

From the Universal House of Justice 31

EVENTS 2000-01

Inauguration of the International Teaching Centre Building	41
The Year in Review	49
Millennium Events	87
Colloquium on Science, Religion, and Development	95
Conference on Modern Religions at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem	103
Mount Carmel Projects: Progress 2000-01	109
The Baha' i Faith on the World Wide Web	115
The Baha' i International Community: Activities 2000- 01	119
Update: The Situation of the Baha' is in Iran	131

ESSAYS, STATEMENTS, AND PROFILES

Culture and the Evolution of Consciousness by Robert Atkinson	145
Symbols of Transformation: The Gardens and Terraces on Mount Carmel by Elham A/nan	175
Creating a Culture of Growth: The Institute Process in the Baha'i Community	191
World Watch by Ann Boyles	201
Profile: The Barli Development Institute for Rural Women	219
Statements by the Baha 'i International Community	
Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension	229
Address to the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders	235
Address to the United Nations Millennium Summit	243
Ending Race and Gender Discrimination	249
Current Situation of the Baha'is in Iran	253
Current Situation of the Baha'is in Egypt	257
Elimination of Racism	261

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Obituaries	267
Statistics	277
Directory	281
Selected New Publications	289
A Basic Baha'i Reading List	295
Glossary	299
Index	307

INTRODUCTION

TO THE BAHA'f

COMMUNITY

In Sierra Leone, participants in a project called Equal Wings gather to discuss ways to encourage women to take an active role in community building. Indigenous peoples in the Chuquisaca area of Bolivia establish a school called Unidad de las Pueblos to provide education for children in communities where it was previously unavailable. In Buryatia, Russia, a youth center tackles problems such as alcoholism, drug use, and the spread of AIDS by addressing not only the physical problems but also their spiritual and moral causes. A young entrepreneur in Ethiopia gains international recognition for his work in establishing a private college that has attracted eight thousand students after only two years of operation- and has committed itself to provide scholarships to ten thousand women from poor families. Two women in New York establish a theater company for children in the inner city, which aims to develop drama, dance, music, and other artistic projects based on themes of racial harmony, unity in diversity, the oneness of God, and conflict resolution. Groups in Mauritius, Ireland, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, India, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Thailand, Panama, Angola, and Uruguay organize interfaith prayer gatherings in homes, schools, and community centers in support of a Day of Prayer for World Peace as world spiritual leaders gather for a summit in New York City. Although they come from diverse backgrounds and far-flung areas of the planet, these people all share a united view of the world, its future, and their role in shaping it. They are Baha'is. The Baha'i International Community, comprising members of the Baha'i Faith from all over the globe, now numbers more than five million souls. They represent 2, 112 ethnic and tribal groups and live in some 127,000 localities in 190 independent countries and 46 dependent territories. What was once regarded by some as a small, obscure sect was reported by the Britannica Book of the Year 1992 to be the second-most widely spread independent religion in the world, after Christianity. Its membership cuts across all boundaries of class and race, governing itself through the establishment of local and national elected bodies known as Spiritual Assemblies. Its international center and the seat of its world-governing council, known as the Universal House of Justice, are located in the Holy Land, in Haifa, Israel.

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

Origins

In 1844, a young Persian merchant named Mirza 'Ali-MW:iammad declared Himself to be the Promised Qa'im awaited by Shiah Muslims. He adopted the title "the Bab," which means "the Gate," and His teachings quickly attracted a large following .

Alarmed by the growing numbers of "Babis," as His followers were known, the Muslim clergy allied themselves with ministers of the Shah in an effort to destroy the infant Faith. Several thousand Babis were persecuted, tortured, and killed in the following years, but the growth of the new religion continued even after the Bab Himself was imprisoned and later executed in July 1850. The horrific treatment of the Babis at the hands of the secular and religious authorities was recorded by a number of Western diplomats, scholars, and travelers, who expressed their admiration for the character and fortitude of the victims.

THE B A B I F D C O M M U N I T Y

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

Mirza J:Iusayn- 'Ali was one of the leading adherents of the Babi Faith who was arrested and imprisoned during the tumultuous years of the Bab's brief ministry. Because of pressure on the Persian shah from European diplomats, 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 J:Iusayn-' Ali had received the first divine intimations that He was the Promised One of whom the Bab had spoken. He adopted the title Baha'u'llah, which means "the Glory of God," and publicly declared His mission on the eve of His exile from Baghdad, in April 1863.

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

In His Will and Testament, Baha'u'llah appointed His eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, who adopted the title 'Abdu'l-Baha ("the Servant of Baha"), as His successor and sole authoritative

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

Among the legacies that 'Abdu'l-Baha bequeathed to history was a series of letters called the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which He had addressed to the Baha'is of North America during the years of World War I. These 14 letters directed the recipients to scatter to countries on all continents and share with their populations the teachings of Baha'u'llah- a mandate that led to the global expansion of the Baha'i community.

Another legacy of 'Abdu'l-Baha is His Will and Testament, which Baha'is regard as the charter of the administrative order conceived by Baha'u'llah. This document appointed 'Abdu'l-Baha's eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as Guardian of the Baha'i Faith and authorized interpreter of its teachings. Successorship to the Founders of the Baha'i Faith would be shared by the Guardian and an elected Universal House of Justice, whose complementary role would be to create legislation supplementing the Faith's scriptures. During the period of his Guardianship, from 1921 to 1957, Shoghi Effendi concentrated on four main areas: the development of the Baha'i World Centre in the environs of Haifa; the translation and interpretation of the Baha'i sacred writings; the rise and consolidation of the institutions of the Baha'i administrative

THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

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

At the Baha'i World Centre, Shoghi Effendi effected the construction of a superstructure for the mausoleum containing the remains of the Bab, which had been brought secretly from Persia

and interred by 'Abdu'l-Baha in a spot designated by Baha'u'llah on Mount Carmel. Shoghi Effendi beautified and expanded the simple native stone structure, which is today a site of pilgrimage for Baha'is from all over the world. He enhanced the Baha'i properties and initiated construction of the International Baha'i Archives building to house the original Baha'i scriptures and artifacts from the early days of the Baha'i Faith. This building, the first on the arcshaped path on the site designated as the world administrative center of the Baha'i community, was completed in 1957. Shoghi Effendi's actions laid the foundations, literally and figuratively, for the further development of the Baha'i World Centre. Shoghi Effendi was also instrumental in interpreting the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and in translating them from the original Persian and Arabic into English. The Guardian had served as secretary to 'Abdu'l-Baha for a number of years and was a student at Oxford University at the time of his Grandfather's passing. Shoghi Effendi's mastery of Persian, Arabic, and English, coupled with the authority conferred upon him as the appointed interpreter of the Baha'i writings, made him uniquely qualified to undertake their translation. He also translated *The Dawn-Breakers*, a history of the Babi Faith, authored *God Passes By*, a history of the first century of the Baha'i Faith, and wrote thousands of letters to communities and individuals around the world, elucidating passages from the writings and giving direction and impetus to Baha'i communities.

Development of the Administrative Order

Shoghi Effendi's work in developing the Baha'i administrative order is one of the most dramatic legacies of his years as Guardian. The first step in this development was to encourage the organized, planned expansion of Baha'i communities in places where local and national Baha'i councils, known as Spiritual Assemblies, would eventually be established. The Guardian effected

this global expansion of Baha'i communities through a series of international plans of varying duration, during which 12 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 Ridvan in Baghdad the goal was to open 132 new countries and major territories to the Faith and to expand existing communities in 120 countries and territories that had previously been opened. These ambitious targets were actually exceeded by the end of the plan, in spite of the difficulties posed by the Guardian's death.

'Abdu'l-Baha, in His Will and Testament, had authorized the

continuation of the Guardianship through the appointment by the Guardian of a successor from among his own sons, should he have them, or other direct descendants of Baha'u'llah. Such a designation was dependent upon the decision of Shoghi Effendi as to whether an individual could be named who met the demanding spiritual qualifications specified by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Shoghi Effendi had no children and died without designating such a Guardian to follow him. He had, however, taken steps towards the election of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Baha'i Faith. He had also appointed a number of individual Baha'is to an auxiliary institution of the Guardianship called Hands of the Cause of God. These individuals had been charged with protecting the unity of the Faith and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world to ensure that the goals of the Ten Year Crusade were won. Upon Shoghi Effendi's passing, these men and women guided the Baha'i community to complete the plan initiated by the Guardian and to hold the first election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963 .

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

THE B A I L A ' F C O M M U N I T Y

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 37 years , launched eight global plans for the advancement of the Faith. From a worldwide population of 408,000 in 1963, the Baha' i community has grown to more than five million members; the number of National and Regional Spiritual

Assemblies has grown from 56 to 182; and the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies has increased from 3,555 to some 11 ,740.

Baha'is live in 236 countries and territories around the planet.

Spiritual and Moral Teachings and Baha'i Community Life

The force that unites this diverse body of people is the vision achieved through their belief in Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God, in the social and administrative structures He established, and in the spiritual and moral teachings He propagated. Central to these spiritual teachings is the concept that there is only one God and that the world's great religions have been established by Messengers or Manifestations of this Divine Reality- Abraham, Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad- who have been sent throughout history to deliver a divine message commensurate with

humanity's stage of development. The spiritual essence of all the major religions, in the Baha'i view, is the same: humanity has been created to know and to worship God. Only the religions' social teachings change through this process of progressive revelation. The Baha'i perspective sees the cumulative benefits of progressively revealed religions as fundamental to an "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 divine Messengers. 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 an individual, the Baha'i writings say that we have passed

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

To promote the development of a society in which Baha'i ideals can be fully realized, Baha'u'llah established laws and moral teachings that are binding on Baha'is. Central to these is daily obligatory prayer. Study of and meditation upon the Baha'i sacred writings each morning and evening is also enjoined. Baha'is between the ages of 15 and 70, with certain exceptions, observe an annual 19-day, dawn-todusk 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, and to avoid gossip and backbiting. He forbade lying, stealing, adultery, homosexual acts, 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 local Baha'i centers. The Baha'i writings call for the erection in each community of a beautifully designed House of Worship, surrounded by gardens and functioning as a spiritual center of activity. A variety of social

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and humanitarian institutions are also to be established around it. Seven Baha'i Houses of Worship presently exist, in Australia, Germany, India, Panama, Uganda, the United States, and Western Samoa, and sites have been purchased around the world for the construction of many more. The Houses of Worship are open to people of all faiths---Or those professing no particular faith- for prayer and meditation. Services are nondenominational. There are no sermons, only readings and prayers from the Baha'i writings and scriptures of other faiths with music by an a cape/la choir. This preserves the sacredness of the experience of hearing and meditating upon the Holy Word without the interference of manmade concepts.

Aims, Objectives, and Activities

As the Universal House of Justice stated in a message addressed to the peoples of the world, written in October 1985, coinciding with the United Nations International Year of Peace, "Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for the reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind." The ultimate aim of the Baha'i Faith is the establishment of unity among all the peoples of the world, and it is because of its orientation towards unity on an international scale that the Baha'i community has been active at the United Nations since that organization's inception. Today the Baha'i International Community, an active non-governmental organization (NGO) that represents the collective voice of national Baha'i communities around the world, enjoys special status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is particularly involved in addressing human rights issues, the needs of women and children, and environmental concerns, as well as pursuing sound, sustainable development policies. To coordinate its international efforts in these areas, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office and Office of Public Information, as well as the Office of the Environment and the Office for the Advancement of Women, collaborate with National Spiritual Assemblies around the world. The Baha'i International Community's activities at the United Nations have earned it a reputation as one of the most effective religious NGOs in the UN system. Its national and international representatives took active roles in the major world summits and NGO forums sponsored by the United Nations during the 1990s. 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

1 Shoghi Effendi , Th e World Order of Saha 'u 'llah : Selected Letters, I st pocket ed. (Wilmette: Baha ' i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 203 .

THE B A I tA' i C OMMUNITY

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

To make its aims and objectives widely known and to promote its perspective on various issues, the Baha'i International Community not only collaborates with like-minded organizations within and outside 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, which is 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 awareness programs throughout the International Year of Peace and since, aimed at government figures, leaders of thought, and the general population. The centenary of Baha'u'llah's passing in 1992 was commemorated, in part, with the publication of a statement detailing His life, teachings, and mission, designed to increase knowledge of the Baha'i Faith among members of the public. A statement presenting the Baha'i perspective on social development,

²World Order of Baha 'u 'I/ah , p. 204.

³See pp. 131-41 and 253- 56 for further information on the continuing persecution of Iran's Baha'i community.

The Prosperity of Humankind, was disseminated at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, and later that year a statement entitled *Turning Point for All Nations* was released as a contribution to discussions on the future of the United Nations during its 50th anniversary. In 1999, the Baha'i International Community released *Who Is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century*.

The Baha'i community has also been continually engaged in a series of international teaching plans. It has seen rapid expansion in different parts of the world, perhaps most notably in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where national Baha'i communities have been established in recent years following the collapse of long-standing political barriers. New national governing bodies are also being formed elsewhere, as the Universal House of Justice deems communities to have reached a sufficient level of maturity.

The existence and growth of the Baha'i community offers irrefutable evidence that humanity, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work together in harmony. While Baha'is are not unaware

of the turmoil in the world surrounding them, their view is succinctly depicted in the following words, taken from *The Prosperity of Humankind*:

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

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

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

BAHA'f
SACRED
WRITINGS

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah

I n the abundance of Our grace and loving-kindness We have revealed specially for the rulers and ministers of the world that which is conducive to safety and protection, tranquillity and peace; haply the children of men may rest secure from the evils of oppression. He, verily, is the Protector, the Helper, the Giver of victory.

The second word We have recorded on the second leaf of Paradise is the following : "The Pen of the Divine Expounder exhorteth, at this moment, the manifestations of authority and the sources of power, namely the kings and rulers of the earth- may God assist them- and enjoineth them to uphold the cause of religion, and to cleave unto it. Religion is, verily, the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world, and of tranquillity amongst its peoples. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish, and emboldened them, and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion. Hear Me, O men of insight, and be warned, ye who are endued with discernment!"

—”””
We entreat God to deliver the light of equity and the sun of

justice from the thick clouds of waywardness, and cause them to shine forth upon men. No light can compare with the light of justice. The establishment of order in the world and the tranquillity of the nations depend upon it.

