent confirmation of death sentences of two more Baha'i prisoners, Messrs. Sirus Dhabih-Muqaddam and Hidayat Kashifi-Najafabadi, no other conclusion can be drawn.

The current circumstances are best understood in the context of the unique nature of the persecution to which Iranian Baha'is have been subjected for over a century. The Iranian Baha'i community has frequently served as a scapegoat, used by various factions struggling for political ascendancy. This has been the case regardless of the changes in political or dynastic regime. Whenever political

leaders have felt a need to divert public attention from some economic, social, or political issue, they have found the Baha'i community an easy target because of the senseless hostility and prejudice inculcated in the public by generations of ecclesiastical propaganda. It is, therefore, not the actions of the Baha'is but the circumstances of Iranian history that have conspired to make the "Baha'i case" a litmus test of sincerity for Iranian public figures who represent themselves as voices of reform and progress.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the 55th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva 22 March- 30 April 1999.

BAHA'I  
INSTITUTE  
FOR HIGHER

EDUCATION  
A Creative and Peaceful Response  
to Religious Persecution

Since 1980, as part of a government-directed attempt to destroy the intellectual and cultural life of the 300,000-member Baha'i community, young people who declare their Baha'i identity have been systematically excluded from colleges and universities in Iran. Deeply concerned at seeing an entire generation of its best and brightest languish without the opportunity for higher learning, the Baha'i community of Iran launched a creative and wholly nonviolent response:

the establishment of its own independent, fullfledged, yet completely decentralized, university system. The New York Times , in an article about the university published on 29 October 1998, called this effort "an elaborate act of communal self-preservation."

Founded in 1987, the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) had, until September 1998, an enrollment of more than nine hundred students , a faculty of more than one hundred and fifty first-rate academics and instructors , and an "infrastructure" composed of various classrooms, laboratories and libraries scattered throughout Iran in private homes and buildings.

As has been widely reported in the international news media, agents of the Iranian government staged a series of sweeping raids in late September and early October, arresting at least thirtysix members of the BIHE's faculty and staff and confiscating equipment and records located in over five hundred homes.

As the New York Times noted, "The materials confiscated were neither political nor religious, and the people arrested were not fighters or organizers. They were lecturers in subjects like accounting and dentistry; the materials seized were textbooks and laboratory equipment."

Those who were arrested, many of whom have now been released, were asked to sign a document declaring that BIHE had ceased to exist as of 29 September and that they would no longer cooperate with it. The detainees refused to sign any such declaration.

To informed observers, the recent arrests and confiscations are clearly part of a long-standing and centrally orchestrated campaign by Iranian authorities to deal with Iran's Baha'i community

"in such a way that their progress and development are blocked."

This is the stated intent of the policy set forth in a secret 1991 government memorandum that instructed authorities in how to deal with "the Baha'i question." The actions against the BIHE, likewise, reflect a new and dangerous period for Iran's Baha'i community.

This period was ushered in by the summary execution of Mr. Ruhullah Rawhani, a 52-year-old medical supplies salesman who was hanged in Mashhad on 21 July 1998 solely for religious reasons, and the subsequent confirmation of death sentences against two other Baha'is in Mashhad in September.

The secret government memorandum, drawn up by the Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council in February 1991 , was obtained and made public in 1993 by Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, the United Nations' Special Representative investigating the human rights situation in Iran. Signed by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the memorandum established a subtle government policy aimed at essentially grinding the community into non-existence by forcing Baha'i children to have a strong Islamic education,

pushing Baha'i adults to the economic periphery and forcing them from all positions of power or influence, and requiring that Baha' i youth "be expelled from universities, either in the admission

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process or during the course of their studies, once it becomes known that they are Baha'is."

Not an "Underground" University

It would be incorrect to call the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education an "underground university," since its existence was well known to the authorities from its earliest years. In fact, in 1996 Iranian authorities conducted far-reaching raids against BIHE sites, confiscating records and equipment but not moving to shut down the operation. In keeping with Baha'i religious teachings on obedience to government, the Baha'is in Iran always answered forthrightly questions about the Institute and any other activities when asked. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the Baha'is of Iran have been blocked from operating their institutions freely and normally, they resorted to the concept of running an "open university" that was both highly decentralized and carefully circumspect in its operation.

Until the government raids at the end of September 1998, the Institute offered bachelor's degrees in ten subject areas: applied chemistry, biology, dental science, pharmacological science, civil engineering, computer science, psychology, law, literature, and accounting. And within these subject areas , which were administered by five university "departments," the Institute was able to offer more than two hundred distinct courses each term. In the beginning, courses were based on correspondence lessons developed by Indiana University, which was one of the first institutions in the West to recognize the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. Later on, course offerings were developed internally.

The teaching was done principally via correspondence, or, for specialized scientific and technical courses and in other special cases , in small-group classes that were usually held in private homes.

"At the beginning, the students did not even know the names of their professors," said one BIHE professor, who, like most others interviewed, wanted to remain anonymous out of fear for his safety and that of his relatives in Iran. Even after three or four years, the students did not know the names of their professors. They had never seen them because it was very dangerous. If somebody

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knew a professor's name, he or she might tell a friend. So all courses were conducted by correspondence at the beginning of this plan.

Over time, however, the Institute was able to establish a few laboratories, operated in privately owned commercial buildings in and around Teheran. These laboratories included a computer science laboratory, a physics laboratory, a dental science laboratory, a pharmacological laboratory, an applied chemistry laboratory and a language study laboratory. The operations of these laboratories were kept prudently quiet, with students cautioned not to come and go in large groups that might give the authorities a reason to object.

#### An All-Volunteer, Unpaid Faculty

At its peak, the Institute had more than one hundred and fifty faculty members. Approximately twenty-five or thirty were professors who were fired from government-run universities after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Other faculty members included doctors, dentists, lawyers and engineers who gave of their time to teach students. The majority were educated in Iran, but a good number have degrees from universities in the West, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the Sorbonne. None of the Baha'i faculty members were paid for their time; all gave it freely as a form of community service.

"These youth are very precious people," said a faculty member, explaining why they were willing to take such risks, without monetary remuneration, to establish the Institute. "We all care about them. They have been through tests and trials and they had no hope. They have been deprived of many things, so if there is any chance for us to get something better for them, we did it."

Each of the five departments drew not only on these volunteer professors for their academic expertise but also on a small and anonymous group of Baha'i academics in North America, Europe, and Australia. These outside academicians sent in the latest textbooks and research papers, occasionally made visits to Iran as guest lecturers, and otherwise provided instructional and technical support.

"The Baha'i youth are all raised to want to study and become professionals," said one of the academics involved in supporting the

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Institute. "So to sit around and do nothing is a very serious psychological pressure. And before the Open University really got going, the youth were in a hopeless position." The academic, who is Iranian born and still has family in Iran, also asked that his name not be used.

#### High Academic Standards

Entrance examinations for the BIHE were required, and the Institute established high standards. Of the roughly fifteen hundred students who applied for admission in its first year of operation, two hundred and fifty were accepted for the first semester of study. By 1996, a total of six hundred students had enrolled in the Baha'i Institute for Higher Education and were pursuing their studies, and, by 1998,

approximately nine hundred students were enrolled.

One former student, who is now living outside of Iran, likened the attitude of many of the students to Gandhi's attitude of nonviolent resistance. Denied the right to an education by the authorities, students were determined to study to show the government that they could study.

Among the indications of the Institute's surprisingly high academic standards and instructional level was the success that a few

Institute graduates had in gaining admission to graduate schools outside Iran, including major universities in the United States and Canada. It should be noted, however, that some Institute graduates and students outside Iran have had a difficult time getting their credits recognized. Such challenges, which are a fact of life for Institute graduates, stem directly from the Iranian government's policy of blocking their access to education and its refusal to recognize the Institute officially.

"In Iran, you have to apply for an examination to go to college," said one former BIHE student, who also asked to remain anonymous. "If you are successful at your exam, you can go to university."

The student described the examination form as having a place which asks, "What is your religion?" The possible answers listed are "Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism." When the Baha'i students either didn't write anything or wrote "Baha'i" off to the side, they were not given an entrance card to go to the examination hall. So they couldn't even take the exam.