—”””

Although a republican form of government profiteth all the peoples of the world, yet the majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. We do not wish that the countries of the world should remain deprived thereof. If the sagacious combine the two forms into one, great will be their reward in the presence of God. Give a hearing ear, O people, to that which I, in truth, say unto you. The one true God, exalted be His glory, hath ever regarded, and will continue to regard, the hearts of men as His own, His exclusive possession. All else, whether pertaining to land or sea, whether riches or glory, He hath bequeathed unto the kings and rulers of the earth. From the beginning that hath no beginning the ensign proclaiming the words "He doeth whatsoever He willeth" hath been unfurled in all its splendor before His Manifestation. What mankind needeth in this day is obedience unto them that are in authority, and a faithful adherence to the cord of wisdom. The instruments which are essential to the immediate protection, the security and assurance of the human race have been entrusted to the hands, and lie in the grasp, of the governors of human society. This is the wish of God and His decree . . .

—”””

Governments should fully acquaint themselves with the conditions of those they govern, and confer upon them positions according to desert and merit. It is enjoined upon every ruler and sovereign to consider this matter with the utmost care that the traitor may not usurp the position of the faithful, nor the despoiler rule in the place of the trustworthy.

—”””

B A 1-IA' f S ACRED WRITI NGS

Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a conupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust. Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these. Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly. Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously ... Wert thou to incline thine ear unto My speech and observe My counsel, God would exalt thee to so eminent a position that

the designs of no man on the whole earth can ever touch or hurt thee. Observe, O King, with thine inmost heart and with thy whole being, the precepts of God, and walk not in the paths of the oppressor. Seize thou, and hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people, and examine in person whatever pertaineth unto them. Let nothing escape thee, for therein lieth the highest good ...

Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice ...

Let My counsel be acceptable to thee, and strive thou to rule with equity among men, that God may exalt thy name and spread abroad the fame of thy justice in all the world. Beware lest thou aggrandize thy ministers at the expense of thy subjects. Fear the sighs of the poor and of the upright in heart who, at every break of day, bewail their plight, and be unto them a benignant sovereign. They, verily, are thy treasures on earth. It behoveth thee, therefore, to safeguard thy treasures from the assaults of them who wish to rob thee. Inquire into their affairs, and ascertain,

every year, nay every month, their condition, and be not of them that are careless of their duty.

Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

It behoveth every king to be as bountiful as the sun, which fostereth the growth of all beings, and giveth to each its due, whose benefits are not inherent in itself, but are ordained by Him Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty. The king should be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds, the outpourings of whose bounty are showered upon every land, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing ...

God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein ...

‘—’

Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, and beware that ye

transgress not the bounds which the Almighty hath fixed. Observe the injunctions laid upon you in His Book, and take good heed not to overstep their limits. Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to anyone, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.

Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquilized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth. Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant. ..

B AHA' f S ACRED WRITIN GS

Beware not to deal unjustly with any one that appealeth to you, and entereth beneath your shadow. Walk ye in the fear of God, and be ye of them that lead a godly life. Rest not on your power, your armies, and treasures. Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs. Succor cometh from Him alone. He succoreth whom He will with the hosts of the heavens and of the earth. Know ye that the poor are the trust of God in your midst. Watch that ye betray not His trust, that ye deal not unjustly with them and that ye walk not in the ways of the treacherous. Ye will most certainly be called upon to answer for His trust on the day when the Balance of Justice shall be set, the day when unto every one shall be rendered his due, when the doings of all men, be they rich or poor, shall be weighed.

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

The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed.

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As to the difference between that material civilization now prevailing, and the divine civilization which will be one of the benefits to derive from the House of Justice, it is this: material civilization, through the power of punitive and retaliatory laws, restraineth the people from criminal acts; and notwithstanding this, while laws to retaliate against and punish a man are continually proliferating, as ye can see, no laws exist to reward him. In all

the cities of Europe and America, vast buildings have been erected to serve as jails for the criminals.

Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference

between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamored of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God .

.....

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns- the shining exemplars of devotion and determination- shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable, and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking- the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world- should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact, the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to

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

utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of

the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.

Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purpose of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required-no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction- those testimonials of greed and bloodthirstiness, so inconsistent with the gift of life- and would instead bend their efforts to the production of whatever will foster human existence and peace and well-being, and would become the cause of universal development and prosperity. Then every nation on earth will reign in honor, and every people will be cradled in tranquility and content.

A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavor, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man 's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of God, the lovingkindness of His favored ones, the unrivaled endeavors of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable.

Endeavor, ceaseless endeavor, is required. Nothing short of an indomitable determination can possibly achieve it. Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause- the daystar of the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity- be regarded as impossible of achievement? Surely the day will come when its beauteous light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man.

J;""

While the setting up of parliaments, the organizing of assemblies of consultation, constitutes the very foundation and bedrock of government, there are several essential requirements which these institutions must fulfill. First, the elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs and the conduct of foreign relations, skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.

Let it not be imagined that members of this type would be impossible to find. Through the grace of God and His chosen ones, and the high endeavors of the devoted and the consecrated, every difficulty can be easily resolved, every problem however complex will prove simpler than blinking an eye.

If, however, the members of these consultative assemblies are inferior, ignorant, uninformed of the laws of government and administration, unwise, of low aim, indifferent, idle, self-seeking, no benefit will accrue from the organizing of such bodies. Where, in the past, if a poor man wanted his rights he had only to offer a gift to one individual, now he would either have to renounce all hope of justice or else satisfy the entire membership.

Close investigation will show that the primary cause of oppression and injustice, of unrighteousness, irregularity and disorder, is the people's lack of religious faith and the fact that they are uneducated. When, for example, the people are genuinely religious and are literate and well-schooled, and a difficulty presents itself, they can apply to the local authorities; if they do not meet with justice and secure their rights and if they see that the conduct of the local government is incompatible with the Divine good pleasure and the king's justice, they can then take their case to higher courts and describe the deviation of the local administration from the spiritual law. Those courts can then send for the

B A I I A' f S ACRED WRITINGS

local records of the case and in this way justice will be done. At present, however, because of their inadequate schooling, most of the population lack even the vocabulary to explain what they want.

As to those persons who, here and there, are considered leaders of the people: because this is only the beginning of the new administrative process, they are not yet sufficiently advanced in their education to have experienced the delights of dispensing justice or to have tasted the exhilaration of promoting righteousness or to have drunk from the springs of a clear conscience and a sincere intent. They have not properly understood that man's supreme honor and real happiness lie in self-respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in irnmaculacy of mind. They have, rather, imagined that their greatness consists in the accumulation, by whatever means may offer, of worldly goods . . .

The highest station, the supreme sphere, the noblest, most sublime position in creation, whether visible or invisible, whether alpha or omega, is that of the Prophets of God, notwithstanding the fact that for the most part they have to outward seeming been possessed of nothing but their own poverty. In the same way, ineffable glory is set apart for the Holy Ones and those who are nearest to the Threshold of God, although such as these have never

for a moment concerned themselves with material gain. Then comes the station of those just kings whose fame as protectors of the people and dispensers of Divine justice has filled the world, whose name as powerful champions of the people's rights has echoed through creation. These give no thought to amassing enormous fortunes for themselves; they believe, rather, that their own wealth lies in enriching their subjects. To them, if every individual citizen has affluence and ease, the royal coffers are full. They take no pride in gold and silver, but rather in their enlightenment and their determination to achieve the universal good.

Next in rank are those eminent and honorable ministers of state and representatives, who place the will of God above their own, and whose administrative skill and wisdom in the conduct of their office raises the science of government to new heights of

perfection. They shine in the learned world like lamps of knowledge; their thinking, their attitudes and their acts demonstrate their patriotism and their concern for the country's advancement. Content with a modest stipend, they consecrate their days and nights to the execution of important duties and the devising of methods to insure the progress of the people. Through the effectiveness of their wise counsel, the soundness of their judgment, they have ever caused their government to become an example to be followed by all the governments of the world. They have made their capital city a focal center of great world undertakings, they have won distinction, attaining a supreme degree of personal eminence, and reaching the loftiest heights of repute and character.

Again, there are sagacious leaders among the people and influential personalities throughout the country, who constitute the pillars of state. Their rank and station and success depend on their being the well-wishers of the people and in their seeking out such means as will improve the nation and will increase the wealth and comfort of the citizens.

Observe the case when an individual is an eminent person in his country, zealous, wise, pure-hearted, known for his innate capacity, intelligence, natural perspicacity- and is also an important member of the state: what, for such an individual, can be regarded as honor, abiding happiness, rank and station, whether in the here or the hereafter? Is it a diligent attention to truth and righteousness, is it dedication and resolve and devotion to the good pleasure of God, is it the desire to attract the favorable consideration of the ruler and to merit the approval of the people? Or would it, rather, consist in this, that for the sake of indulging in feasts and dissipations by night he should undermine his country and break the hearts of his people by day, causing his God to reject him, and his sovereign to cast him out and his people to defame him and hold him in deserved contempt? By God, the mouldering

bones in the graveyard are better than such as these! Of what value are they, who have never tasted the heavenly food of truly human qualities, and never drunk of the crystalline waters of those bounties which belong to the realm of man?

FROM THE
UNIVERSAL
HOUSE OF
JUSTICE

The Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Baha'i Faith, provides vision, direction, and coordination to the worldwide activities of the Baha'i community and is the sole institution empowered to enact further application of the laws of Baha'u'llah. This article contains selected highlights from the major letters of the House of Justice written to Baha'i institutions, individuals, and communities between April 2000 and April 2001.

Re: Jvan 157 BE Message

In its message to the Baha'is of the world at Re: Jvan 157 BE (April 2000), the Universal House of Justice took the opportunity to reflect on the progress made by the worldwide Baha'i community during the Four Year Plan for the expansion and consolidation of the Faith, which had just ended. Its judgment was that "[t]he culture of the Baha'i community experienced a change" during this period-evident in "the expanded capability, the methodical pattern of functioning, and the consequent depth of confidence" in individuals, institutions, and local communities. Baha'is the world

THE B AHA' I W O R L D

over were making consistent, systematic efforts to deepen their knowledge of their Faith and apply it "to promulgating the Cause, to managing their individual and collective activities, and to working with their neighbors." The House of Justice identified the chief propellant of this change of culture as "the system of training institutes established throughout the world with great rapidity- an accomplishment which, in the field of expansion and consolidation, qualifies as the single greatest legacy of the Four Year Plan."

This system, wrote the House of Justice, is "an engine of the process of entry by troops,"¹ and its development marks "a major stage in the evolution of the Baha'i community," as members have come "to appreciate how systematization would facilitate the processes of growth and development." Increased attention to prayer and meditation, and Baha'is' participation in devotional gatherings also showed an "intensified individual and collective transformation." The "advisory influence, collaborative role and practical work" of the Institution of the Counsellors, particularly

in regard to the institute process, and the "timely stimulation" of the International Teaching Centre, were noted as important elements in the community's progress.

Throughout the Plan, Baha'is around the world demonstrated their ability to integrate thought and action through "planning, building institutional capacity, and developing human resources."

Baha'i administration at all levels was involved in both the planning process and the implementation of the plans.

Highlights of the work at the Baha'i World Centre included the translation of a new volume of Baha'u'llah's writings; continuation of the construction work on the Terraces and Arc; completion of a new pilgrim reception center in Haifa; and approval of the architectural plans for a visitors' center at Bahji.

The Baha'i community made advances in many areas during the Four Year Plan- including pioneering, public information, artistic pursuits that represented "a range of imaginative activities

1For a detailed discussion of the development of the institute process in the Baha ' i community see pp. 191 - 99.

TII E U N I V E R S A L H O L J S E O F J I ' S T I C E

that grounded people in the Cause"; the translation and publication of Baha'i literature, including the Most Holy Book of the Baha'i Faith, the Kitab-i-Aqdas, which was released in Arabic and a number of other languages; the formation of seven new National Spiritual Assemblies; and the enrichment of scholarly Baha'i literature and the expansion of the Association of Baha'i Studies.

Social and economic development activities grew from some 1,600 at the beginning to more than 1,900 towards the end of the Plan, and pilot projects for youth empowerment and literacy, community health worker training, the advancement of women, and moral education were launched. The Baha'i World Centre's Office of Social and Economic Development held 13 regional seminars around the world, bringing together some seven hundred participants from 60 countries.

Baha'is continued to promote two major objectives in their external affairs work: influencing processes towards world peace and defending their Faith. In the face of "the intractable situation in Iran," Baha'i institutions and external affairs agencies "devised new approaches to activating available instruments of governments and the United Nations." As a consequence, the House of Justice noted, "the executions of Iranian Baha' is virtually stopped and the number of those sentenced to long-term imprisonment was drastically reduced."

In other external affairs work, 99 National Spiritual Assemblies became involved in human rights education, and 52 Offices for the Advancement of Women were established around the world. Baha'is made contributions to conferences, workshops,

NGO committees at the United Nations, and in other venues. Highlights of Baha'i public information efforts included the launch of The Baha'i World Web site, the release of the statement Who Is Writing the Future?, the launch of the Persian-language radio program Payam-e-Doost on the Internet, 2 and The Happy Hippo Show initiative in South Eastern Europe. 3 The House of

2<www.bahairadio.org>

3See The Baha'i World 1998-99, pp. 145-50 for a report on the Baha'i International Community's involvement in The Happy Hippo Show and the Royaumont Process.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Justice described the Baha'i International Community as "a unifying agent in major discussions shaping the future of humankind," particularly in the significant part it took in organizing the Millennium Forum.

Interfaith dialogue initiatives around the world have "increasingly involved the Faith as a recognized participant," the House of Justice noted, and "The frequency and wide embrace of interfaith gatherings represent a new phenomenon in the relations among the religions."

Writing of the current world situation, the Universal House of Justice made reference to simultaneous twin processes of integration and disintegration, which are evident throughout the world in "contrasting but interactive tendencies" that include wars, the breakdown of civil order, terrorism, international criminal networks, and, at the same time, efforts towards the establishment of collective security and an international criminal court, high-level consultation regarding the development of a system to deal effectively with global issues, new methods of communication, and so on.

The end of the Four Year Plan, said the House of Justice, coincides with the close of the twentieth century and the opening of "a new stage in the unfolding of the Formative Age" of the Baha'i Faith. We are presented with a "vision of world-shaping trends that have synchronized" at this "bridge between times," and the administrative system of the Faith "stands before the gaze of the world in the wholeness of its essential form." Now the capacities developed by the Baha'i community during the last century must be used to pursue "the inescapable tasks remaining to the Formative Age." Looking towards *Rivian* 2001 and the Twelve Month Plan to be launched at that time, the House of Justice described it as an important period in laying the groundwork "for the next twenty-year thrust" of the Divine Plan. "What was so carefully begun four years ago-the systematic acquisition of knowledge, qualities and skills of service-must be augmented."