#### Complex Administration

In its day-to-day operation, the Institute functioned basically like a correspondence school, but with its own delivery service. In its early years, students and faculty sent homework assignments and lessons back and forth via the state-run postal system. But the packages often did not arrive and were assumed to have been intercepted as part of the government's attempt to interfere with Baha'i education.

Since professors could not deliver lectures openly, they prepared their own written notes and compiled textbooks for distribution to the students. Again, as noted above, some of these texts were based on the latest Western research. One student in civil engineering, for example, was studying the construction of earthquake-proof earthen silos-and the Institute's overseas contacts were able to get for him some of the latest research on this topic from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"Our aim was to offer the best courses available in Iran," said a faculty member.

The entire operation relied heavily on the use of extensive photocopying, and one of the biggest blows in the recent raids was the confiscation of several large photocopying units.

The Institute system also featured a network of special depository libraries around the country. Numbering more than forty-five, these libraries existed in the private homes of Baha'is and enabled students in each district to obtain access to the necessary textbooks for the courses. Some of these libraries were seized in the recent raids.

#### Shut Down

Over time, as Institute officials began to feel increasing confidence about their operation, they started to organize many group classes along with independent study in private homes. The Institute also began to publish sophisticated course catalogues, listing not only course offerings but the qualifications of the faculty members. Through the international network of Baha'i communities worldwide, the Institute also began to establish the means by which its graduates might become fully recognized by other institutions of higher education outside Iran.

#### BAHA' I I NSTITUTE FO R HIGHER EDUCATION

It is not clear to the Baha'i community of Iran why the raids and confiscations were launched in late September. And Iranian government officials have not been forthcoming with explanations when asked about the actions. According to the New York Times, Iranian officials made no comment when asked about the raids and arrests.

Among other significant human rights conventions, Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966. Parties to this Covenant "recognize the right of everyone to education" and more specifically that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means." The exclusion of Baha' is from access to higher education in Iran certainly constitutes a gross violation of the Covenant. These latest steps taken to shut down the Iranian Baha'i community's creative and peaceful response only increases public outrage regarding the Iranian government's attempt to strangulate the Baha'i community.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the 43rd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York City 1- 19 March 1999.

#### PROMOTING WOMEN'S HEALTH

T he Baha'i International Community is pleased that women's

health was identified as a critical area of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and that the Commission on the Status of Women is focusing global attention on this vital issue. The Baha'i International Community, which actively collaborates with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNIFEM, and other UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on promoting women's health, participated most recently in the Expert Group Meeting on Women and Health: Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into the Health Sector, held in Tunisia in September-October 1998. As the Commission consults about actions that governments, UN agencies, and NGOs might take to improve the health of women, and to empower women to participate fully in the affairs of the world, we offer the following points for consideration.

- When women enter the arenas of law and politics and when their voices are heard in the council chambers of the world, they will be instrumental in ending war and freeing vast resources for peaceful pursuits. "The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war," the Baha'i writings assert, "will be consecrated to such ends as ... to the extermination of disease . . .to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain . . .to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral , and spiritual life of humanity." <sup>1</sup>
- Women's health is important not only to women but to their families, their communities, and the world as a whole. In the Baha'i view, the very progress of civilization depends on the unconstrained participation of women in all aspects of social life. Participation requires that women and girls be assisted and encouraged to develop all of their capacities and that they maintain the ongoing physical, emotional, and spiritual health essential to contribute as equal partners with men to the advancement of civilization.
- Avoidable causes of maternal morbidity and mortality, HIV-AIDS , tuberculosis, depressive disorders, and violence against women take a heavy toll on the whole community. Women play fundamental roles in the education of children and in promoting the health of the family both in the home and through organizations that promote and protect the health and wellbeing of the community. Healthy families and communities cannot be achieved without careful attention to creating conditions conducive to sustaining healthy girls and women.
- Consideration must be given to the health of women throughout their life span. They must be ensured adequate nutrition, especially in the early years, and protected from harmful traditional practices through the teenage years and into adulthood. The health of older women must also be paid special attention. With

the marked increase in life expectancy for women, their right to physical, mental and spiritual health must be safeguarded.

1. Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha 'u 'llah: Selected Letters* (Wilmette, Baha' f Publi shing Trust, 1982), p. 204.

## W O M E ' S H E A L T H

The Baha' i International Community has been active in the process of improving the health of women and girls . Much of this work includes raising awareness of the rights of women and girls, raising the discussion of issues to the level of principle, and applying those standards at the local, national, and global levels. We stand ready to continue to protect and promote the health of women and girls and are eager to collaborate with the Commission on the Status of Women, other UN agencies and NGOs in doing whatever will enable women to contribute their share to the advancement of civilization.

The world of humanity has two wings-one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. 2

2. *Selections from the Writings of 'A bdu 'l-Baha* (Wilmette: Baha' f Publishing Trust 1997), p. 316.

The Baha' i International Community presented this statement to the 55th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, held in Geneva 22 March- 30 April 1999.

## PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

As conflicts within countries become increasingly prevalent throughout the world, the international community is awakening to the critical need to address the question of minorities .

Because every country has minorities of some sort, governments are realizing that the potential for instability may be more widespread than previously imagined. It is, therefore, highly appropriate that the issue of minorities should be on the agenda of the United Nations at this time. The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted more than five years ago, has already made a major contribution to this discussion by articulating international standards. It states not only that minorities should not be targets of discrimination but that cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity within a country should actually be encouraged and safeguarded.

Now that the standard has been articulated, the next step is implementation. The Baha' i International Community is pleased to note

that the Working Group on Minorities, established by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of

Minorities, is gradually putting into place the means to review the implementation of the Declaration and to address the issues its implementation will raise.

In the view of the Baha'i International Community, the responsibility for ensuring equal rights for minorities falls on both minorities and majorities. The ruling groups (whether they be the majority or a minority) have a special responsibility, for the sake of justice, to bring about the social and political adjustments which will enable the other components of their society to exercise, to the fullest extent possible, their common and fundamental rights. Those groups not in power, on the other hand, have a moral responsibility to respond honorably to genuine efforts made toward them and to recognize, accept, and fulfill their responsibilities toward society at large. As issues arise, both majorities and minorities must view them in the context of an increasingly interdependent world, where the advantage of the part is best served by ensuring the advantage of the whole, and where the whole cannot flourish when parts are oppressed or deprived.

Governments need to take the lead by proving their determination to accord to minorities the same rights accorded to other citizens. This they can do by identifying the conditions that tend to disenfranchise certain minorities and by enacting legislation that will address those conditions. Such legislation is an important step, but legislation alone will never, in and of itself, end discrimination against minorities. Attitudes must change. Groups must learn to view one another in fundamentally different ways. They must see each other as partners, as co-workers, as worthy of respect and just treatment. Majorities must rid themselves of the assumption of entitlement, and minorities must eventually break free of the helplessness and suspicion induced by prolonged discrimination.

Legislation can actually facilitate changes in attitude by placing legal sanctions on behavior that was once considered acceptable. By motivating people to change the way they behave, legislation can stimulate an examination of the beliefs underlying the old behavior and consideration of the principles that support the new behavior. But only a change of both heart and mind will permanently eradicate the willingness to hate those we perceive as different from ourselves. Such a profound change can be effected

## PROTECTION OF MINORITIES

only through the influence of spiritual and moral principles. The foundation for peace, harmony and stability in the world is the principle of the oneness of humanity. Ignorance of the oneness of the human family makes one vulnerable to irrational fears and hatreds

that can be easily stirred up by lies, half-truths, distortions and inflammatory accusations proffered by unscrupulous leaders for their own benefit.

But unity is not uniformity; the oneness of the human family implies respect for the diversity within that family. In order to move toward a world characterized by unity in diversity, children must be taught to recognize diversity as a source of enrichment, not as a threat. The Baha' i International Community, therefore, commends the Working Group for its attention to the promotion of multicultural and inter-cultural education. In our view, an understanding of cultural diversity as the varied expression of our common humanity is one of the keys to the peaceful and lasting resolution of conflicts involving minorities. School curricula should aim at rendering obsolete old animosities, based upon ethnic, linguistic and religious differences , by providing instruction about the various cultures present in each country in a way that highlights those common aspirations that bind us all together as members of the human family.

When children are taught to recognize fundamental human qualities in a wide variety of cultural forms , they will be able to regard each culture as enriching society as a whole. They will also be much less vulnerable to manipulation by those who would pit one group against another for political reasons .

The Baha' i International Community is convinced that, if the human rights efforts being made by the United Nations and Governments are to bear fruit , the combined force of political and legal, spiritual and moral influences must be employed. For its part, the Baha 'i International Community is attempting to address the challenge of nurturing the minorities within its own membership throughout the world. Baha' i communities are obliged by the teachings of their faith not just to tolerate but to nurture , encourage and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class or nation within it. For that reason, the Baha' i writings suggest that if any discrimination at all is to be tolerated, it should be in favor of the minority. Guided by the unifying principles of world order

brought more than a century ago by Baha' u' llah, Baha' i communities worldwide are attempting to integrate people of all racial, national and religious backgrounds into a single community-a community that is both unified and diverse.

The Baha' i International Community will continue to collaborate with the Working Group on Minorities , and it stands ready to offer its experience in establishing unified communities characterized by respect for diversity.

INFORMATION

REsOURcEs

OBITUARIES



Second World War and later devoted of a the majority of his life to serving the Baha' i Faith. In 1944, he married chem-

Tove Larsen, with whom he raised one daughter. They became Baha' is 1949 and were the first Baha'is to settle in the Balearic Islands, in 1953 , thus earning the title Knights of Baha'u ' llah. The four years spent in the Balearic Islands interrupted Mr. Deleuran 's successful career as an architect, a career later resumed in East Pakistan where the family lived for six years until 1963 . Mr. held

Deleuran served on several Spiritual eight Assemblies in the Balearic Islands, Denmark, France, and Pakistan, including the first Local Spiritual to Assemblies of the Balearic Islands devoted, and Denmark and the National Spir- teachitual Assemblies of Denmark and . . . in

Pakistan. Appended to a letter dated 29 September 1953 written on behalf all

of the Guardian to express his happi- ness that Mr. Deleuran had decided to pioneer, the following was written in the Guardian's own hand: "Assur- ing you of my loving prayers for your

#### OBITUARIES

place in the annals of the Baha'i communities of those countries." National Spiritual Assembly of the Louise Groger

Baba ' is of the United States and on 22 March 1999 in California, United States. Louise A. Groger was born 11 April 1907 in San Francisco, Cal-

on his experience in Iran as head textile factory, Dr. Golmohammadi earned his doctorate in organic

istry at the University of Uppsala

where he also lectured. Dr. Golmoin hammadi married Elizabeth Beven in 1964. They had two children. In 1994, they pioneered to Hungary, where Dr. Golmohammadi soon became a member of that National Spiritual Assembly. He remained on the Assembly until his passing. Dr. Golmohammadi was able to attend the first Baha' i World Congress

in London in 1963 and the first

International Baha'i Conventions as a delegate. The Universal House of Justice wrote that his "dedication

the Faith, his many years of

persevering service in both the ing and administrative spheres

Sweden and latterly in Hungary, his gentle, loving, unifying spirit,

combine to win for him an enduring

I. See The Baha'i World 1996-97, p. 307, for her obituary.

places. Later, Mr. Hautz served for several years as a member of the

several national committees. Shortly after attending the fourth Interna- tional Baha'i Conference in New

ifornia, to a Catholic family. She became a Baha'i in 1936 and served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of San Francisco from 1938 to 1949. After the untimely passing of her husband.

band in 1950, Mrs. Groger pioneered Puntas Arenas, at the southern tip of Chile. She remained there for two years before returning to the United States. After the launch of the Ten Year Crusade, Mrs. Groger decided in

to return to Chile. She settled on step

Chiloe Island- the first Baha'i to do so- and thus became the Knight of 'white

Baha' u ' llah. She offered her home to young boarders, and sold fruit, jam, vegetables, and flowers to earn of

her living. The Universal House of Justice wrote after her passing, "DEEPLY SADDENED LOSS VALIANT KNIGHT BAHAU'LLAH FOR CHILOE ISLAND GREATLY LOVED LOUISE A. Spir- GROGER. HER SETTLEMENT AND LONG YEARS PIONEERING THIS REMOTE ISLAND WILL EVER ADORN ANNALS BAHAI HISTORY."

Larry Hautz

Lawrence Albert Hautz was born 19 August 1908 in Ohio, United States. He became a Baha'i in 1939, at the famage of 31. He made his living as an Madjzinsurance salesman and was able to response to

visit the Holy Land as a pilgrim after Mrs.

the Second World War. He was asked to stay for a total of ninety days to assist the Guardian to acquire property surrounding several Baha'i holy

Delhi, Mr. Hautz and his wife Carol pioneered to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where they bought a plot of land and in time founded a motel, snake park, and an elementary

Beginning with about twenty students, the school's student body grew in time to over four hundred. About this school, the National Spiritual Assembly of Zimbabwe wrote, "In the height of racial discrimination

then Rhodesia, Larry took a bold

and against all odds established the first school on the supposedly

owned' property for the indigenous children." Mr. Hautz also served on the first Local Spiritual Assembly

Harare. Carol Hautz passed away in 1971. "WE SHARE YOUR DEEP SENSE

OF LOSS IN PASSING DEARLY LOVED LARRY HAUTZ," wrote the Universal House of Justice to the National

itual Assembly of Zimbabwe, a "FAITHFUL, GENEROUS, ENERGETIC SERVANT BLESSED BEAUTY."

Tahereh Madjzoub

8 March 1999 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Tahereh Hezari was born 16 January

1925 in Qazvin, Iran, to a Baha'ily. She married Rahrnatollah

oub in 1943. In 1954, in

the call of the Ten Year Crusade,

Madjzoub and her husband pioneered

to Turkey, where they remained until

1964, at which time they moved to

Germany. In 1983 Mrs. Madjzoub

joined her family at their pioneer post a in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she resided until her passing. Throughout her life, Mrs. Madjzoub traveled frequently throughout Europe and Africa in service to the Faith, was a member of several Local Spiritual Assemblies and national and local committees, and was active in organizing Baha' i from activities wherever she lived. She kept her home open to all and was known as "dear mother" by the Baha'is of Zimbabwe. The Madjzoubs had three children. After her passing the Universal House of Justice wrote that her "STAUNCH FAITH, HER LONG-SUFFERING ATTITUDE IN HER ADVERSITIES, AND HER SACRIFICIAL ATTITUDES IN TEA C HING FIELD WERE TRULY EXEMPLARY."

Baha'i representative to the World Health Organization, and after her retirement in 1979 was one of the Ethel Gertrude Martens was born 19 July 1916 in The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. The Martens family was one of the first Anglo families to live in The Pas, a small northern town built around a Hudson Bay trading post. During her undergraduate years, at the suggestion of a fellow Baha'i student at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Martens began studying the bur-

Indian and Inuit communities. After three-month fellowship with the World Health Organization, spent studying health programs for indigenous people in the United States, Mexico, and Guatemala, she returned to Canada and founded a nationwide program to train community health workers. She earned her doctorate from the University of Saskatchewan in 1973, based on research done during the course of her work with indigenous Canadians. Dr. Martens traveled to more than eighty countries in service of both her profession and Baha'i community. She was instrumental in developing health programs in Cameroon under the auspices of the Canadian International Development Agency, was the Executive Secretary until 1986. During the first Anglo families to live in The Pas, a small northern town built around a Hudson Bay trading post. During her undergraduate years, at the suggestion of a fellow Baha'i student at the University of Manitoba, Dr. Martens began studying the bur-

founders of the Baha' i Health Agency, serving as its primary health care programs. Mary Elizabeth Martin 19 February 1999 in Haifa, Israel.