In the letter, the House of Justice gave particular emphasis to the subject of children, referring to their "social dislocation" as

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

the "mark of a society in decline." In such a climate, it wrote, the Baha'i community must give paramount importance to the spiritual education of its children and junior youth. It must provide them with spiritual and academic education and assist them to develop their character, in recognition that "They bear the seeds of the character of future society which is largely shaped by what the adults constituting the community do or fail to do with respect to children." The heavy responsibility of parents in shaping the spiritual development of their children and molding their moral character was also emphasized.

Significant Documents

Throughout the year, the Universal House of Justice released a number of documents important to the development of the Baha'i community. These included a new publication of Baha'i writings on The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting, prepared and released "in connection with the recent application of additional laws related to the devotional life"; The Spiritual Education of Children and Junior Youth: Baha'i Classes for Children, prepared by the International Teaching Centre; a document that outlined the evolving role and responsibilities of Continental Pioneer Committees in assisting Baha'is to arise and pioneer or travel teach; a revised version of A Codification of the Law of Ifuququ 'llah to assist Baha'is around the world to deepen their understanding of the law, which was first universally applied in 1992; The Institution of the Counsellors, a document outlining the role and responsibilities of this body of "eminent and devoted believers appointed for the specific purpose of protecting and propagating the Baha'i Faith"; and Century of Light, a document produced under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice "to provide members of the Faith with a perspective on two defining processes that unfolded during the twentieth century: on the one hand, the sequence of events that made the unification of humanity the principal feature of modern history and, on the other, the emergence from obscurity of the Cause of God and its Administrative Order."

THE BAHAI WORLD

Functioning of the Baha'i Administrative Order

An 18 July 2000 letter regarding the functioning of the Baha'i administrative order provided a detailed discussion of the differences between that order and the democratic system, which was summed up as follows: "the systems differ in their essential spirit: one is a seeking for power, the other is an acceptance of responsibility for service." The House of Justice stated clearly, "All members of a

Baha'i community, no matter what position they may temporarily occupy in the administrative structure, are expected to regard themselves as involved in a learning process, as they strive to understand and implement the laws and principles of the Faith."

The Unity of Nations and the Lesser Peace

On 19 April 2001 the secretariat of the Universal House of Justice released a letter that had been written to an individual regarding the unity of nations and the Lesser Peace. The letter states, "there is nothing in the authoritative Baha'i Writings to indicate that the Lesser Peace would be established before the end of the twentieth century. However, there are clear statements affirming that the unity of nations would be, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, 'securely established' during the twentieth century." It notes that "the evolution of the World Order of Baha'u'llah is an organic process proceeding in accordance with the Divine Will and animated by a spiritual reality." It will be manifested "as a result of consecrated human endeavor over decades, and indeed centuries ... " Baha'is must be oriented to process, in contrast to society today, "which focuses exclusively on events rather than on evolutionary processes." The letter differentiates between the political unity of the Lesser Peace and the unity of nations, "which arises from a recognition among the peoples of the various nations, that they are members of one common human family." The unity of nations, the House of Justice concludes, clearly did emerge during the twentieth century.

Millennial Gatherings

A 24 September 2000 letter from the secretariat summarized the significance of and the Baha'i community's involvement in the international "Millennium" gatherings- the Millennium Forum for

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

non-governmental organizations, the Millennium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the Millennium Summit for government leaders. The letter noted that "for any observer imbued with the Baha'i vision of peace and its inherent processes, the substance and implications of these recent events, seen together with previous world conferences that during the last decade also involved leaders of nations, must be gratifying indeed to contemplate. " 4

Letters regarding the Institution of the Counsellors

A letter written on 29 October 2000 announced the appointment of 81 members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors for the Protection and Propagation of the Baha'i Faith for a five-year term of service and urged them to "bend their energies to foster the systematic growth of the community worldwide." The House of Justice wrote that in the approaching Five Year Plan, "the Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members will play a vital role, in collaboration with Spiritual Assemblies and Regional Councils, in ensuring that the design and implementation of programs of action,

from the national to the local level, respond to the exigencies of the hour." The newly appointed Counsellors were invited, along with members of their Auxiliary Boards, to participate in events marking the International Teaching Centre's occupation of its permanent seat in January 2001. The House of Justice wrote, "The coming together of the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members in the Holy Land, for the first time, on so propitious an occasion, will give further impetus to the activity that they will be required to sustain."

There were also two letters from the Universal House of Justice on the occasion of the historic events at the Baha'i World Centre in January 2001. On 9 January a letter from the House of Justice to the Counsellors' Conference held immediately prior to the inauguration of the International Teaching Centre Building provided the Counsellors with a blueprint for the upcoming Five

4 See pp. 87- 93 for a full account of these three gatherings.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Year Plan and proved seminal to discussions at their conference and at that of the Auxiliary Board members. 5

Then, on 16 January 2001, at the conclusion of the conference of the Continental Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members in Haifa, the Universal House of Justice sent a letter to the Baha'is of the world, in which it described the events, noting that this Institution "has reached a new stage in its maturation," and that "By internalizing and integrating the lessons and experiences of systematization called for in the Four Year Plan, they have indeed been transformed into channels of unified thought." Further, the House of Justice took the occasion of the conference to announce in the letter, "the Faith of Baha'u'llah now enters the fifth epoch of its Formative Age." 6

5 See pp. 41--48 for a full account of these events.

6 See p. 48 , footnote I, for a brief explanation of the ages and epochs of the Baha'i Faith.

EVENTS

2000-01

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Members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliaries, entering the Seat of the Universal House of Justice for a conference session, with the International Teaching Centre Building in the background.

Inauguration of the

INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING CENTRE

BUILDING

In January 2001, nearly one thousand members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliary Boards came from 172 countries to commemorate the inauguration of the newly completed seat of the International Teaching Centre in Haifa, Israel.

The event was historic, marking the first time that the entire membership of this institution has ever come together.

The Institution of the Counsellors operates parallel to the system of elected assemblies that govern the Baha'i Faith at the local, national, and international levels. At the international level, the International Teaching Centre is a nine-member consultative body based at the Baha'i World Centre, which advises the Universal House of Justice on matters relating to the propagation and protection of the Baha'i Faith. The Boards of Counsellors, comprising 81 members worldwide, carry on this work at the continental level, and the 990 members of the Auxiliary Boards, working with their assistants, extend the focus of the work to the regional and local arenas. The interaction between the appointed and elected institutions in the Baha'i Faith is both close and harmonious.

Travel to the conference on Mount Carmel was not easy for participants from some parts of the world. Take, for example, the case of the Auxiliary Board members from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Because of the social and political upheavals in their country, the 24 members of the Auxiliary Board there had not been able to meet for some time. Nevertheless, 20 of them and all four Counsellors serving that country- managed to make it to Haifa. One Auxiliary Board member who lives deep in the equatorial jungle spent ten days in a canoe on a river traveling from his village to the closest airport. It was necessary for him to travel in a canoe because the riverboats that usually transport people are barely functioning due to rebels, bandits, and general unrest in the country. Having arrived in the town where the airport is located, he met another Auxiliary Board member who had his plane ticket. They caught the flight with minutes to spare-a good thing, since only one plane every two weeks flies to the country's capital, Kinshasa. Later, there was a joyous reunion with other Board members from around the country in the Addis Ababa airport before they all caught connecting flights to Tel Aviv. Board

Members of the Universal House of Justice, the International Teaching Centre, the Continental Boards a/Counsellors, and the Auxiliary Boards, assembled in front of the new International Teaching Centre Building.

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Continental
Counsellors and
members of the
Auxiliary Boards

ascending the
terraces leading to
the Shrine of the
Bab.

members from countries in other parts of the world also faced similar challenges.

Once they arrived at the Baha'i World Centre, participants took part in a three-day program of visits to Baha'i holy places in the Haifa/Acre area. For many, it was their first and perhaps their only opportunity to visit the site to which they turn in prayer each day.

The conference itself began on 14 January with a devotional program commemorating the completion of the International Teaching Centre building. In the morning, as an act of devotion and reverence, the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members ascended the nine lower terraces leading from the base of Mount

Carmel to the Shrine of the Bab, which stands midway up the mountain. After circumambulating the Shrine, they proceeded along the Arc path to visit the International Teaching Centre Building itself.

In the afternoon, all participants gathered at the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, where a welcoming message to the conference from the international governing body was read. Emphasizing the deep historical and spiritual significance of the

completion of the terraces and Baha'i administrative buildings on Mount Carmel, the message stated, in part, that "the occupation of the International Teaching Centre of its permanent seat on the Mountain of the Lord ... marks the beginning of what future generations will regard as a splendid chapter in the annals of our Faith."

The urgency of the tasks lying before the Baha'i community was

THE BAHAI WORLD

also underscored in the message. Addressing the conference participants, the House of Justice said,

You hail from far-flung geographic regions and cultural backgrounds that make you truly representative of a cross-section of the human family. The world's crying need for the divine prescriptions is made plain by the ills afflicting society at every level in all parts of the planet. We must be swift in ministering to this need.

Following the reading of the message, a devotional program consisting of prayers and readings from the Baha'i sacred writings in various languages took place.

Consultative sessions during the following two days focused on issues germane to the work of the Institution of the Counsellors throughout the world. Topics included the fostering of individual

initiative; the progress of training institutes throughout the world; the development of systematic programs of growth for the worldwide community; and issues related to the protection of the Baha' i

Faith. Opportunity was also given to Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members to engage in continental or regional consultations, which promoted discussion of issues as they related to particular conditions in different parts of the world.

The two living Hands of the Cause of God were invited to address the conference on the first day of the consultative sessions.

The address prepared by Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Mul)ammad Varga, which was read by one of the members of the International

A choir
composed of
Auxiliary Board
members from
Kiribati,
performing
at the
Counsellors'
Conference.

! NALIGURATION

Members a/the
Auxiliary Boards
in Africa
ascending the
terraces of the
Shrine of the Bab.

Teaching Centre, provided an overview of the International Teaching Centre as one of the vitalizing agencies of the World Order of Baha'u'llah, operating at the dawning point of a new era in human history. While noting that the unfoldment of human destiny towards the attainment of peace is well under way, he emphasized that, according to the Baha'i writings, universal peace will only be reached through a long process of transformation of individual hearts and minds. While more strife and conflict will occur as we progress towards this goal, he said, we stand now at the threshold of a new century of challenge and of promise. Hand of the Cause of God 'Ali-Akbar Furutan spoke to the participants about the importance of obeying Baha'u'llah's injunction to teach His Faith to others and of the importance of educating our children. Children today, he said, are subject to great difficulties because of the generally corrupt atmosphere they face in the world, and so Baha'i parents and the Baha'i community must provide strong moral and spiritual education to enable them to flourish and to share their positive outlook in spite of the corruption around them. Mr. Furutan also met informally with

participants in the evenings at the Pilgrim House near the Shrine of the Bab.

One major topic of discussion in the consultative sessions was the training institute process. For the previous four years, with the encouragement and guidance of the International Teaching Centre and the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliaries, the worldwide Baha'i community had been engaged in the process of systematizing the training of large numbers

THE BAHAI WORLD

of its members in the spiritual, moral, and social teachings of their Faith. The goal has been to raise up the human resources capable of establishing a distinctive Baha'i way of life and of contributing to social advancement throughout the planet. By January 2001, the result of these efforts was the establishment of more than three hundred training institutes, which reach even the remotest areas of the planet through a decentralized system of tutors, study circles, and sequences of courses based on the sacred writings of the Baha'i Faith.

Immediately before the conference attended by the Auxiliary Board members, the Counsellors held a series of meetings to consider the best way forward for the Baha'i community as it was preparing to embark on the upcoming Five Year Plan at the beginning of 2001. Urging the Baha'i community to build on the strength of what has been accomplished, the House of Justice addressed a letter to the Counsellors, calling for their Institution to assist the community to concentrate its efforts on specific, smaller geographic areas that have the potential to develop the basic elements of community life. These would include the establishment of study

circles, children's classes, and devotional meetings, which should be open to all inhabitants of the locality and should have the goal of producing a positive impact on the well-being and cohesiveness of society at large. As Baha'i communities develop, they are urged to introduce small social and economic development projects appropriate to the needs of the area. These might include projects to promote literacy, the advancement of women, the protection of the environment, or education.

CONCLUSION

Both during casual informal conversations and in the consultative sessions, Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members from all parts of the world found that, although their experiences necessarily

varied, they shared a global breadth and depth of understanding about the activities in which they were involved. Contributions from participants from Latin America, who shared their long years of experience in the institute process, particularly enriched the consultations, as did those of the Auxiliary Board members from Africa.

Simultaneous translations into English, French, and Spanish facilitated communication throughout the conference sessions, and Auxiliary Board members showed impressive powers of concentration and restraint as they made their observations briefly so as to allow others to contribute to the consultations. The incorporation of music from every region of the world into the sessions added to the unique atmosphere of the conference, in which both joy and seriousness were evident.

With all of the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members gathered on the concourse of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice during the final session, the Universal House of Justice entered. The air was electric with a sense of excitement and anticipation as a message from the institution to the Baha'is of the world was read. The House of Justice spoke of a new stage in the maturation of the Institution of the Counsellors and noted that "by internalizing and integrating the lessons of systematization called for in the Four Year Plan, they have indeed been transformed into channels of unified thought." Other signs, such as the synchronization of "the internal processes of institutional consolidation and the external processes towards world unity," coupled with "the extraordinary dynamics" of the conference itself, moved the House of Justice to announce: "the Faith of Baha'u'llah now enters the fifth epoch of its Formative Age." As soon as these words were read, the conference erupted in a torrent of joy, with participants reveling in the historic moment. ¹

The message was followed by the reading of a passage from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, after which the Universal House of Justice exited and the conference concluded. Farewells echoed along the colonnade of the Seat and down the path towards the Shrine of the Bab, as participants went to say their final prayers before setting off on their journeys home. Their days on Mount Carmel had equipped them for the tasks ahead by imparting to them a new vision, inspiring them to renewed commitment to their work, firing them with spiritual energy, and providing a focus for their vital work in the ongoing process of the consolidation and expansion of their worldwide community.

¹ Historical eras in the Baha'i Faith have been divided into three distinct ages:

the Historic Age, the Formative Age, and the Golden Age. The Historic Age

lasted from the inception of the mission of the Bab in 1844 to the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921 and encompassed the lives of the Central Figures of the Faith. The Formative Age began in 1921 and will continue until the commencement of the Golden Age, when universal peace will be established and the institutions of the Baha'i Faith will function at their full capacity and power.

The Formative Age has further been divided into a number of epochs. The first lasted from 1921 to 1944 and saw the beginnings of the development of the Baha'i administrative order. The second, lasting from 1946 to 1963, witnessed the extension of this development and culminated with the election of the Faith's international governing body, the Universal House of Justice. The period encompassed by the third epoch (1963-86) was characterized by rapid growth and the emergence of the Faith from obscurity onto the world stage, which was due, in no small measure, to the renewal of the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran, the land of its birth. The fourth epoch (1986-2001) saw further development of the community's institutional capacity at all levels, its complete emergence from obscurity, and increased involvement in social and economic development work around the world.