geoning field of health education . Toronto,  
 After graduating, she worked as a Health Educator for Manitoba's Ministry of Health and later gained a master's degree in public health. Dr. Martens began studying the Baha'i Faith during World War II but did not declare her belief in Baha'u'llah until 1953. In 1958 she was recruited by the government of Canada to be the first national Health Educator, and with responsibility for indigenous Canada

Elizabeth Martin was born in Canada, on 26 January 1931. From the time of her enrollment as a student in 1954 until her passing Mrs. Martin made memorable contributions to the promotion of the Baha'i Faith. Noteworthy among these are the assistance she rendered on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly to the development of Canadian Local Spiritual Assemblies; the editing and publishing of 'Abdu 'l-Baha in

#### OBITUARIES

and Messages to Canada (the latter first being the first compilation of the Guardian 's letters to the Canadian Baha ' i community); the contributions she made as a writer and director in the field of film production ; her role in the formation of the National Spiritual Assembly of Iceland ; her work as a photographer in the production of such items as a national advertising campaign in the mid-1980s; the assistance she gave to the National Assembly of Canada in organizing both national and international Baha' i conferences, as well as a series of National Conventions; as assistant to the National Secretary, with corre-

as an opera singer and gave his professional concert in February but in September of that same year he gave up his career to pioneer Cyprus. He and his mother Violet were the first Baha'is to move thus earning the title Knights of Baha ' u ' llah. After living for a period in Ireland, Mr. McKinley moved next to Greece , where he became the literary editor of the Athens Daily Post for over a decade. McKinley was known in the European literary community as an accomplished poet and editor and was included in the International Who's Who in Poetry. He edited the book

spondence and other special projects;  
and her services as a Baha'i pioneer.  
trans-

These, and the aesthetic contribu-  
tions she made to the second Baha'i  
World Congress in New York, as well  
the

as her efforts at the Baha'i World  
Lysohorsky,  
Centre, will make her warmly remem-  
bered. In a message written at the time  
married

of her passing, the Universal House  
of Justice paid tribute to Mrs. Mar-  
Unitin's "MORE THAN FOUR DECADES  
that " 1-11 s

CEASELESS DEVOTION CAUSE  
BAHA'ULLAH," and wrote that they  
ACTIVITIES

"GRATEFULLY RECALL INTEGRITY  
THAT CHARACTERIZED HER MANY  
SERVICES."

Hugh McKinley

9 February 1999 in Suffolk, England.

Hugh McKinley was born 18 February  
1924 to a Baha'i family in Oxford,  
Zea-

land. In the course of his life-long  
in

service to the Faith, he pioneered to  
Cyprus, Greece, and Wales, went on  
frequent travel teaching trips through-  
out western Europe, and was a member  
eight

of several different Local Spiritual  
in

Assemblies. Mr. McKinley was trained

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

first to Indonesia and then moved to  
Australia in 1963, where he obtained  
a degree in architecture from Mel-  
bourne University. He lived in several  
serve

Australian cities before moving in  
1978 to the United States, and then  
Jose Moucho

The Earth Is But One Country by  
John Huddleston in the 1970s,

translated an abridged version of The  
Dawn-Breakers from Persian into  
Greek in 1973, and also translated

German writings of Onda

a friend and fellow writer from  
Czechoslovakia. Mr. McKinley

Deborah Waterfield in 1979. In its  
message after his passing, the

Universal House of Justice said

INDEFATIGABLE LABORER -  
PIONEER -  
ING FIELD, HIS TEACHING

COUPLED WITH PROFOUND KNOWL-  
EDGE OF THE HOLY WRITINGS AND  
FIRMNESS IN THE COVENANT BROUGHT  
GREAT VICTORIES TO THE CAUSE."

Hedi Moani

October 1999 in Devenport, New

Zealand. Hedi Moani was born

1944 in Mahmoudabad, Iran, a Cas-  
pian Sea town to which his family  
had pioneered. Mr. Moani came from  
a family of pioneers, six of his

brothers having left home to serve

that capacity. Mr. Moani pioneered

by the Universal House of Justice  
who said also that "his commitmen-  
to the upliftment of the Maori  
people of New Zealand ... will long

as an encouragement to others."

later to New Zealand, where he lived  
14 October 1998 in Adelaide, Australia. Jose Maria Marques Moucho  
Mr. Moani felt so close to the Maori  
was born 13 May 1917 in the Alentejo,  
people that he changed the spelling of  
Portugal. He became a Baha'i in 1950  
his last name-Ma'ani- to resemble  
and was named a Knight of Baha'u'llah  
theirs. He was well loved and widely  
in 1954 when he pioneered to East  
known by the Australasian Baha'i  
Timor, then governed by Portugal.  
community, and was described by the  
Soon after his arrival, he was imprisoned  
National Spiritual Assembly of New  
Zeland as one with a "well trained  
Baha'i activities. He was able, howmind, an eloquent tongue, and a quick  
ever, to smuggle a telegram to the  
wit. .. underpinned with warmth, a love  
Baha'i World Centre, which enabled  
for people, an instant recognition for  
Shoghi Effendi to effect Mr. Moucho's  
their disposition, and an accepting  
release. Mr. Moucho encountered  
humanity." In addition to his service  
further difficulty as a result of dison several Local Spiritual Assemblies,  
crimination by the Catholic Church  
he served for a time on the National  
and the local government, and found  
Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand  
it difficult to gain employment. He  
and was completing his Ph.D in relirema ined in the country, however,  
gious studies at the time of his death.  
founded his own coffee plantation,  
Mr. Moani was beaten to death in  
and was eventually accepted by his  
his New Zealand home sometime  
neighbors as one of their own. He  
between 13 and 17 October 1999. A  
lived in East Timor for nineteen years,  
member of the predominantly Maori  
where he served at different times as  
Ratana church, dismayed at the death  
the Secretary, Chairman, Vice-Chairof his church's leader and angry at the  
man, and Treas urer of the Local

conversion of several members of the Spiritual Assembly of Dili, East Timor's capital. Mr. Moucho married Maria Olga in 1957. Together they later declared not guilty by reason of insanity. Among the seven hundred people present at Mr. Moani's funeral were members of the Ratana Ringatu Anglican, and Muslim faiths, as well as a large number of Bahá'ís from around the region. Due to the religious motivation behind his death Hedi Moani was declared a martyr; arrested

for his ties to the Bahá'í community and sent to Siberia. He lived there elected eighteen years before returning to his home, where he began working in the Turkmen Academy of Sciences as a photographer. He married Malike Nadji a year later, in 1957. They had two children. Beginning in 1960, he began traveling to Moscow and Leningrad in order to educate officials on the Bahá'í Faith, in the hopes of gaining official recognition and legal registration of the Bahá'í Spiritual communities in the Soviet Union. He did not achieve the national recognition he sought, but the Bahá'í community of Ashgabat was eventually

Ali-Akbar Nadji

4 December 1998 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Ali-Akbar Nadji was born on 5 February 1914 to a Bahá'í family in Ashgabat. Mr. Nadji was a student at the Leningrad Mining Institute in 1938 when he was

## OBITUARIES

States. Mr. O'Brien became a Bahá'í in 1961 and one year later was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Beverly Hills, California. In 1963 he was invited to become the coordinator of activities at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, a position which he occupied until 1966, at which time he pioneered with his wife to Ireland. Mr. O'Brien served on the Local Spiritual Assemblies in Ireland, and England. Mr. O'Brien also served on the National Assembly of Ireland from 1972 to 1979, save for one year in 1975. He was known by his friends for his sharp intellect, by his colleagues for

States. Mr. O'Brien became a

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Assembly of Ireland from 1972 to  
1979, save for one year in 1975.

was known by his friends for his

intellect, by his colleagues for

his proreco gnized at the state level as a result fessional ism and skill as an actor,

of his efforts. He was a member of and although socially shy, as a comthe first Local Spiritual Assembly of pelling and energetic public speaker.

Ashgabat, formed in 1989, and participated in the first National Convention of the Baha 'is of the USSR in 1991.

In the words of the Universal House of Justice, his "EXEMPLARY STEAD- that

FASTNESS AND DEVOTION KEPT BANNER FAITH ALOFT FOR DECADES DURING DIFFICULT TIMES IN REG ION," and his "LOVE AND ATTACHMENT TO THE CAUSE HELPED REVIVAL BAH A 'j INSTITUTIONS TURKMENISTAN."

Philip O'Brien

Turkmeni-

9 January 1999 in London, England.

Philip O'Brien was born 23 May 1927 was

in Troy, New York, United States, to the

Irish Catholic parents. After com- Languages

pleting degrees in Theater Studies Baha'i

and Psychology, he began working soon

in the perfomling arts industry in New York City and Los Angeles. An actor, of

producer, and director, Mr. O'Brien the

was a well-known figure in the theat- until

rical world in Ireland and the United elected

## THE BAHAI W ORLD

to the Regional Spiritual Assembly of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. He comattended the seventh International age

Baha' i Convention as a delegate and working

He married Jane Moore. The couple had four children. The Universal House of Justice lovingly remem- bered his many achievements in service to the Faith, noting also

"HIS INDOMITABLE FAITH COUPLED WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR PRODUCED A JOYOUS AND GALVAN IZING EFFECT UPON THE FRIENDS."

Hassan Pishrow

9 June 1998 in Ashgabat,

stan. Hassan Pishrow was born 15

November 1936 in Ashgabat, and

Assistant Professor of Persian at

State Institute of World

of Turkmenistan. He became a

in 1989, at the age of53, and was

an active promoter of the Baha'i Faith. Mr. Pishrow was a member

the Local Spiritual Assembly of

Baha'is of Ashgabat from 1989

1992, at which time he was

of Abdu'l-Rahman Rushdy, one of the early Egyptian Baha'is. After pleting commercial school at the

of sixteen, Mr. Rushdy began

also served as a member of the Auxiliary Board. In its message after his studies passing, the Universal House of Justice said "HIS SERVICES TO RENEWAL Accoun- BAHA'I ACTIVITIES [in Turkmeni- Accountant stan) LOVINGLY REMEMBERED." Alexandria. Mr. Rushdy married Hoda Ruhu'llah Rawhani Enayatallah Ibrahim Ali in 1952, and 21 July 1998 in Mashhad , Iran . in 1955 the family pioneered to Ethio- Ruhu ' llah Rawhani was born in pia , where Mr. Rushdy worked as 1946 in Najafabad, Iran. He was Chief of the Finance Division of the executed by the Iranian government Imperial Highway Authority. In addition to serving on the Local Spiritual He was kept in solitary confinement Assembly of Addis Ababa, Mr. for the ten months preceding his Rushdy served on the Regional Spiritual Assembly of the Baha 'is of defined by Iran 's Constitution, and North-East Africa from 1962 to 1966. hanged. The Rawhani family was Having survived an attempt on his notified after the fact. Mr. Rawhani life in 1964, and feeling confident had been arrested and imprisoned on that the Ethiopian Baha 'i community was firmly established, in 1967 in Baha'i activities. The Iranian government initially denied that it had ily to Burundi. They remained there executed Mr. Rawhani, calling him until 1989. While in Burundi , Mr. "an imaginary individual," but later Rushdy served as the legal representative of the Burundi Baha'i community, "criminal acts against national security." Mr. Rawhani was accused of as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Burundi, from the

as an accountant. In the years that followed, he undertook further studies until he became a member of the French Institute of Chartered Accountants, and later the Chief with the British Company in

under questionable circumstances.

to the Baha'i Faith. She later stated time of its establishment in 1974. that she was not a convert but had One of Mr. Rushdy's most significant been a Baha'i all her life. Mr. Rawhani accomplishments in Burundi was supported his family as a medical supachieving the legal recognition of plies salesman and was the father of that country's Baha 'i community, in four children.

the face of repeated bans and restric-

Gamal Rushdy tions on Baha'i activity by the

gov-

8 February 1999 in London, England. ernment. After twenty-three years

in

Gama! Rushdy was born 6 July 1923 Burundi, the Rushdys moved to Lonin

Alexandria, Egypt, the third son don, where Mr. Rushdy coordinated

## OBITUARIE S

the Baha' i Office of Arab Affairs until married Qodratullah Soltani in 1948

his passing. The Rushdys had three and later moved with him to Iran.

In

children. The Universal House of Jus- 1955 she and her husband left

Iran to

tice wrote of its deep grief at the news pioneer to Brazil. They settled

in Sao

of his p assing, and said that "HIS Caetano, in Sao Paulo state,

where

DEVOTED SERVICES TO CAUSE OF GOD Mrs. Soltani served on the Local

EV ER SI NC E HIS YO UTHFUL Spiritual Assembly for two years

. In

YEA RS ... REMEMB ERED WITH HI GH 1963 , they moved to Mogi Mirim.

In

ADMIRATION." addition to serving on the Local

Spiritual Assembly of that city, Mrs .

John Sargent

Soltani contributed greatly to the con-

12 August 1998 in Zimbabwe. John

struction and operation of the Centro

Sargent was born 18 January 1923 in

Educacional Baha'i Soltanieh, serving

the United States and was a prospecton the school 's administrative council

ing geologist and curator by trade. He

and board. The Soltanis had two chilentered the Baha' i Faith in 1962 and

dren. The Universal House of Justice

three years later pioneered to what was

wrote that " HER DEVOTED SERVICES then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Edith Anderson, his first wife, NEARLY FOUR DECADES IN PROMOTING VITAL INTERESTS FAITH BRAZIL passed away in 1961. They had one HIGHLY VALUED. "

son. In 1968, Mr. Sargent married Aili Honkanen, with whom he had a daughter. His work allowed him to travel Tenerife,

often, an opportunity he used to Elizabeth

spread the teachings of the Faith. Mr. in

Sargent served on the National Spiritual States.

tual Assembly of the Baha'is of and

South-Central Africa from 1967 to 1969 and on the National Spiritual is to

Assembly of Zimbabwe from 1970 to thus earn-

1977, and again from 1980 to 1985. of Baha'u'llah.

Before he passed away, Mr. Sargent Spirihad completed much research in preparation for the writing of the first Spiritual

Baha'is history of Zimbabwe, and he She

had established the country's first Baha'is library. He was also the first to

also successfully introduce the Baha'is Faith dressmaker.

to a Zimbabwean chief. Ferdosieh Soltani

26 September 1998 in Mogi Mirim , Peter

Brazil. Ferdosieh Badii was born in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on 2 February 1929 to a Baha'is family. She in Uganda

Peggy True

27 May 1998 in Santa Cruz de

Canary Islands. Marguerite

Trauger was born 24 October 1912

Middletown, New York, United

She married George True in 1934

became a Baha'is in 1936. In 1953 the Trues were the first Baha'is

settle in the Canary Islands,

ing the title Knights

Mrs. True served on the Local tual Assembly of Santa Cruz de

Tenerife and the National

Assembly of the Canary Islands.

was an author of a guide book and several children's books, and was

a fashion designer and

The Trues raised two children.