YEAR IN

THE

REVIEW

The worldwide Baha'i community is a vibrant, ever-growing entity that currently comprises more than five million people in virtually every nation and territory in the world. Baha'is are united by their beliefs and by the desire to share with the world the framework which they believe offers the best hope for the advancement of human civilization. Baha'is around the world are working both to unify and to consolidate their own communities and to improve conditions in the wider society. Internally, they strive to develop their own understanding of their Faith and to create distinctive communities. Externally, the community is concerned with being a catalyst for the progress of society and using the Baha'i teachings as guidance for practical solutions of humanity's problems. Overall, Baha'is understand that these internal and external activities are inextricably linked, as the development of local Baha'i communities enhances their ability to assist others, and in turn their work for the benefit of mankind is an assistance to the wider community. This article surveys events and activities of Baha'is around the world during the period between Ri9van 2000 and Ri9van 2001.

Baha'i youth in
Malaysia
perform a dance
about equality

of the sexes as
part of a
presentation for
"Wanita 2000 "
in Kuala
Lumpur in
August.

The sheer number of activities prevents this article from being comprehensive either topically or geographically. Instead, it aims to provide a glimpse of the constantly evolving breadth and scope of Baha'i activities, and perhaps to offer insight into the challenges of building a global community.

Advancement of Women

Baha'is view the equality of women and men as essential to the success of society, with each gender having the responsibility to uplift and assist the other. 'Abdu'l-Baha articulated this principle in His statement, "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 ... Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be." 1

This concept was the inspiration for the Equal Wings program, which centers around training modules designed to instruct participants in the means by which gender equality can be realized. The training modules were introduced to the African continent through a series of seminars for men and women conducted in 2000.

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

In Sierra Leone, members of the Auxiliary Boards, the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Teaching Committee, and the Equal Wings program coordinator were among the nearly 30 participants in a one-day "Vision Conference" held in Freetown in August 2000. The group discussed the guidelines for the institute, with emphasis on the institute's role in increasing the human resources in the country by ensuring the role of women in community activities and fostering their participation in all levels of society. Participants also examined aspects of Baha'i life such as the development of study circles, children's classes, youth activities, Nineteen Day Feasts, and the means for teaching the Baha' i Faith and consolidating existing communities. Mohamed Adams, coordinator of the Equal Wings program, gave an overview of the program, in which he explained its purpose and highlighted the fact that women are an important part of the human resources of the Baha' i community. The conference

ended with the participants drawing up an action plan for renewed support of the institute and the Equal Wings program.

Another Equal Wings training program was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 7 to 11 April. The five-day course was organized by the National Baha'i Women's Committee in collaboration with the Office of Social and Economic Development.

It was conducted by two members of the Continental Board of

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~ NATIONAL BAHAI COMMITTEE

... ~OR

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Baha 'is in

. THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Mbale,Uganda, ~ á

in a parade '

celebrating

International

Wom en s Day.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Counsellors, Lee Lee Loh Ludher from Malaysia and Lally Warren from Botswana, and was attended by Baha'is from Botswana,

Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and

Zambia. Elsewhere in Africa, Equal Wings training programs were held in Ghana, Niger, and Zambia, with representatives from 23 countries participating in the various training seminars.

In addition to large regional initiatives, Baha'is participated in other conferences such as the celebration of International Women's Day in Harare, Zimbabwe. More than one thousand people, including government ministers, representatives from various non-governmental organizations, and members of many religions, gathered to commemorate the day on 8 March 2001.

Baha'is distributed two hundred copies of the statement by the Baha'i International Community (BIC) entitled Women and the Peace Process, and one hundred copies of a pamphlet produced by the National Spiritual Assembly about the equality of women and men. Part of the BIC's statement was later reprinted in a local newspaper under the heading "A Message of Peace."

The Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women in Malaysia was involved in a variety of events to commemorate "Wanita

2000," a Women's Day celebration on 26 and 27 August. The Baha' i youth of Malaysia organized and performed an hour-long program of dramatic presentations and dances on the theme of equality of women. Baha'is also joined the NGO "soapboxes."

Sessions were presented in the shadow of Kuala Lumpur 's Petronas Towers, before crowds of two thousand or more people. Another

part of the initiative involved a two-day conference on 17 and 18 August, in which Baha'is also participated. The conference discussed proposals for the country's Eighth Malaysian Plan and Women's Development Action Plan. The Baha'is also presented a copy of *Advancement of Women: A Baha'i Perspective*, by Janet and Peter Khan, to the prime minister of Malaysia.

And in Guam, the Baha'i Office of External Affairs organized and sponsored another event focused on promoting the equality of men and women: the third annual Global Unity Symposium, held on 8 April 2001. A panel of experts gave presentations

on various aspects of the theme of equality, including Senator Joanne Marie Salas Brown, of Guam's legislature; Dr. George Kallingal, professor of education at the University of Guam; Dr. Thomas Shieh; and Jayne Flores, a journalist for the Pacific Daily News. Dr. Kirk Johnson, assistant professor of sociology at the University of Guam, presented Baha'i perspectives on the issue. Participants included a number of educators, students, and other members of the wider community. Baha'i literature relevant to the subject was made available to all.

Baha'i youth
running coast-to-coast in the
United States to
promote racial
harmony
as part of the
"Spirit Run."

Race Unity

The Baha'i Faith teaches that all people are equal, and Baha'is strive to eliminate prejudices that create separations between people based on race, creed, or culture. Far from seeking a uniform whole, though, Baha'i communities are encouraged to integrate the cultures and heritage of the vast palette of humanity. The Baha'i community, which has members from more than two thousand ethnic and tribal backgrounds, seeks to create a unified planet, one which is free from racial prejudice and realizes Baha'u'llah's statement that "the earth be regarded as one country and one home." 2

2 Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah* revealed after the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette:

Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 127.

THE BAHAI WORLD

In the United States, a message of racial harmony in the form of a three-month, three-thousand-mile run from Seattle, Washington, to New York City began at dawn on 29 May 2000. Titled the

"Spirit Run," it involved nine runners, all Baha'i youth of different ethnic backgrounds, who collectively ran 54 miles each day in an effort aimed at teaching the Baha'i Faith to Native Americans. In the evenings, the runners held meetings about the Baha'i Faith in stops along their cross-country journey. They emphasized the Faith's doctrines of racial unity and offered themselves- youth from African-American, Caucasian, East Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and Persian backgrounds- as an active model of unity in diversity.

The Run was initiated by Arthur Fernandez-Scarberry, who is of Choctaw descent and was inspired by the overwhelming need for a message of racial unity. "Every step is a prayer," he said of the journey. The youth and their entourage- a small motorcade that accompanied them in their trek- lived together for the three months of the run, frequently engaging in "talking circles," in which the runners discussed their problems and challenges or shared their joy using the Baha'i principle of consultation combined with the Native American practice of passing a "talking stick," which designates one speaker at a time and is passed around to ensure that everyone is given equal opportunity to contribute. The run ended on 9 August, International Day of the World's Indigenous People, when the team arrived in New York City. The runners were recognized in the United Nations General Assembly during the opening ceremonies of the Day and were invited to participate in a consultation on indigenous children and youth. The runners were also involved in an all-day consultation at the United Nations in preparation for the 2001 World Conference against Racism, which sought to formulate suggestions on issues of concern to indigenous peoples within the context of the conference's draft agenda.

Celebration of indigenous culture was also a key aspect of a CD launch in Hay River, Northwest Territories, Canada, on 9 September. The CD features selections of Baha'i sacred writings set to music and translated into six languages spoken by the Dene people in Canada's Northwest Territories. The release of the CD was the latest phase of a project launched four years ago by Canada's National Spiritual Assembly to make recordings of Baha'i scriptures available to Native Canadians in their own languages. The meeting was held at K'atl'odeeche, the Hay River Dene Band Reserve, and opened with a drum prayer offered by local drummers and a traditional feeding of the fire ceremony. Ms. Susan Lyons, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, presented a copy of the CD on behalf of the Baha'is of Canada to Chief Pat Martel of the Hay River Dene Band, and other guests also received copies of the CD. The Baha'is served a traditional meal to the approximately one hundred participants. After receiving the gift, Chief Martel addressed

the gathering at length, in his own language, speaking about the power of prayer and its universality, regardless of its source. Indigenous Baha'is in Bolivia are working in their communities to promote education in areas where it was formerly unavailable. The Local Spiritual Assembly of Puka Puka in the Chuquisaca area established a Baha'i school called Unidad de las Pueblos (Unity of Peoples), to provide the tribal communities with an opportunity for education. Until 1997 there were only two grades with two teachers in Puka Puka, and children who went to school elsewhere were discriminated against because of their identity and culture. In 1998 the Puka Puka Assembly decided to establish a private school, starting with the fifth grade of primary school and three grades of middle school. They were also able to build two classrooms and two houses for teachers. In 1999 the first year of middle school was added to the curriculum, and in 2000 a second year was added. The Local Spiritual Assembly is currently assisting with financing the school by selling products produced by the Baha'i community, but the school aims to become fully self-sufficient by 2007.

Social and Economic Development

Baha'u'llah wrote to the His followers, "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations

Young Baha 'is
repairing a fence
around their
vocational school
in a village in
Arunachal
Pradesh, India.

on its exigencies and requirements." 3 At its heart, the Baha'i Faith is concerned with promoting the welfare of human society, and by participating in social and economic development activities, the Baha'i community seeks to assist in increasing capacity and building resources while making contributions to the physical conditions of those around them.

Baha' is in Buryatia, Russia, are tackling the difficult situation of rising rates of alcoholism, drug use, and AIDS among youth in this Siberian republic. AIDS-related deaths have increased dramatically in Buryatia in recent years-an indication of the general moral crisis afflicting much of the region. As a means to combat the physical problems and their spiritual and moral causes, Baha'is created the Youth Center for Social Initiatives. The program aims to promote healthy lifestyles among youth and to train teachers and other specialists to do prevention work with them.

The Youth Center is an extension of the Young Lions social project, a Baha'i project for youth that provides alternative activities,

training in moral leadership, and popular social activities for the youth of the Ulan-Ude region. The program's emphasis is on creating a basis for individual growth and self-fulfillment through community service, recognizing that prevention work is only effective when accompanied by a sustainable, morals-based system.

3 Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 213.

Oxanna Dorzhieva, director of the Youth Center, identified its principal concerns as "the development of young people's awareness of their personal dignity and the need for spiritual independence, development of a volunteer movement for prevention work, training of teachers and other specialists in prevention education, and cultivation of a positive lifestyle among youth and teenagers."

Local officials in Ivolga approached the Young Lions for assistance in organizing prevention activities for the whole region, where rates of drug use among youth and of alcohol and drug-related crime have sharply increased in recent years. The Youth Center also works to develop regional, national, and international collaboration in prevention work, seminars, and workshops on moral leadership, the prevention of AIDS, and substance abuse. Further, the Center is working with specialists from the AIDS Center of Buryatia to create a program for youth that will include materials on moral education, to be presented to education ministers for use in schools in the region.

Dealing with the difficulties of youth was also the aim in Swindon, United Kingdom, where the ten-week Swindon Twelve to Eighteen Program (STEP) began on 20 February 2001, designed specifically for teenagers with problems such as low self-esteem and depression. The STEP program is sponsored by Swindon's

Participants
in a dental
health class
organized
by the
Cambodian
Organization
for Research,
Development,
and
Education, in
Kanda/
Cambodia.

Health Authority, which has encouraged the development of the

"Tranquility Zones" that led to the implementation of STEP.

For the past three years, the Baha'i community in Swindon, in the United Kingdom, has been operating Tranquility Zones. The program, organized and operated by the Baha'i Projects Office, provides the people of Swindon with a place where they can "recharge" spiritually. The Zones involve a setting of candlelight, fresh flowers, and accompanying music and inspiring readings, all intended as a means of spiritual upliftment. An average of 30--40 people attend each session, seven of which run every two weeks. The projects gained international attention in March 2001, when the BBC's World Service ran a 15-minute profile of the Tranquility Zone projects. The Borough Council for Healthy Living has encouraged the creation of permanent Zones for use by the people of Swindon and has included the project in a pamphlet on stress prevention which was distributed to local schools.

In Samoa, another project initiated by the Baha'is is focusing on a very different problem- and uses humor as an essential ingredient in the effort. On 16 October 2000, World Food Day, Samoa's first television series dedicated to a healthy diet, "O le Kuka Samoa," was launched at the residence of the New Zealand high commissioner. Well-known Samoan comedian Sumeo, alias "O le King Kuka," stars as a master chef in the television cooking program, aired weekly on TV-Samoa.

The Samoan Baha'i Charitable Trust for Social and Economic Development produces the show in collaboration with the Samoan Nutrition Center. Other partners include the New Zealand High Commission in Samoa, New Zealand Official Development Assistance (NZODA), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the FAO Pacific Regional Office, UNICEF, the Samoan government's Health Department, and Television Samoa Corporation.

A spokesman for the Baha'i Charitable Trust outlined the program's intent as increasing consumption of nutritious foods, particularly locally produced fruits and vegetables. A cookbook produced with the assistance of FAO and NZODA and featuring the

YEAR IN REVIEW

recipes used in the show was released with the show's debut. Although it is designed for a general audience, the program is specifically aimed at improving the diet of children in the area. The show, broadcast in the Samoan language, also features interviews with local celebrities and sports figures.

The use of the media in development is also key in other areas. Baha'i radio programs and stations have long been a means of educating and edifying the public. Now, the Baha'i community in Chad, in conjunction with the Association for the Protection of the Environment and of Nature, has established Radio Brakoss,

"Community Radio for Development." The station's main objectives are training, providing information, and contributing to the development of the rural population of Chad. The station's proposed goal is development that encompasses parallel growth between material, economic, and spiritual means.

The station's daily twelve-hour broadcast has two major sections. The Baha'is provide a six-hour section of the program known as Antenne lumiere, which offers music, prayers, and spiritual readings, many of which come from the Baha'i teachings. The second part of the program focuses on more social development and is aimed primarily at the rural population of Chad. It informs listeners about such issues as the rights of women and children and their importance in overall society, education, health, and agriculture, and it offers news of the world.

Education

For Baha'is, education, especially of children, is a means for contributing to an "ever-advancing civilization." The Baha'i teachings emphasize the importance of education in the various arts and sciences, but also emphasize education in morality and spirituality- without these, education is incomplete. Throughout the world, Baha' i schools are combining the principles of spiritual and moral education with traditional educational disciplines.