Peter Vuyiya

7 June 1998 in Eldoret, Kenya.

Vuyiya was born in Kenya 16 March

1922 to a Quaker family. He was cated at Makerere University

## THE BAHAI' WORLD

and subsequently earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture from Cambridge University in England and a master's caredegree in agricultural education from Oregon State University in the United States. From 1948 until his retirement in 1972, he served with the Kenyan Civil Service as District Agricultural Officer and Provincial Agricultural Officer. Later, with the Ministry of Lands and Settlements, he was Chief Technical Officer at the Ministry's Nairobi headquarters. He embraced the Baha'i Faith in 1953, after hearing a passage from the book Baha 'u 'llah and the New Era read by a Baha'i to Interone of Mr. Vuyiya's colleagues. "There was something far-reaching in the passage on the unity of mankind," return Mr. Vuyiya later recalled. Mr. Vuyiya secwas elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Kenya in 1969, was appointed by the Universal Kingdom's House of Justice as a Continental Wade's Counsellor for Africa in 1973, and in 1988 was asked by the House of Jus-

Local Spiritual Assembly. After passing of the Guardian in 1957, Wade and his wife became the takers of Shoghi Effendi's place in London. They raised three children. In 1965, while he was on the National Spiritual of the Ba ha' is of the British Mr. Wade was asked to come to the Baha'i World Centre to serve as first Secretary-General of the International Community, a which he filled for fifteen Wade helped organize the first World Congress in London in 1963 and, while serving in Haifa, the national Baha'i Conventions 1973, and 1978 . Rose Wade passed away in 1987. Following his to England, Mr. Wade and his ond wife, Carolyn , took up editorship of the Baha 'i newsletter of the United Baha'i community. After Mr. passing, the Universal House of wrote that "HIS INDOMITABLE

FAITH,

tice to serve as a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre in the Holy Land, a post he held until 1993. He had four children with his wife Ruth. The Universal House of

Justice wrote that his decades of service

"BEAR ELOQUENT TESTIMONY STERLING QUALITIES WHICH CHARACTERIZED HIGHLY VALUED EFFORTS THIS DISTINGUISHED PROMOTER

southern

FAITH. "

respected, widely loved elder of the

John Wade

a

26 November 1998 in Bristol, England.

devel-

John Wade was born 20 April 1910 in London. He joined the Baha'i Faith in 1955, along with his wife Rose, shared

and was soon elected to London's

First

## OBITUARIES

Nations peoples, and was a member passing,

of the Local Spiritual Assembly of said

Carcross for thirty-three years. "Auntie Dora's" home was always open to travelers and for Baha'i meetings .

Around 1950, she married Harold Wedge. They had four children.

O.Z. Whitehead

29 July 1998 in Dublin , Ireland.

Oothout Zabriskie Whitehead was born 18 March 1911 in New York City, United States. Mr. Whitehead-Baha'i

called "Zebby" by those who knew several

him-grew up in upper-class Manhattan

and defied his family's wishes

HIS WISDOM, HIS LOVING SPIRIT AND TIRELESS SERVICE CAUSE SPANNING OVER FOUR DECADES WERE MOTIVATED PASSIONATE DEVOTION BAHAI'ULLAH."

Dora Wedge

3 December 1998 in Whitehorse,

Yukon , Canada. Alice Dora Wedge

was born 29 July 1916 in the

Yukon. Mrs. Wedge was a highly

Tlinget/Tagish Nation who played

key role in the expansion and

development of the indigenous Canadian

Baha'i community. She became a Baha'i in 1961 and thereafter

the Baha'i teachings with many

written after Mr. Whitehead's

the Universal House of Justice

that Mr. Whitehead's "LONG YEARS SELF-SACRIFICING DEVOTION TO THE CAUSE OF GOD ... CONSTITUTE IMPERISHABLE RECORD LIFE EXEMPLARY SERVICE."

Ruhiyyih Zahrai

19 July 1998 in Verdun, Quebec,

Canada. Ruhiyyih Zahrai was born

Ruhiyyih al-Tahhan on 1 October

1928 in Damascus, Syria, to a

family. Mrs. Zahrai settled in

countries throughout the Arab

in order to serve their nascent

Baha'i by dropping out of Harvard University to pursue an acting career, becoming in an accomplished stage and screen actor. After From the 1930s through the 1960s he worked with several notable dramatists, including Noel Coward, Lillian Gish and John Ford. He was probably most famous for his role as Al in the 1940 film version of The Grapes of Wrath. Mr. Whitehead became a Baha'i in 1950 and was able to meet Shoghi Effendi while on pilgrimage in 1955, an experience about which he spoke of the rest of his life. In 1963, after serving on the Local Spiritual Assemblies of both New York and Los Angeles, he left the United States to pioneer to Ireland. He served on that country's National Spiritual Assembly from 1972 to 1974 and from 1975 to 1987. Mr. Whitehead wrote three collections of biographies of early Baha'is-Some Early Bahri 'is of the West, Some Bahri 'is to Remember, and Portraits of Some Baha 'i Women. He also contributed regularly

communities. She pioneered to Iraq in 1949 and married Shahab Zahrai in 1955. They had five children. After their marriage they moved to Oman then in 1959 to Kuwait. The year they moved to Qatar and Lebanon in 1967. Mrs. Zahrai most of her life as a skilled was known for her honesty and integrity. In 1986, in the midst of the Lebanese civil war, her husband kidnapped in Beirut. For three Mrs. Zahrai stayed in Beirut, to find him. In the the interviews conducted about her husband, Mrs. Zahrai did not hesitate to affirm her belief in the Baha'i Faith in people from groups often very to the Baha ' i Faith and its Syrian am1Y officers, officials, and local militia During the war, her neighbors often gather in her apartment and her to chant prayers to end the stant bombardment. She never her husband. Finally, in 1989, the





included in this category are several institutions- especially large schools-which, although focusing only on one field, have the potential to make a significant impact. In this category there are currently 43 such organizations, which are located in all continents of the globe.

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Otamendi 215	COLOMBIA
1405 Buenos Aires	Asociacion de Estudios Baha'is
Argentina	Apartado Aereo 513 87
Santa Fe de Bogota 12	Colombia
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Geneva, CH-1208

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Japan

Email: dalai@geneva.bic.org

E-mail: sfotos@gol.com

GERMANY

Nationaler Geistiger Rat der

Baha' i in Deutschland e.V.

Eppsteiner Str. 89

65719 Hof11eim

Germany

Malaysia

E-mail: gbs@bahai.de

Email: nsa\_sec@nsam.po.my

GHANA

Association for Baha' i Studies

P.O. Box 7098

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Ghana

Hamilton

HAWAII

Association for Baha' i Studies

c/o Robert McClelland

2142 Aluka Loop

Pearl City

Hawaii 96782-1317

USA

E-mail: ramabm@aloha.net

E-mail: as929@freenet.carleton.ca

INDIA

Association for Baha' i Studies

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Mumbai 400 098

India

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Nigeria

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Association for Baha'i Studies  
 Editorial Baha'i Indolatino-  
 Uralskaya St. 6-1 -66  
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 E-mail : ackerman@glasnet.ru 1405 Buenos Aires  
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 Spain  
 E-mail: du7202@cc.uab.es Belgium  
 E-Mail: centre.bahai@skynet.be  
 TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
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 E-mail : dwitzel@sa.omnes. net compuserve. com

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

COTE D'IVOIRE JAPAN  
 Maison d'Editions Baha' ies Baha'i Publishing Trust  
 08 B.P. 879 7-2-13 Shinjuku  
 Abidjan 08 Shinjuku-ku  
 Cote d'Ivoire

Tokyo 160-0022

Japan

FIJI ISLANDS

E-mail : nsaj pn@tka.att.ne.jp , or

Baha'i Publishing Trust

schwerin@mail4.alpha-net.ne.jp

P.O. Box 2007

Government Buildings

KENYA

Suva

Baha'i Publishing Agency

Fiji Islands

P.O. Box 47562

Nairobi

GERMANY

Kenya

Baha' i-Verlag

E-mail: mehrazehsani@hotmail.com

Eppsteiner Strasse 89

D-65719 Hofheim

KOREA

Germany

E-mail: verlag@bahai.de

Baha' i Publishing Trust

249-36 Huam-Dong

Yongsan-ku

HONGKONG

Baha'i Publishing Trust

Seoul 140-190

C-6 11th Floor, Hankow Centre

Korea

IC Middle Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

E-mail: nsakorea@nuri .net

Kowloon

LEBANON\*

Hong Kong

MALAYSIA\*

E-mail: bahaihk@asiaonline.net

NETHERLANDS

INDIA

Stichting Baha'i Literatuur

Baha'i Publishing Trust

Riouwstraat 27

P.O. Box 19

NL-2585 GR The Hague

New Delhi 110 001

The Netherlands

India

E-mail: nsaneth@tref.nl, or

E-mail: bptindia@del3 .vsnl.net. in

milani@gironet.nl

ITALY

NIGERIA

Casa Editrice Baha'i

Baha'i Publishing Trust

Via Filippo Turati, 9

P.O. Box 2029

I-00040 Ariccia (Rome)

Marina-Lagos

Italy

Nigeria

E-Mail: ceb.italia@pcg.it

E-mail: nakhsh@hyperia.com

\*Address communications to Baha'i World Centre, P.O. Box 155 ,  
31 00 I Haifa, Israel.