In Australia, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Canada, and the United States, Baha'i communities are making use of the "Virtues Project" to instill these values in children. The project is based on five strategies, or spiritual life-skills, which are tools for creating a "culture of character." The project uses Baha'i principles as its basis and incorporates spiritual concepts from other religions. During the International Year of the Family, the UN Secretariat and World Conference for Cities and Corporations endorsed it as "a model program for families of all cultures." The Virtues Project has received prestigious awards and extensive media coverage for its impact.

Moral training is not limited to children, however. The Human Plenitude Program in Brazil is collaborating with the Ministry of Education in the "Education for Justice" project, which was inaugurated in June 2000. The project aims to provide moral leadership training for up to six thousand legal professionals, including judges and prosecutors who work with youth.

Baha'i education projects also focus on creating schools and formal education programs, and many are in rural areas, where access to education is often limited. The Unity in Diversity Foundation in Indonesia initiated a project entitled "Educating Children in Remote Villages" to establish seven educational centers within two years on the Mentawi Islands. Over the next four years, these centers will serve 540 children. Graduates of the Foundation's earlier

program "Empowering Youth in Child Education" are training and educating the village children. The project is being conducted in collaboration with the Department of Education, Elementary Schools Division.

Participants,
speakers, and
.facilitators of
,~-- -"""" a workshop
á on moral
leadership
held in
Yaounde,
Cameroon, in
March, 2001.

Y EAR IN REVIEW

Fori Constantinescu
(right), coordinator of
the Royaumont
Process project
"Promoting Positive
Messages through the
Media , "presents
inf ormation about the
project to the
president of Romania.
Emil Constantinescu.

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Indigenous peoples are also a point of focus for Baha'i educational initiatives. In Bolivia, the National Spiritual Assembly's Environmental Studies Center has established an early education program in a number of Aymara and Quechua areas. The programs are targeted at parents to help them initiate spiritual training and assist with literacy in their children. Nearly two hundred children are participating.

During 2000-01 , Baha' i-inspired curricular materials focusing on moral education were introduced for use in public schools in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, the Philippines, and Venezuela, and new materials were provided to schools as part of the existing religious education program in Brazil. Programs for training school teachers were carried out in Honduras, Kazakhstan, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moral education activities in public schools are

currently being carried out by Baha'is in more than 25 countries. The curriculum development unit of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education included the Baha'i Faith as part of religious study in secondary schools in the country. Both the syllabus and the texts from which the syllabus was devised were developed by Baha'is. In Ethiopia, Dr. Fisseha Eshetu, a member of the Baha' i community in that country, was recognized for his contribution to education. Dr. Eshetu was one of four young men and women who received a Global Young Entrepreneur award at the seventh World Summit of Young Entrepreneurs, held at the World Trade Center in New York from 28 August to 1 September 2000. The

Summit focuses on those who creatively contribute to enterprise and who share their prosperity, and it seeks to offer young entrepreneurs opportunities for access to venture capital, global markets, and international joint ventures, in the belief that developing the private sector is a key component for achieving social progress and equitable globalization.

Dr. Eshetu is the president of Unity College, the first private college to be accredited by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education. It was officially inaugurated in March 1998, and after only two years of operation, eight thousand students were enrolled, making it the second-largest institution of higher education in the country, after Addis Ababa University. The school offers courses in accounting, business administration, marketing, personnel management, hotel management and hospitality, and language training in Amharic, English, and Arabic. The college is already self-sustaining and there are plans to upgrade it to a full-fledged university by 2004. Dr. Eshetu is committed to providing scholarships to ten thousand women from poor families and already has partial commitments from donor organizations. In September 2000 the college launched a daily, non-political newspaper with a circulation of ten thousand, focusing on social development. It also launched an educational radio program that airs for 20 minutes six days a week.

Arts

Baha'u'llah wrote: "the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind. Just as the foundations of religion are made firm through the Law of God, the means of livelihood depend upon those who are engaged in arts and crafts."⁴ Many Baha'i artists throughout the world are attempting to use their arts to demonstrate and elucidate the essence of the Faith. They use artistic means not only for expressing their Faith, but also as a means to inform others, inspired by Baha'u'llah's words.

⁴Baha ' u ' llah, cited in " The Arts," Compilation of Compilations, Vol. (Maryborough , Victoria: Baha' i Publications Australia, 1991), p. 3.

Artists Robin
White and Leba
Toki working with
tapa, a bark cloth,
in their studio in
Canberra,
Australia.

To express the essential truths of their Faith, artists Robin White of New Zealand and Leba Toki of Fiji opened an exhibit of collaborative works at the Helen Maxwell Gallery in Canberra, Australia, which was displayed for one month in October and November 2000. Their works offer a portrait of harmony, blending Western and Fijian artistic traditions. They use the metaphor of tea, a symbol common to English and Indian culture and which has been incorporated into Fijian culture, to demonstrate the coming together of people in a convivial atmosphere. Ms. White called the month-long exhibit "a way of demonstrating the potential for people from very different cultural backgrounds to work together in harmony, in a positive and creative manner."

Not only the subject matter, but also the materials of the art are meant to represent diversity. Tapa, a Fijian bark cloth, was chosen as the medium because it is inseparably associated with indigenous Fijian and other Pacific Island cultures, which "aimed at suggesting the possibility of one culture embracing, in a positive way, features of other cultures," said Ms. White. In recognition of this goal, the set of three tapa have been titled "Cakacakavata," which means "working together." The set has been purchased by the National Gallery of Australia.

The high commissioner of New Zealand, Simon Murdoch, and the counsellor of the Fijian High Commission, Akuila Waradi, attended the 20 October opening of the exhibit. Mr. Waradi spoke during the brief formal portion of the opening, and he expressed

his pleasure at having the opportunity to view artwork that was the product of collaboration and called the work "very different and very beautiful."

Hoping to foster children's enthusiasm for artistic endeavors, Baha'is in New York City instituted the Children's Theater

Company program in that city. Activities include rehearsals and classes in drama, art projects, dance, and musical theater. The main objective is to illustrate Baha'i principles through the arts including racial harmony, unity in diversity, oneness of God, and conflict resolution. More than fifty children between the ages of four and twelve, most of whom are not Baha'is, gather weekly at the New York Baha'i center to prepare, rehearse, and perform skits meant to illustrate these principles.

The children rehearse their skits and hold performances every

two months in a 140-seat auditorium, with each season's theme based on commemorative days designated by the United Nations. The CTC was also selected by UNICEF to perform at the conference on the State of the World's Children at the United Nations building in New York in December 2000. More than two hundred dignitaries and leaders from all over the world attended the conference, including Queen Noor of Jordan, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, US senator Hillary Clinton, and UNICEF executive director Carol Bellamy. The Baha'i community of New York City offers its local Baha' i center as a gallery for month-long displays of the artwork produced by children in the program. The display garnered news coverage in newspapers and on television in New York, and the two women who founded the Children's Theater Company were voted "New Yorkers of the Week" by a local television station. The producers of Sesame Street Children's Television also approached them to make nine segments featuring the Children's Theater program to be aired nationally as part of the Sesame Street program.

On 5 February 2001 , the feature film *Serenades*, written and directed by Iranian-born Baha'i Mojgan Khadem, had its world premiere at the Perth International Arts Festival in Australia. The film is set in the Australian outback in the 1890s, at a time when

German Lutheran missionaries were trying to bring Christianity to Australia's Aboriginal people. It tells the story of a young woman of Afghan and Aboriginal background who struggles against a forced marriage after the death of her mother.

Ms. Khadem credited this quotation from Baha'u'llah as inspiration for the story:

What "oppression" is greater than that which hath been recounted? What "oppression" is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied. 5

The words, she says, "made it very clear what my film needed to be about. It needed to be about oppression, and what that oppression meant. At the center of that idea was an Aboriginal girl who felt this grave oppression that Baha'u'llah speaks about, where she looks everywhere for God, but she can't find Him." The film is Ms. Khadem's first feature, and it was shot on location in the South Australian outback. The film's star, Alice Haines, was also making her feature debut. Costar Aden Young, producer Sandra Levy, and director of photography Russell Boyd each have extensive lists of films to their credit. The movie will be released throughout the country in May 2001.

In the United Kingdom, Baha'i composer Denver Morgan used the words of Baha'u'llah as inspiration for his musical composition "Ridvan-the New Dawn Oratorio." The National Chamber Orchestra of Wales, under conductor Martin Pring, and Cardiff's Ardwyn Singers, under musical director Helena Braithwaite, performed the world premiere of the piece on 25 March 2001 in the Brangwyn Hall in Swansea. The libretto for the 90-minute oratorio was the Ridvan Tablet of Baha'u'llah, which was set to music for solo singers, choir, and orchestra. On the night of the premiere, every member of the audience, choir,

5 Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-iqan* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), p. 31.

and orchestra, and each soloist received a copy of a presentation booklet of the Ridvan Tablet.

Mr. Morgan, a member of the British Academy of Composers and Song Writers, stated: "All of the musicians [who performed at the premiere] have been in the forefront of the development of new and innovative musical works, and their collaboration with a Baha'i composer is an important breakthrough in the acceptance of the Baha'i writings as a source of musical inspiration."

Patrick Dawson
(Baha'i), DN Puri
(Sikh), AN
Pandeya (Hindu),
and Janice
Johnston
(Religious Society
of Friends)
at an interfaith
devotional
meeting at the
Baha'i center in
Dublin, Ireland,
in August 2000.

Interfaith Activities

'Abdu'l-Baha's edict "prefer all religionists before yourselves" 6 has had a strong impact on Baha'i communities throughout the world. Baha'is have experienced religious persecution since the birth of their Faith in the mid-nineteenth century and are acutely aware that religion should be a means for the unity of mankind, not for its division. This, combined with the Baha'i belief in the fundamental verity of all the world's major religions, makes the Baha'is vocal proponents of interreligious activities.

Baha'is, in their search for unity among the religions, focus on similarities and points of congruence, such as prayer. Baha'i communities around the globe organized interfaith prayer meetings in homes,

schools, and community centers in response to a
6 ' Abdu ' l-Baha, Th e Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by
'A bdu 'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, rev.
ed. (Wilmette: Baha' i Publi shing Trust, 1995), p. 453 .

call by the United Nations for people everywhere to observe a
Day of Prayer for World Peace as the Millennium World Peace
Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders opened on 28 August
2000. The Summit brought together more than one thousand spiritual and
religious leaders representing every major world religion
in an effort to "forge a partnership of peace." 7

A delegation representing the Baha'i International Community attended the
Summit meetings, as Baha'i communities around
the world joined in prayer meetings in places such as Mauritius,
where the National Spiritual Assembly invited representatives of
the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim communities to a
prayer gathering at the Baha'i Institute in Belle Rose. The event
was covered by the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation radio and
television services.

In Ireland, representatives of several of the world's major
faiths gathered at the Baha'i center in Dublin on 28 August to
participate in a devotional program of extracts from Baha'i, Buddhist,
Christian, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Sikh, and Zoroastrian
sacred texts. After the devotional program, tea was served and the
representatives of the various religions learned about each other's
faiths and traditions in an atmosphere of goodwill. Irish Baha'is
sponsored similar events in Cavan, Fingal (a suburb of Dublin),
Sligo, Shannon, and Waterford.

In Cote d'Ivoire, the Baha'is of Abidjan and Dabou invited
animist, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim representatives to pray for
peace at the Cocody Baha'i Center on 28 August 2000. The
Ivorian Ministry of Communication also sent a representative,
and the invitation to the event was broadcast on national radio and
on the national television evening news, and printed in four articles in the
main national newspapers. There were readings from
the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Baha'i scriptures, followed by
statements on world peace by the various religious representatives. Similar
events were held in the cities of Danane and
Bouake.

7See article on pp. 87- 93 for more about the Millennium World Peace Summit
of Religious and Spiritual Leaders.

The Baha'is of Dominica hosted a prayer gathering in an auditorium at the
University of the West Indies Center in Roseau,
where prayers from 13 religions were read, ending with an excerpt from the
Baha'i statement The Promise of World Peace.

In India, the State Baha'i Council of Sikkim organized a

prayer gathering at the Hotel Rendezvous in Gangtok on 28 August. The governor of Sikkim, Choudhary Randhir Singh, attended along with representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, and Sikh communities. News of the gathering was carried on the Sikkim cable television and in several local and regional newspapers.

In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Baha'is held a devotional gathering at the Baha'i community center in Port Blair and invited representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh communities to chant and recite prayers for world peace. About 60 people attended, and the event was covered by local newspapers and announced on the local bulletin of All India Radio.

In Thailand, the Santitham School, a Baha'i-run primary school in Yasothon, held a gathering of about 250 students, teachers, and staff to pray for world peace on 31 August 2000. Three Buddhist monks, two Muslim representatives, and three Catholic nuns were invited to share their prayers with the students, with the provincial education officer and the director of the District Education Office also in attendance. Local radio and television stations covered the event.

Other prayer gatherings were held at the Baha'i House of Worship in Panama City, Panama, at the Baha'i center in Luanda, Angola, and at the Baha'i center in Montevideo, Uruguay.

December 2000 saw the culmination of a year-long initiative in Norway dedicated to promoting dialogue among faith communities in the country. On 11 December, King Harald V met with participants in the national interfaith dialogue effort to discuss the results of their interactions and discussions. The king had also been the guest of honor at the launching of the interfaith project in 1999, which saw the creation of six dialogue groups on issues of religious freedom; family life; cohabitation, sexuality and equality; environmental issues; violence and non-violence; and religious and values education.

Meeting with the king were two members of Norway's Commission on Human Values, the coordinator of the Cooperation Council for Religions and Life-stance Communities, and representatives from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim religions. Britt Strandlie Thoresen, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of Norway, represented the Baha'i Faith at the meeting. "In the year since we launched this effort," she said, "we have formed bonds of fellowship and understanding among Norway's various faith communities, which we hope will contribute to an atmosphere that welcomes diversity in our increasingly multicultural country."

The interfaith dialogue project was sponsored by Norway's Commission on Human Values and the Cooperation Council for Religions and Life-stance Communities, one of Norway's principal

interfaith organizations. The Commission on Human Values was appointed in January 1998 with a three-year mandate to "contribute to a broad mobilization for human values and socio-ethics," to "enhance positive joint values, and strengthen the responsibility for the environment and community," and "to work against indifference, and promote personal responsibility, participation and democracy." Because the mandate of the Commission expired at the end of December 2000, the Cooperation Council for Religious and

Baha 'is in
Colombo,
Sri Lanka.
in front of
the Baha "iowned
Vishina
Niketan
Peace
Centet:

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Life-stance Communities will take on the task of carrying forward the dialogues.

Another body that offers a prominent voice for religious cooperation is Uganda's Always Be Tolerant Organization (ABETO). ABETO, in collaboration with the Baha'i Office of External Affairs in Uganda, held a workshop on 16 September 2000 on the need for tolerance between religious communities. The workshop was attended by religious leaders from various faith communities within Uganda. Miria Matembe, the Ugandan minister of Ethics and Integrity, attended the workshop as the keynote speaker. She addressed the need for collaboration among the religious leaders, saying that achieving religious tolerance was squarely in their hands. Each community offered statements that addressed the separations between the various faiths. Judith Eiyoo read the Baha'i statement "Religious Tolerance: The Baha'i Community Viewpoint," a copy of which was distributed to each workshop participant.

Involvement in the Life of Society

Baha'is are actively involved in public outreach, desiring to share with the world the spiritual principles and ideals that they believe will bring peace to the world and unity to its peoples. Baha'is work extensively with the United Nations and other international organizations, and strive to contribute to the discourse of society by participating in activities and dialogues with governments and

A delegation of
Baha 'is
presenting the

book Forever in
Bloom to the
1 president of
I
1 • India (center),
during a visit on
18 July 2000.

YE AR IN R EV IEW

leaders of thought. These include meetings with public officials and government ministers, and public presentations elucidating the position of the Baha'i Faith and its relevance, and demonstrating to the public how the Baha'i teachings can be used for the advancement of civilization.

By far the largest of these forums in the past year was in Hannover, Germany, at Expo 2000, where an estimated five hundred thousand people visited the Baha'i exhibit between June and October 2000. The 170-square-meter exhibit, sponsored by the Baha'i International Community and the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Germany, featured development projects in Colombia, Kenya, and Eastern Europe that illustrate the importance of grassroots capacity-building, the advancement of women, and moral and spiritual values in the process of social and economic development. The exhibit was designed to resemble a lotus flower, with three-meter-high acrylic glass "petals" in a semi-circular arrangement around a central space for reflection and contemplation.

It was located opposite the entrance in the Global House- an area designated as a forum and meeting place for organizations and policy-makers interested in sustainable development and the Agenda 21 process. Several Baha'i development projects were the subject of in-depth presentations in the seminar room of the Global House.

Nearly 250 Baha'i volunteers served at the exhibit, joining in the opportunity to present the Baha'i grassroots efforts to achieve what the Baha'i International Community describes as "dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth." The spiritual teachings of the Faith, the idea of global expansion within the framework of an administrative system, and the activities of the Baha'i International Community worldwide attracted great attention.

Elsewhere in Europe, representatives of the Baha'i International Community, the National Spiritual Assemblies of the United Kingdom and Switzerland, and several other Baha'i agencies participated in the Geneva 2000 Summit for Social Development from 25 to 30 June 2000. The opening of the Summit on 25 June,

Manijeh Roosta (right),

academic director of the
Baha 'i-run Nur
University in Bolivia,
receiving an award from
the Bolivian minister of
Education, Tito Hoz de
Vila, on 30 June 2000.

which was broadcast on CNN, included the reading of a Baha'i prayer. The event included a special session of the UN General Assembly to review progress made since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and a parallel NGO Forum which brought together some four thousand representatives of civil society.

The Baha'i International Community, the European Baha'i Business Forum, and the European Baha'i Youth Council all had displays and sponsored seminars at the NGO event, on themes ranging from racial integration to science, religion, and development. The European Baha' i Business Forum sponsored six different sessions addressing the themes of values in business, women entrepreneurs, microfinance and human development, ethics and entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, and the role of business in promoting human prosperity. One session was featured in the Earth Times daily newspaper produced at the Geneva event.

Baha'is in England had an opportunity to share a holy day celebration with close to thirty thousand people when London's Millennium Dome hosted a "Baha'i Day" on 21 October 2000. More than two thousand Baha' is from around the United Kingdom came to the Dome to commemorate the Birth of the Bab, a festive occasion marking the birth of the Prophet-Herald of the Faith.

The Baha' is presented a diverse program of artistic performances and entertainment, both on the main stage and in the

Dome's entrance hall, including juggling, clog dancing, a string quartet, singers, a Ceilidh band, dancers, and a steel band. An exhibit about the Faith just inside the main entrance, an arts and crafts area for children, and a Tranquility Zone for prayer and meditation were also part of the celebration.

In the Faith Zone, which was one of the Dome's permanent exhibits, excerpts from the Baha'i scriptures were displayed on tall pillars along with those of other faiths coexisting in Britain, including the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian religions.

Since its completion in 1986, the Baha'i House of Worship in New Delhi, India, has become one of the world's most prominent physical symbols of the Baha'i Faith. The building, also

known as "the Lotus Temple" because of its distinctive lotus-shaped design, with concrete "petals" sheathed in marble, has been a source of international interest and praise, and receives an average of three and a half million visitors every year, recently surpassing the Taj Mahal as the most visited building in the world.

The temple has always welcomed dignitaries, tourists, and travelers, but 2000 marked the first visit of a head of state on an official visit. The president of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, visited the House of Worship on 29 October along with his family. Also accompanying the president was a delegation of about 30 Icelandic dignitaries, including the foreign minister and his wife. They were met by the secretary-general of the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Ramnik Shah, the general manager of the House of Worship, Shahin Javid, and a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for Asia, Zena Sorabjee. The Icelandic delegation also included a Baha'i, Vilhjalmur Gudmundsson, who is director of market development for the Trade Council of Iceland. On 19 April 2001 the Indian temple received an official visit from Jens Stolberg, prime minister of Norway. Mr. Stolberg and his delegation were given a reception, brief tour, and explanation of the building's design and function. The Norwegian delegation

THE BAHAI'IS OF THE WORLD

was also briefed on the collaboration between the Baha'is and the Norwegian development agency NORAD.

In Brazil, a ceremony on 19 September 2000 saw soil samples from 26 nations deposited in the hourglass-shaped Peace Monument in Rio de Janeiro. The monument now contains soil from nearly 150 countries and stands as a representation of the oneness of humanity and the global cooperation needed to achieve lasting peace. Built by the Baha'i International Community and the Baha'i community of Brazil in 1992 for the Earth Summit and designed by the renowned Brazilian sculptor Siron Franco, the five-meter-high concrete and ceramic monument is located near the site of the 1992 Global NGO Forum. Forty-two nations contributed soil to the monument at its inauguration on 14 June 1992, held as one of the closing ceremonies of the Earth Summit and Global Forum, and the remaining soil samples have been collected throughout the years since, with many of them coming from sacred sites. Etched on the four sides of the monument's upper pyramid is a quotation from Baha'u'llah displayed in English, Portuguese, Chinese, and Terena, an indigenous language of Brazil: "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens." The final deposits of soil passed through the hands of a human chain to the top of the monument, where a street child, who happened to be passing by at that moment, placed it in the monument.

Community Development

Just as individuals are counseled by the Baha'i teachings to "acquire the attributes of spiritual and material perfection,"⁸ so must they collectively pursue the same goals for the more than two hundred communities in countries and territories throughout the world. There is an awareness that the communities, like the people who compose them, need to attend to their growth and development- to promote creativity, build capacity, and develop distinctive social patterns.

⁸ 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, 1st pocket ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 35.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Saha'is in Belarus
with documents
certifying the
official registration
of the country's
National Spiritual
Assembly.

As a celebration of its own growth, on 26 November 2000 the Baha'i community of Malaysia celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Faith in that country. The Baha'is hosted a commemorative dinner in Kuala Lumpur, which was attended by more than six hundred people. The venue for the event was decorated with colorful banners and displays of the Baha'i sacred writings. The guest of honor was the deputy minister of National Unity and Social Development, Dr. Tiki Lafe, and Dr. John Fozdar, son of the first Baha'is to settle in Malaysia, spoke about the early days of the Faith there. The evening included prayers read in four languages with choral accompaniment, and presentations by children and youth of Baha'i songs and dances. A booklet, "Celebrating 50 Years of the Baha'i Faith in Malaysia," was produced for the event and given to all participants.

Another significant step in the development of national communities is the recognition of their national administrative bodies, the National Spiritual Assemblies, by their countries' governments. Such registration and incorporation allows the Baha'is to enjoy the same freedoms and protections as their coreligionists.

In Belarus, a country where the Baha'i Faith has been legal only since the collapse of the Soviet regime, the National Spiritual Assembly was registered with the government on 29 August 2000. In a ceremony the following day, the chairman of the State Committee for Religious Affairs presented a certificate of registration to one of the first Baha'is in Belarus, National Assembly member

Agata Shpakovskaya.

THE BAHAI WORLD

A similar event on 9 October 2000 saw the incorporation of the Baha'i community of the Canary Islands. The Spanish government recognized the body as an Associative Religious Entity in the Registry of Religious Entities of the Ministry of Justice. On 17 September 2000, Baha'is William Collins and SM Waris Hamadani presented 13 different editions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. The editions represent many of the currently available translations of Baha'u'llah's book of laws, which is also known as the "Most Holy Book." The languages presented include the book's native Arabic (which appeared in 2000 in its first authorized version), along with Danish, Dutch, English, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Thai, and Urdu. The first authorized English edition of the book was issued in 1992, on the one hundredth anniversary of Baha'u'llah's passing. Many members of the Library staff were on hand for the presentation, with Helen Poe accepting the books on behalf of the Library of Congress. A short talk was given by Mr. Collins, who works at the Library, about the Baha'i Faith and the significance of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, including a brief account of the history of its writing and the subjects it addresses. Mr. Hamadani spoke briefly about translating the book into Urdu, a process which took approximately 18 months; it was published in 1997. Bulgarian, French, and German translations of the book have since been donated to the Library.

Baha'is William Collins (far left) and Waris Hamadani (second from right) presenting copies of the Kitab-i-Aqdas to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

Children and youth participants at a summer school in Catania, Sicily, in

September 2000.

Baha'is are also attempting to deepen their understanding of the laws of Baha'u'llah by studying the Kitab-i-Aqdas within their own communities, in order to better reflect the ideals set forth in it. To this end, participants from around Pakistan gathered at the Baha'i center in Islamabad from 23 to 25 June 2000 to participate in the first program offered by the Academy of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, which has been established to focus on in-depth study of the Most Holy Book and to support research on its laws and ordinances.

Muhammad Ashraf Ali, joint secretary of Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Minorities, participated in the program and during the official inauguration of the Academy unveiled a glass ornament on which was engraved the opening paragraph of the Kitab-i-Aqdas in both Arabic and English. After the ceremony, Mr. Ali addressed the audience, saying: "It has been memorable for me to represent the government of Pakistan in so blessed a gathering where participants from every nook and corner of the country have come to study the Most Sacred Book of the Baha'i religion. I hope, as you have made such a beautiful display of all the divine scriptures of the world, one day we will see all the followers of the religions united on one single platform."

Baha'i and non-Baha'i scholars presented research papers on various religions, broadening the Academy's study program beyond the single book to incorporate elements of other religious

traditions. There were also presentations on the significance of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, both within the Faith and in the spectrum of holy texts. The offerings provided the participants with both a new vision and practical techniques for their study of the book.

Youth

Youth, who collectively represent the future of human society, are given special emphasis in the Baha'i Faith. Called upon to serve the Faith through their energy and enthusiasm, Baha'i youth hope to rise to meet the expectations set forth by Baha'u'llah in His statement, "Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord." 9 Baha'i youth workshops promote the Faith through music, arts, and dances that embody Baha'i themes and ideas. The Baha'i youth workshop of Oahu, Hawaii, with members from the islands of Oahu, Maui, and Kauai, arrived in Tonga in July 2000 for a three-and-a-half-week tour. During its stay, the workshop performed 36 times for approximately eleven thousand people- 11 percent of the total Tongan population. More than eight thousand members of the audience were students. Previously, the Tongan workshop, Pacific Flame, had only been allowed to perform in one school.

In Macedonia, the Theatrical Youth of Macedonia launched a project inspired by a training seminar on "Promoting Positive Messages Through the Media: The Happy Hippo Show" held there recently in the framework of the Royaumont Process on stability and good neighborliness in southeastern Europe. The interactive dialogue for youth was launched on 3 May 2000, with the goals of using the Happy Hippo format in schools and youth cultural centers, filming programs for a television documentary, and publishing information on the positive messages of the show in various languages. The organization has already conducted programs in 24 towns, visiting two to three schools in each town and involving up to six hundred youth in each program.

9Baha'u'llah, cited in "Youth: A Compilation," *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. 2 (Maryborough, Victoria: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), p. 415.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Children
and youth
performing at an
Asian Baha'i
youth conference
in Karachi,
Pakistan,
in July 2000.

Guyana's "Youth Can Move the World" project, funded by the Varqa Foundation in collaboration with UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth and Sport for Guyana, saw 350 youth participating in a seven-day training program. Afterwards, between September 2000 and August 2001, 60 youth groups were functioning regularly with more than one thousand youth participating in an integrated program of study and service to the community. The one-year program covers issues of special importance to youth, including drug use, domestic violence, literacy, gender equality, discrimination and prejudice, and protection of the environment. Another key element deals with the promotion of transformation in both individuals and communities. As part of the second phase of the program, participants present what they have learned in schools, community centers, and youth clubs throughout the country. Materials used in the course include scripture from the major religions in Guyana, namely the Baha'i Faith, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Some of the main forums in which Baha'i youth gather to share their enthusiasm for their Faith and create strategies of action are youth conferences like the First Latin American Youth Congress in Santiago, Chile, where some 650 youth from 25 countries gathered in January 1998. In 2000, five more International Congresses were held, with one in Paraguay in January, and others in

Ecuador, El Salvador, Canada, and the Dominican Republic in July and August. Thousands of youth from dozens of countries gathered at these Congresses, which serve as the focal point for a growing phenomenon known as the Baha'i Youth Movement. The youth in the Movement are dedicated to discovering both practical and spiritual solutions to the challenges facing the world, and to becoming catalysts for spiritual transformation. They aim to reach the hearts of humanity by sharing the message of the Baha'i teachings, which they believe is solely capable of healing humanity. The youth also work toward these goals through grassroots programs such as the Youth Leadership Project for the Common Good in Bolivia, which trains high school students in moral leadership, team building, and consultation. The project garnered the attention of government agencies in several countries where the Congresses were held, and spawned initiatives for similar projects in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, Uruguay, and six islands of the Caribbean. In the Marshall Islands, "Share a Basket Overflowing with the Words of Baha'u'llah" was the theme of the youth conference held on Majuro on 25 and 26 June 2000. Nearly one hundred young Baha'is from Fiji, Hawaii, Kiribati, the Marianas, the Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu participated in the event. The inspiration for the theme was the Marshallese custom of having a basket overflowing with food from which anyone can partake. In order to share the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the youth prepared quotations from the Baha'i writings about subjects that best suit the attributes and

Children
studying
about the
Bab and
Baha 'u 'llah
in a class in
Crown
Haven,
Abaco,
Bahamas.