## DIRECTORY

### NORWAY

Baha'i Forlag  
Drammensveien 110 A  
N-0273 Oslo  
Norway  
E-mail: bahaiforlag@c2i.net

### SPAIN

Editorial Baha'i de Espana  
Bonaventura Castellet 17  
ES-08222 Terrassa  
Spain  
E-mail: edibahai@arrakis.es

### PAKISTAN\*

Baha ' i forlaget AB  
PHILIPPINES  
Baha'i Publishing Trust  
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1004 Manila  
Philippines

### SWEDEN

Box 60  
S-194 21 Upplands Vasby  
Sweden  
E-mail: bahaiforlaget@swipnet.se

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Baha'i Publishing Trust  
Ta Hsueh Road, Lane 18, No. 26

### POLAND

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Baha'i Publishing Trust  
TaiwanROC  
ul. Nowogrodzka !Sa m4  
E-mail: bahaiptt@pristine.com. tw  
P0-00-511 Warsaw

### Poland

### UGANDA

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Kampala  
Uganda  
E-mail: bahai@starcom.co.ug, or  
olinga@starcom.co.ug

### Portugal

E-mail: aen@bahai.pt  
Baha'i Publishing Trust

### UNITED KINGDOM

### ROMANIA

6 Mount Pleasant  
Casa de Editura si Tipografia Baha ' i Oakham  
C.P. 124 O.P. 1  
3400 Cluj-Napoca  
Romania  
E-mail: bahai@mail.soroscj.ro

### Leicestershire

LEIS 6HU

### United Kingdom

E-mail: bpt@bahai.org.uk

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Haifa Offices: E-mail: joanne.langley@dal.ca  
 • Secretariat  
 • Office of Public Information Baha'i Office of the Environment  
 P.O. Box 155 for Taiwan  
 31 001 Haifa 149-13 Hsin Sheng South Road  
 Israel Section 1, Taipei 10626  
 E-mail : opi@bwc.org Taiwan, ROC  
 Web : <www.bahai.org> E-mail: tranboet@asiaonline.net. tw

## DIRECTORY

European Baha'i Business Forum Hong Kong Baha'i Professional  
 c/o George Starcher, Secretary Forum  
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 F-73000 Chambery Middle Road, Tsim Sha Tsui  
 France Kowloon  
 E-mail: GS 12@calva.net Hong Kong

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 c/o Neissan Besharati, Secretary CH-9405 Wienacht/AR  
 14, Briar Close Switzerland  
 Palmers Green , E-mail: info@landegg.edu,or  
 London N 13 5NL rector@landegg.org  
 United Kingdom  
 E-mail: ebyc@dawn.joensuu.fi Mottahedeh Development  
 Services  
 Health for Humanity 750 Hammond Drive, Bldg. 12  
 467 Jackson Avenue Suite 300  
 Glencoe, IL 60022 Atlanta, Georgia 30328  
 USA USA  
 E-mail: health@usbnc.org E-mail: mdssed@msn.com

International Environment Forum  
 World Community Foundation  
 c/o Sylvia Karlsson  
 315 West 70th Street,  
 Arrendagaton 65  
 Suite 14C  
 S-58335 Linkoping  
 New York, NY 10023  
 Sweden  
 USA  
 E-mail: ief@bccca.org

Selected NEW  
 PUBLICATIONS

A Companion to the Study of the Kitab-i-iqan  
 Hooper C. Dunbar. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 316 pp.  
 Intended to stimulate the study of the book which, according to Shoghi

Effendi, "occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of Baha' i literature, except the Kitab-i-Aqdas." Contains annotations to the fġan, major themes of the fġan identified by Shoghi Effendi, a new index, and a suggested course of study.

#### The Holy Passions

Michael Fitzgerald. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 384 pp.

George Ronald's second major collection of poetry by Michael Fitzgerald.

#### Issues Related to the Study of the Baha'i Faith

Universal House of Justice. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998. 45 pp.

The letters in this compilation were written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to Baha'is who, conscious of the importance Baha'u'llah attaches to the pursuit of knowledge and the use of reason, had raised questions regarding the scholarly study of the Baha' i Faith; specifically, the relationship between the truths of revelation and the demands of science.

#### THE BAHAI WORLD

##### Leroy Ioas: Hand of the Cause of God

Anita Ioas Chapman. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 416 pp.

Biography of eminent Baha'i Leroy Ioas, written by his daughter.

Appointed a Hand of the Cause of God by Shoghi Effendi in 1951, Leroy Ioas was Secretary-General of the Baha'i International Council until the Guardian's passing in 1957, and after that served as one of the nine Hands of the Cause resident in the Holy Land. Includes over seventy photographs.

##### Like Pure Gold: The Story of Louis Gregory

Anne Breneman. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998. 45 pp.

Children 's book that explores the hardships and triumphs of the life of Hand of the Cause of God Louis Gregory. Illustrated.

##### Love, Power, and Justice: The Dynamics of Authentic Morality

William S. Hatcher. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998 . 155 pp.

Drawing on the insights of philosophy, science, and religion, the book's aim is to promote critical thinking on the subject of morality; specifically, how to determine whether one's moral standard is "authentic"-reckoned according to a higher authority- and not merely self-conceived.

##### A Love Which Does Not Wait

Janet Ruhe-Schoen. Riviera Beach: Palabra Publications, 1998. 312 pp.

Explores the lives of nine Baha'is whose lives were transformed through their contact with ' Abdu ' l-Baha: Lua Getsinger, May Maxwell, Martha Root, Hyde Dunn, Keith Ransom-Kehler, Susan Moody, Dorothy Baker, Ella Bailey, and Marion Jack.

##### Mahmud's Diary

Mirza Ma[.imud-i-Zarqani. (trans. Mohi Sobhani and Shirley

Macias) Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 530 pp.

The long-awaited translation of the personal diaries of Mirza Mal)ud-i-Zarqani, who accompanied 'Abdu'l-Baha on His travels through America. Regarded by the Universal House of Justice as "a reliable account of 'Abdu 'l-Baha 's travels in the West and an authentic record of His utterances," it includes many newly translated public talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha previously unavailable.

#### NEW P UBLICATIONS

Messages to Canada

Shoghi Effendi. Thornhill, Ontario: Baha'i Canada Publications, 1999. 294 pp.

The expanded second edition of Shoghi Effendi's messages to the Baha'i community of Canada, covering the years 1923 to 1957.

Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baha'i Faith

Christopher Buck. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. 150 pp.

A comparison and analysis of symbols and imagery found in the writings of Baha'u'llah and the scriptures of Nestorian Christianity. Distributed by Kalimat Press as Volume Ten of the Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions series.

The Phenomenon of Religion

Moojan Momen. Oxford: Oneworld Publishers, 1998. 640 pp.

Arranged into three main fields of enquiry-the religious experience and its expression, conceptual aspects of religion, and religion in society-this study draws examples from all the major religious traditions to introduce students to the many-sided phenomenon of religion. Includes 350 illustrations.

A Pilgrim's Song

Heather Niderost. Limoges, Ontario: September House, 1998. 114 pp.

A series of personal sketches from the author's pilgrimage to the Holy Land and a primer on the specifics of the nine-day Baha'i pilgrimage program, including maps.

Planning Progress: Lessons from Shoghi Effendi

June Manning Thomas. Ottawa: Association for Baha'i Studies, 1999. 208 pp.

Explores the spiritual principles of effective planning and the methods that Shoghi Effendi used to direct the development of the worldwide Baha 'i community from 1921 to 1957.

Resonances

Various authors; edited by Sylvie Nantais-Bourdeau. Limoges, Ontario: September House, 1998. 129 pp.

Anthology composed of winning entries and honorable mentions from a short fiction contest held in 1997. It also includes twelve photographs.