Baha 'is in
Laos
consulting
with
Continental
Counsellor
Lee Lee Loh
Ludher about
the training

institute
process, in a
workshop held
in July 2000.

qualities of the Pacific Islands peoples. The youth shared experiences and then read from Baha'i writings that support each topic, told stories, and performed music, dances, and songs based on Baha'i themes.

Training Institutes

Through the curriculums and programs of Baha'i training institutes, Baha'is seek to increase the human resources of the Baha'i community. 10 Baha'is learn systematic methods for contributing to the spiritual and administrative growth of their communities, offering service to others, expressing their faith through arts and music, and teaching the Faith to others. Institutes also address issues such as health care, literacy, and the equality of women and men- issues which relate directly to the broader society, all in an effort to enliven the spirit and enhance the abilities of the Baha'i community.

A key aspect in the development of the training institutes has been the Ruhi curriculum, developed in Colombia and now used worldwide as a systematic means for Baha'is to better understand their Faith. The spiritual education of children is another essential aspect of training programs. In Colombia, the Primary School Program, dedicated to strengthening existing schools, has become the center of Baha'i activities. There are currently 66 pre-primary

°For more about training institutes, see pp. 191 - 99.

Participants in
a Baha'i
training
institute class
in Burkina
Faso, in
September
2000.

Baha'i schools in the Guajira region and 14 schools in the surrounding area, with a total of thirteen hundred students enrolled in Guajira and five hundred students enrolled in other areas.

In Panama, the training institute has devised a nationwide systematic sequence of courses for children and youth to study materials that emphasize participants' spiritual development. The program is carried out in stages appropriate to the ages of the children. To follow up, the children and youth come back together again in national and regional gatherings and are encouraged to carry out activities in their respective communities.

The National Spiritual Assembly, along with the Committee for the Baha'i Education of Children and the National Institute Office, has also planned a systematic national program for the education of children and junior youth. The objective of this collaborative effort is to establish an official Baha'i curriculum for Baha' i classes. Junior youth activities are also conducted at the local, regional, and national levels. In April 2000, 724 junior youth were involved in the institute process.

During the last year, 387 people, which constitutes 76 percent of the Baha'i population of the Ukraine, went through Ruhi training courses as part of the institute process. Two branches of the national training institute in Kiev and Odessa worked intensely to provide courses. Currently there are 31 active study circles in the Ukraine, and participants are beginning to form service projects inspired by the institutes.

Sharing the Baha'i Message

Of all the activities of the Baha'i community, none is seen as more fundamentally important or meaningful than teaching the Baha'i Faith, an undertaking which 'Abdu'l-Baha called "the greatest of all divine bestowals." 11 For Baha'is, teaching is more than a mere numerical increase; it is a measure of humanity's response to the message that they believe is the means for the advancement of the whole human race.

One of the most recent evolutions of Baha'i teaching efforts is the development of Area Growth Programs, mandated by the Universal House of Justice, which concentrate efforts to teach the Baha'i Faith in specific geographic areas, with the support and guidance of Baha' i institutions. The aim of the programs is to increase the capacity of believers and communities in a region to foster a process of accelerated and sustained growth by raising up human resources for well-designed expansion and consolidation activities and by strengthening local and regional Baha' i institutions. Between 2000 and 2001, 29 pilot Area Growth Programs were initiated in various countries.

Two pilot programs are currently under way in the Russian Federation. One program, concentrated in the Murmansk region, is carried forward mostly by youth, who have planned and carried out several teaching projects as well as a dance workshop and study circles. The other program, in the Baikal region, has served to reinvigorate the Baha'i community and has attracted people from surrounding areas to the Faith while increasing the focus and enthusiasm of the community.

In some places, people are especially receptive to the Baha'i teachings and embrace the Faith in large numbers. A six-month project in the area of Raj-Shahi, Bangladesh, resulted in close to six thousand people declaring their belief in Baha'u'llah. More

11' Abdu 'l-Baha, Japan Will Turn Ablaze (Tokyo: Baha 'i Publi shing Trust, 1993) , p. 12.

than a quarter of them subsequently trained in the country's institute program, enhancing their understanding of their new Faith.

In Mongolia, 214 people became Baha'is in response to six teaching projects following Baha'i summer school sessions. Nearly all of the new believers soon enrolled in institute courses. In an effort to teach the Faith to the Tsaatan (Reindeer) people, who live in Hovsgol Province, a team of Baha'is visited the area and met with the main chief of the tribe, who gave permission for them to share their message. The Baha'is conducted two children's classes and held a unity feast, and as a result six people enrolled in the Baha'i community.

Use of the media to promote the Baha'i teachings has had a tremendous impact in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Baha'is broadcast radio and television programs on the subjects of peace, the elimination of prejudice, consultation, prayer, family life, and children's education. The television programs are locally produced and air weekly for a half-hour on the national television station RTCN, immediately before the news, and later in the evening on the private Channel A. Radio programming by the Baha'is is carried by RAGA Radio on Sunday mornings, and the broadcasts are followed widely in the capital, Kinshasa, and across the Congo

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Baha 'is in Gitarama, Rwanda, singing and drumming at a Baha'i teaching conference.

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River in Brazzaville, the capital of the neighboring Congo Republic. After seeing one of the Baha'i television programs about the elimination of racial and tribal prejudice, two people walked 20 kilometers to the Baha'i center to declare their desire to become Baha' is.

Several government officials, including the minister of Information, the minister of Foreign Affairs, and a high-ranking official in the Ministry of the Interior, have been active supporters of the programs and have encouraged the widespread diffusion of the social and moral principles they transmit. After a program on the Baha'i electoral process, an officer from the president's office called the national Baha'i center to request more information about the Baha'i administrative system, stating that the concepts were important for the development of the country.

In 2000, three gatherings held at the United Nations brought together leaders of nations, of civil society, and of world religions to address the challenges facing humanity as it enters the twenty-first century.

MILLENNIUM EVENTS

Over the past decade, the United Nations has sponsored a series of international gatherings aimed at highlighting and promoting constructive action on some of the most pressing social issues currently confronting humanity. Among the largest of these gatherings have been the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit); the World Conference on Human Rights; the World Summit for Social Development; the Fourth World Conference on Women; and Habitat II. The series culminated in the holding of a Millennium Forum for non governmental organizations (NGOs) in May 2000 and of a Millennium Summit for heads of state and government in September 2000. Both took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. A Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, although not an official United Nations event, was also held in part at the United Nations immediately prior to the governmental leaders' summit.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Millennium Forum

The first of these three events, the Millennium Forum, was held from 22 to 26 May 2000 and brought together more than one thousand representatives of NGOs from some one hundred countries. The purpose of the gathering was "to consult about the role of the United Nations in confronting the great global challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century."

Consultation focused on peace, security, and disarmament; the eradication of poverty, including debt cancellation and social development; human rights; sustainable development and the environment; facing the challenges of globalization; achieving equity, justice, and diversity; and strengthening and democratizing the United Nations and other international organizations.

The Millennium Forum was first called for by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in recognition that the views and recommendations of organizations of civil society would be beneficial to all delegations represented in the UN General Assembly.

At the end of the Forum, participants adopted a Declaration to be presented to world leaders at the Millennium Summit in September. The Declaration made recommendations for revitalizing the United Nations and affirmed,

... in our vision, we are one human family, in all our diversity, living on one common homeland and sharing a just, sustainable, and peaceful world, guided by universal principles of democracy, equality, inclusion, voluntarism, nondiscrimination, and participation by all persons ... It is a world where peace and human security, as envisioned in the principles of the United Nations Charter, replace armaments, violent conflict, and wars. It is a world where everyone lives in a clean environment with a fair distribution of the earth's resources. Our vision includes a special role for the dynamism of young people and the experience of the elderly and reaffirms the universality, indivisibility, and interdependence of all human rights--civil, political, economic, social, and cultural.

As the cochair of the Millennium Forum was the Baha'i International Community's principal representative, Techeste Ahderom, the BIC's United Nations Office served as the focal

point and de facto office of the Millennium Forum during the period leading up to the event. Upwards of eight Forum interns worked with the BIC staff. BIC representatives also served on the executive committee, convened the thematic group on religion, and served on the drafting committee for the final document issued as the Millennium Forum Declaration. Lawrence Arturo and Diane 'Ala'i represented the Baha'i International Community at the Millennium Forum. Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

The Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders took place from 28 to 31 August 2000 at the United Nations and the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City. It brought together some one thousand religious leaders, representing every major world religion- the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism, as well as indigenous religions from almost every continent. The purpose of the gathering was "to further the prospects for peace among peoples and nations, and within every individual." In essence, participants recognized that it is time for the world's religious communities to stop fighting and arguing among themselves and, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, to begin working together-in cooperation with secular leaders at the United Nations and elsewhere- for peace, justice, the eradication of extreme poverty, the protection of the environment, and social harmony.

At the event's conclusion, participants adopted and signed a Declaration entitled Commitment to Global Peace. It notes that "the United Nations and the religions of the world have a common concern for human dignity, justice and peace"; it accepts that "men and women are equal partners in all aspects of life and children are

the hope of the future"; it acknowledges that "religions have contributed to the peace of the world but have also been used to create division and fuel hostilities"; and finally, it resolves to "collaborate with the United Nations and all men and women of goodwill locally, regionally, and globally in the pursuit of peace in all its dimensions." Further, the Declaration condemns all violence in the name of religion, calls for the protection of the environment for future generations, and urges religious communities to respect the right to freedom of religion.

The secretary-general of the Baha'i International Community, Mr. Albert Lincoln, represented the Baha'i Faith at the gathering. He was invited to offer a Baha'i prayer during the opening session of the Summit and to give an address during the third plenary session in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations. His presentation called on the gathering to work for a "global community based on unity in diversity" through identifying "core values that are common to all religious and spiritual traditions." He noted, "Our disordered world is in desperate need of a moral compass that is above passing fashion and untainted by the pervasive materialism of the modern era. The convening of this Summit suggests that the world has become aware of this need and of the capacity latent in the world's religious traditions." Lawrence Arturo and Bani Dugal-Gujral also attended the Summit as Baha'i representatives, and the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office contributed to the Commitment to Global Peace Declaration. While the religious summit was not an official United Nations event, the United Nations made its General Assembly Hall available for plenary sessions, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the participants, referring to the event as "one of the most inspiring gatherings ever held here" and noting, "Whatever your past, whatever your calling, and whatever the differences among you, your presence here at the United Nations

Albert Lincoln,
secretary-general
of the Baha'i
International
Community,
addressing the
Millennium World
Peace Summit of
Religious and
Spiritual Leaders.

MILLENNIUM EVENTS

signifies your commitment to our global mission of tolerance, development, and peace." Summit organizers said that many of the

groups involved had not previously participated significantly in interfaith events, and so their commitment was particularly heartemng.

Millennium Summit

The largest gathering of heads of state and government ever held, the Millennium Summit took place from 6 to 8 September 2001 at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Of the UN's 189 member states, 187 took part in the event, which focused on the theme "The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-First Century." Nearly 200 delegations were represented by 99 heads of state, 47 heads of government, three crown princes, five vice presidents, and a number of deputy prime ministers, foreign ministers, and ambassadors.

The Summit's final Declaration lists six "fundamental values" that must form the basis of international relations: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. The Declaration also voices a determination "to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world." In it, the world's leaders state: "We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality, and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs."

Leaders also discussed the moral imperative and necessity of ending extreme poverty; the importance of understanding globalization as more than an economic phenomenon, with positive and negative impacts, and that it must be justly and democratically regulated in order to benefit all; the importance of giving special attention to the development needs of Africa; the imperative to take action on climate change; the need to reform the Security Council as well as international financial and trade systems; and the importance of involving civil society and the private sector in development efforts. Debt relief, combating HIVI AIDS, corruption, the effects of civil war, and the challenges of building

Techeste Ahderom,
principal
representative of the
Baha'i International
Community to the
United Nations,
speaking before the
Millennium Summit
in his capacity as cochairman of the
Millennium Forum.

democratic societies in the wake of the collapse of communism were other topics on the agenda.

By the time they left, the leaders had signed, ratified or acceded to some 40 international treaties. They had also pledged, in a special session of the Security Council, to strengthen peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts.

In an innovative approach to UN summitry, four roundtable discussions took place, allowing world leaders to exchange views freely in gatherings of 30 to 50.

A significant feature of the Millennium Summit was the invitation extended by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the NGO Forum to participate. As cochair of the Millennium Forum, the Baha' i International Community's principal representative, Techeste Ahderom, was asked by Mr. Annan to undertake this assignment. After all national leaders had spoken and before the Summit adopted its final Declaration on 8 September, Mr. Ahderom addressed the gathering and presented to it a report of the Forum. Referring to the Declaration and Agenda for Action that had been formulated and adopted by the Forum participants, he said:

After hearing your speeches here over the last three days, I must say that our vision and plan of action are consonant with much of what has been said . . .

I am personally heartened by this and feel that this historic Summit may well be remembered as having opened the door

MILLENNIUM EVENTS

to a long-awaited era of peace, justice, and prosperity for all humanity. This new era will , of course, require concrete deeds and not just words.

We in civil society stand ready to work with you and your governments, side by side, in a strong new partnership to create this new world. At the same time, civil society also stands ready to hold you to your commitments if you do not deliver on your words. 1

While the media's coverage of these three signal events was generally either cynical or nonexistent, the significance of the gathering of so many organizations representing the world's peoples, so many religious leaders, and so many governments and heads of state will someday be recognized as an important step forward in humanity's journey towards the attainment of world peace. As the Universal House of Justice noted, in a letter that was addressed to all National Spiritual Assemblies, dated 24 September 2000:

For any observer imbued with the Baha' i vision of peace and its inherent process, the substance and implications of these recent events, seen together with previous world conferences that during the last decade also involved leaders of nations,

must be gratifying indeed to contemplate. It must, too, be doubly thrilling to realize that at so early a stage in the Baha'i era, representatives of our international community took part so notably in these occurrences that have set down milestones along the way towards that new World Order so clearly foreshadowed by the Pen of Baha ' u' llah.

1 For the full text of Mr. Ahderom 's address to the Millennium Summit, see pp. 243-47.

In November 2000, the Baha'i International Community's Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity sponsored a gathering to explore how religious values and scientific methods can be integrated in development work.