The Servant, the General, and Armageddon

Roderic and Derwent Maude. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 158 pp.

Historical-fictional account of the closing years of the First World War, recounting the brief but significant linking of the lives of 'Abdu'l-Baha and British General Sir Edmund Allenby. Published in time to commemorate the eightieth anniversary of the liberation of Palestine.

Servant of the Glory: The Life of 'Abdu'l-Baha

Mary Perkins. Oxford: George Ronald, 1999. 326 pp.

A straightforward, easily readable account of the life of 'Abdu'l-Baha for young people. Companion to the author's earlier biographies of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, Hour of the Dawn and Day of Glory.

Unlocking the Gate of the Heart

Lasse Thoresen. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998. 352 pp.

A thorough examination of the Baha'i writings on spiritual topics, designed to help readers gain an understanding of their place in creation, learn how to change attitudes and life styles, and discover methods to use in the search for greater perfection.

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'LLAH

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 of Bah:i'u'll:ih

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 Bah:i'u'll:ih Revealed after the Kit:ib-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 Bah:i'u'll:ih

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-Bah:i in Paris in 1911-1912

Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to a wide variety of audiences in Paris in 1911 - 1912, explaining the basic principles of the Baha'i Faith.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rulers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and rise of civilization and elucidating the spiritual character of true civilization.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bah:i

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 on the evolution of humanity, the Baha'i perspective on Christian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

#### B AHA'f R EADING 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 th e world .

## The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters

An exposition on the relation between the Baha' i community and the entire process of social evolution under the dispensation of Baha'u'llah, in the form of

a series of letters from the Guardian of the Baha' i Faith to the 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. paper ed . Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1990.

The first comprehensive account of the Baha' i Faith, written in 1923 and updated for subsequent editions.

### The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion

William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin. rev. ed . Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1998.

Textbook providing an overview of Baha'i history, teachings, administrative structure, and community life.

### All Things Made New

John Faraby. 2d rev. ed . London : Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1987.

A comprehensive outline of the Baha' i Faith.

Most of the books listed above have been published by various Baha' i Publishing Trusts and are available in bookshops, libraries, or from the Trusts. Please see the Directory for addresses.

## GLOSSARY

'Abdu'l-Baha: (1844-1921) Son of Baha'u'llah, designated His successor and authorized interpreter of His writings. Named 'Abbas after His grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Baha was known to the general public as ' Abbas Effendi. Baha'u'llah gave Him such titles as "the Most Great Branch," "the Mystery of God," and "the Master." After Baha'u'llah's passing, He chose the name' Abdu' l-Baha, meaning " Servant of Baha' u'llah."

Administrative Order: The system of administration as conceived by Baha' u'llah, formally established by ' Abdu' l-Baha, and realized during the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. It consists, on the one hand, of a series of elected councils, universal, national, and local, in which are invested legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the Baha' i community, and, on the other hand, of eminent and devoted Baha'is

appointed for the specific 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

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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 which the international administrative buildings of the Baha'i Faith are being built.

Auxiliary Boards : An institution created by Shoghi Effendi in 1954 to assist the Hands of the Cause of God. When the institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors was established in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice, the Auxiliary Boards were placed under its direction .

Bab, the: The title, meaning "Gate," assumed by Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, who was the Prophet-Founder of the Babi Faith and the Forerunner of Baha'u'llah. Born 20 October 1819, the Bab proclaimed Himself to be the Promised One of Islam and announced that His mission was to alert the people to the imminent advent of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," namely, Baha'u'llah. Because of these claims, the Bab was executed by order of Na'iri'd-Din Shah on 9 July 1850.

Baha'i Era: The period of the Baha'i calendar beginning with the Declaration of the Bab on 23 May 1844, and expected to last until the next appearance of a Manifestation (Prophet) of God after the expiration of at least one thousand years.

Baha'i International Community: A name used generally in reference to the worldwide Baha'i community and officially in that community's external relations. In the latter context, the Baha'i International Community is an association of the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world and functions as an international 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.

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.

## GLOS SARY

Baha'u'llah: Title assumed by Mirza I: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.

Consultation: A form of discussion between individuals and within groups which requires the subjugation of egotism so that all ideas can be shared and evaluated with frankness, courtesy, and openness of mind, and decisions arrived at can be wholeheartedly supported. Its guiding principles were elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Continental Boards of Counsellors: An institution created in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice to extend into the future the work of the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, particularly its appointed functions of protection and propagation. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, there was no way for additional Hands of the Cause to be appointed. The duties of the Counsellors include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, advising and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Faith in their areas. Counsellors are appointed for tenns of five years.

Convention: A gathering called at a regional, national, or international level for consultation on matters affecting the we lfare 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 Templer 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-l 800s. Tempters 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 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'llah: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the Kitabi-Aqdas, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom all must tum" (at present, the Universal House of Justice) of nineteen percent of what remains to one's personal income after one's essential expenses have been covered. Funds generated by the payment of I: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'llah: Title initially given by Shoghi Effendi to those Baha'is who arose to open specified new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached the remaining unopened territories on the list at a later date.

Lesser Peace: A political peace to be established by the nations of the world in order to bring about an end to war. Its establishment will prepare the way for the Most Great Peace, a condition of permanent peace and world unity to be founded on the spiritual principles and institutions of the World Order of BaM'u' llah and signaling humanity's coming of age.

## GLOSSARY

Local Spiritual Assembly: The local administrative body in the Baha'i Faith, ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The nine members are directly elected by secret ballot each year at Ric;lvan from among the adult believers in a community.

Monument Gardens: Beautifully landscaped gardens at the heart of the Arc on Mount Carmel where befitting monuments have been erected over the graves of the daughter and wife of Baha'u'llah, His son who died in prison in Acre, and also the wife of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Mount Carmel: The mountain spoken of by Isaiah as the "mountain of the Lord." Site of the Baha'i World Centre including several Baha'i holy places, the most important of which are the Shrine of the Bab and the Monument Gardens.

**National Spiritual Assembly:** The national administrative body in the Baha' i Faith, ordained in the Baha'i sacred writings, with authority over all activities and affairs of the Baha' i Faith throughout its area. Among its duties are to stimulate, unify, and coordinate the manifold activities of Local Spiritual Assemblies and of individual Baha'is within its jurisdiction. The members of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world constitute the electoral college for the Universal House of Justice. At Ri~van 1998, there were 179 National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies. See also Regional Spiritual Assembly.

**Nineteen Day Feast:** The principal gathering in each local Baha' i community, every Baha'i month, for the threefold purpose of worship, consultation, and fellowship.

**Pioneer:** Any Baha' i who arises and leaves his or her home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Baha ' i Faith. "Homefront pioneer" is used to describe those who move to areas within their own country that have yet to be exposed to the Baha' i Faith or where the Baha ' i community needs strengthening.

**Regional Spiritual Assembly:** An institution identical in function to the National Spiritual Assembly but including a number of countries or regions in its jurisdiction, often established as a precursor to the formation of a National Spiritual Assembly in each of the countries it encompasses .

**Ri<,lvan:** Arabic for "Paradise." 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 Ri<;!van in Baghdad.

**Shoghi Effendi Rabbani:** (1897-1957) The Guardian of the Baha'i Faith after the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921 , designated in His Will and Testament as His successor in interpreting the Baha'i writings and as Head of the Faith.

**Shrine of Baha'u'llah:** The resting place of Baha ' u'llah 's mortal remains, located near the city of Acre, Israel. The Shrine is the holiest spot on earth to Baha'is and a place of pilgrimage.

**Shrine of the Bab:** The resting place of the Bab 's mortal remains, located on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, a sacred site to Baha'is, and a place of pilgrimage.

**Tablet:** Divinely revealed scripture. In Baha' i scripture, the term 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, and the supreme administrative body ordained by Baha 'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His Book of Laws. The Universal House of Justice is elected every five years by the members of

all National Spiritual Assemblies, who gather at an International Convention. The House of Justice was elected for the first time in 1963. It occupied its permanent Seat on Mount Cannel in 1983.

Adapted from A Basic Baha'i Dictionary, Wendi Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989).

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