COLLOQUIUM ON SCIENCE, RELIGION, & DEVELOPMENT

The past century has seen much of human society propelled by unprecedented advances in communication, production, medicine, and other scientific and technical fields. Despite these scientific leaps, the stratification between the developed and developing nations is greater than ever. Human society seems to lack the collective direction and focus needed to deal with the fact that many of its nations are being left behind in the process of social evolution. Instead, the development of nations is seen primarily in terms of scientific and commercial advancement, governed by the idea that humanity's problems are no more than a checklist of physical needs that can be filled by agencies of development experts. But this limited perspective, which has been prominent in development efforts for much of the past fifty years, has eliminated the overarching structure that can relate problems to their sources. Increasingly, governments and NGOs are coming to an understanding that none of the physical elements of development-whether food, shelter, or money- is alone enough to make lasting changes in human lives without a basis in the spiritual aspects of human life.

The spiritual basis of development and the need to include moral and ethical training in development efforts were issues explored by the Colloquium on Science, Religion, and Development held from 21 to 24 November 2000 in New Delhi, India.

The Colloquium convened to discuss ways to address the social, physical, and technological advancement of mankind and the spiritual perspective that is needed if such advancement is to lead to lasting improvements in global society.

"Our goal was to bring together a diversity of organizations

and practitioners in the field of development to explore how scientific methods and religious values can work together to bring about a new, integrated pattern of development," said Matthew Weinberg, director of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity (ISGP), one of the Colloquium's organizers. The ISGP's statement to the conference, entitled "Science, Religion, and Development: Some Initial Considerations," explains the breakdown of development as it evolved in the twentieth century and identifies the areas where progress is needed.

The proceedings of the event, a mix of plenary sessions and workshops, took place in the India International Center and allowed for a wide range of discussion and consultation. The primary focus was on capacity building in five key areas identified by the ISGP's document: economic activity, education, technology, governance, and justice.

Farida Vahedi, Colloquium coordinator and director of the Indian Baha'i Office for the Advancement of Women, articulated

The lieutenantgovernor of Delhi,
Vzjai Kapoor,
addressing the
inaugural session
of the Colloquium,
on the grounds
of the Baha 'i
House of Worship
in New Delhi.

S C I E N C E , R E L I G I O N , & D E V E L O P M E N T

the Colloquium's aim as giving "impetus to a discourse that explores the relationship between technical knowledge, spiritual value systems, and social advancement—something which until recently has been lacking worldwide."

Dr. Benham Ta'i, the regional representative for South Asia of the Netherlands-based Institute for Housing and Urban Studies, spoke of a "missing link" in development that would "explain the shortcomings of the current model." Said Dr. Ta'i, "Now there is a perception that spirituality is the link and the key idea for changing the attitudes for decision-making in the processes of development." In keeping with the spiritual focus, the conference commenced with a devotional session inside the prayer hall of the Baha'i House of Worship in New Delhi. Bani Dugal-Gujral of the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office, Katherine Marshall of the World Bank, and Continental Counsellor Zena Sorabjee all gave addresses that evening, and a message from the president of India was read to the gathering. The opening session concluded with a performance entitled "Sarod for Harmony," by master of

the sarod Ustad Amjad Ali Khan. 1

"Although there has been considerable evolution in development thinking over the past several decades, serious questions remain concerning present approaches and assumptions," said Ms. Dugal-Gujral in her opening address. "The great majority of the world's peoples do not view themselves simply as material beings ... but rather as social and moral beings concerned with spiritual awareness and purpose."

Ms. Marshall, who oversees the World Bank 's recently launched collaboration with religious organizations, known as the World Faiths Development Dialogue, urged a new partnership between religious groups and development specialists. She noted the "special role" in both understanding and helping the poor that religious groups have long played, despite the fact that, as she said, "their insights and their work are too little known in many development circles."

1 The sarod is a many-stringed lute, native to northern India.

A panel discussion
at the Colloquium,
exploring the
relationship
between justice
and development.

"The idea should be to engage in a process that opens new windows of understanding, raises the bar of objectives, offers new insights and new visions, on all sides," Ms. Marshall said in an address to the opening session.

The Colloquium was organized by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India and the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, an agency of the Baha'i International Community. Cosponsors included the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Development Research Center of Canada, Decentralized Training for Urban Development Projects, the Department of Secondary Education and Higher Education of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the World Health Organization, and the Textile Association (India).

Participating groups came mainly from India, with others from Bolivia, Colombia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. There was also participation by representatives of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In all, some one hundred NGOs, government officials, and international development specialists took part in the conference, focusing on issues such as the empowerment of women, environmental

preservation, appropriate technology, education, human rights, and rural development.

Central to discussions about humanistic development, these issues are also present in the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. The

SCIENCE, RELIGION, & DEVELOPMENT

interest of the Baha'is in the Colloquium is intrinsic to their ideas about the nature of humanity and its natural, inevitable progress.

Baha'is have long recognized the essential element of spirituality in efforts to assist the development of mankind. Baha'u'llah, in many of His writings, characterizes God as the "Divine Physician" for humanity's sicknesses. He exhorts the Baha'is, "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in," but He also warns that humanity cannot alone find the solution to its ills:

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it lying on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned . . . [humanity] can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor [has it] any knowledge of the remedy.²

This new understanding of development work hinges largely on the complementary relationship between science and religion, a theme frequently stressed in the Baha'i writings, which runs strongly counter to views held by many experts that religion is a hindrance to progress and scientific advancement. Although historically an adversarial relationship has often emerged between organized religion and science, with each considering the other a flawed means of discovering truth, the agencies involved in the ISGP Colloquium recognized that a new paradigm of interaction is needed.

Participants in a workshop at the Colloquium exploring the relationship between values and economic activity.

² Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i

Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 213.

As Mr. Weinberg said, "Science can explain how the world works-it can give us tools for material progress. But it can't tell us how we should treat each other, nor can it tell us what our ultimate purpose should be." In the Baha'i view, science and religion

can and should be mutually beneficial instead of mutually exclusive, he said. Haleh Arbab Correa of the Colombia-based Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences (FUNDAEC), said that development specialists must begin to see "science and religion as two complementary sources of knowledge."

"The two systems are not as dissimilar as they are presented to be," said Dr. Arbab Correa. "Objective observation, induction, the elaboration of hypotheses, and the testing of predictions are important components of scientific methods. But they are also present in religious pursuits, albeit in different configurations and at different levels of rigor.

"Similarly, faith does not belong exclusively to religion," Dr. Arbab Correa continued. "Science, too, is built on elements of faith, particularly faith in the order of the world and the ability of the human mind to explain the workings of that order."

MS Swaminathan, holder of the UNESCO chair in Eco-technology, said in his talk at the Colloquium, "The formidable power of science and technology can benefit humankind only if we know how to temper it with humanism and spirituality."

The end of the conference saw a call for more research in many key areas, including ways to create a set of development indicators that assess the impact of values-based approaches and identify the "best practices" of religiously-inspired development.

"The emphasis of this event was to involve national and grassroots level organizations in this dialogue. And we were pleased that a number of key points and possible lines of action were identified by the participants here for future consideration," said Mr. Weinberg. He called the conference "an experiment and a learning endeavor, since an integrated discourse on these three topics has really only recently begun to take shape in the world at large. "

S C I E N C E , R E L I G I O N , & D E V E L O P M E N T

"The development community," said Mr. Weinberg, "has come to understand that development is all about building capacity ... and capacity building is all about knowledge. We have to recognize and value appropriate indigenous knowledge systems and blend them with the modern systems."

The ISGP's initial findings, along with an open letter to all of the participating development organizations, were published and distributed to the participants. The document identifies the challenges and goals of the movement towards the spiritualization of development efforts and calls the new path of development "inevitable." In the words of that statement,

It is simply no longer possible to maintain the belief that social and economic progress can flow from a strict materialistic

conception of life . . . Civilization flies on two wings: reason and faith. The building of human capacity cannot occur by relying on one wing alone.

Scholars from Saha'i, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds came together in December 2000 to look at the challenges facing their religious communities at the beginning of the 21st century.

CONFERENCE ON MODERN

RELIGIONS

Hebrew University
of Jerusalem

At the opening of the twenty-first century, religions are being confronted with a world complicated by problems and opportunities that were inconceivable centuries or even decades ago.

Increasingly, they must look inward, to examine their ability to address this changing world, and outward, to understand and cope with their new surroundings. Long-established religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are searching for keys to modernity that come without the sacrifice of the integrity of the teachings that have long sustained their respective communities. The Baha'i Faith, a much younger religion, offers quite a different perspective on the role of religion in a modern, multicultural world.

At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, from 17 to 21 December 2001, religious scholars gathered to discuss the context and implications of their collective search for coexistence and adaptability by discussing the social, philosophical, and psychological challenges facing their communities. The gathering brought together some 54 participants from Baha'i, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds, and was cosponsored by the Chair for Baha'i

THE BAHAI: A WORLD

Dr. Hossain Danesh,
rector of Landegg
Academy, and Dr.
Moshe Sharon, holder
of the Chair for Baha'i
Studies at the Hebrew
University, convenors
of the conference on
modern religions held
at the Hebrew
University.

Studies at the Hebrew University and Landegg Academy, a Baha'i-inspired institute of higher learning in Switzerland.

The issues addressed are not necessarily new, but as the world shrinks into a single neighborhood, the requirements of coexistence are becoming ever more urgent. This issue was particularly significant at the December conference, given its setting- a city sacred to three religions which is straining under the weight of religious coexistence. As Ehud Olmert, the mayor of Jerusalem, said in his opening remarks to the conference, "There is certainly no place more appropriate for this kind of conference than Jerusalem." The challenge that faces religious communities, he said, is "to flourish, but not at the expense of each other."

The president of the Hebrew University, Menachem Magidor, described his vision of making the university into a preeminent center for the study of religion, with research centers devoted to each of the monotheistic faiths. He said, "The university is not a house of prayer, but it should be a house of learning and understanding." The rector of Landegg, Hossain Danesh, called the proceedings "historic" and summarized the conference as a counterpoint to the conflict in the midst of which it was taking place, saying: "The conference focused on fundamental issues that are common to religions, held in a city and at a time when religious conflict in political terms was considerable." Dr. Danesh announced on the final day of the proceedings that the conference was to become an annual series, with the second event planned for January 2002 on

C O N F E R E N C E O N M O D E R N R E L I G I O N S

the Landegg campus. 1 The overarching theme of this series of conferences will be "Religion and Science."

Moshe Sharon, the holder of the Chair for Baha'i Studies and co-convenor of the conference, said that the field of Baha'i studies is emerging as an independent area of academic inquiry and that this was the first conference convened by a major international university for the study of the Baha'i Faith and its relationship to its sister faiths. The Chair for Baha'i Studies at the University is, likewise, currently the only one of its kind. 2

"Through this conference," said Dr. Sharon, "the Hebrew University has declared its interest in Baha'i studies and its recognition of the importance of this field alongside Jewish, Christian, and Islamic studies."

The conference began with opening remarks from Mayor Olmert; President Magidor; Yair Zakovitch, the dean of the Faculty of Humanities; and Professor Sharon. In the evening's keynote address, Dr. Danesh reviewed the common elements of the monotheistic religions that have made them cornerstones of civilizations, as well as

Dr. Stephen

Lambden, Dr.
Susan Maneck,
Dr. Va hid Ra Jati
and D1'. Am in
Banani (leji to
right) participate
in a panel
discussion at the
conference.

1 At that time, the institution will have formally become Landegg International University.

2 Other academic centers and programs, most notably the Baha'i Cha ir for World Peace at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, have been established to study Baha'i perspectives on and contributions to other academ ic disciplines, but the Cha ir for Baha 'i Studies at the Hebrew University is the first academic cha ir devoted to the study of the Baha'i Faith. For information about the fonnation of the Hebrew University Chair, see *The Baha'i World 1999- 2000*, pp. 123- 26.

TII E BAHA'I W ORLD

Conference
participants in
a session on the
"Contemporary
Meeting of
Ultimate
Differences. "

some of the teachings and principles of the Baha'i Faith that address challenges unique to the modem age.

The proceedings of the conference consisted of panel discussions and presentations of papers by participants. More than 50 papers were submitted, on subjects such as "Religious Fragmentism," "The Baha'i Idea of a World Religion," "The Mystery of Religious Conversion," and "Eschatology and Globalization."

A book of the proceedings is planned, and some of the papers are available in electronic form, on the Landegg Academy Web site.³

Most of the presentations dealt with aspects of Judaism or the Baha'i Faith, but there were also contributions on Sufism, the Wahhabi movement, modem Islam, and Mormonism. The final panel discussion, "Contemporary Meeting of Ultimate Differences," featured presentations about African Christians in Israel and about the Baha'i Faith, Christianity, and indigenous religions in the Pacific islands. One of the last presentations was a paper

by Dr. Ammon Netzer of the Hebrew University on "The Jews and the Baha'i Faith" in which Dr. Netzer, a Jew of Iranian descent, discussed the factors that had caused nearly 10 percent of Iranian Jews to convert to the Baha'i Faith.

In addition to the discussions and presentations, the conference also included two musical performances: the first by the King

David String Ensemble, conducted by Anita Kamien, concluded the first evening; and the second, by the world-renowned santour

3 <www.landegg.org>

CONFERENCE ON MODERN RELIGIONS

player Kiumars Haghighi, highlighted the closing session. The final day of the conference comprised a day trip to the terraces of the Shrine of the Bab in Haifa, the Shrine of Baha'u'llah near Acre, and a walking tour of Baha'i holy places in Acre's Old City.

Participants represented a wide geographic spectrum, coming mainly from the United States and Israel, but also from Canada,

Denmark, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. The conference was also marked by the

participation of many young scholars alongside well-known professors and scholars in the field of religious studies. Dr. Danesh

noted this as he expressed hope for the future, saying, "The juxtaposition of youth and experience was very insightful and promising

for the future of religious studies. It demonstrated that there are fine minds coming up, and this augurs well for the emergence of

new insights into the role of religion in the development of civilization."

The Shrine of the Bab and lower terraces, illuminated after sunset.

MOUNT

CARMEL

PROJECTS

Progress 2000-01

In May 1990, concentrated construction efforts began on the Baha'i projects on Mount Carmel, cultivating seeds that were planted in the late nineteenth century, when Baha'u'llah visited Mount Carmel during his imprisonment in the Ottoman penal colony of Acre. He pointed out to His son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, the spot where the Shrine of the Bab, the spiritual and physical centerpiece of the Baha'i properties on the mountain, was to be built.

The most recent work is an elaboration of the projects initiated by 'Abdu'l-Baha and carried on by Shoghi Effendi. This effort has been undertaken not only to preserve and beautify the Baha'i holy places, but also to provide a series of buildings to serve as the administrative heart of the Baha'i Faith.

Before his passing in 1957, Shoghi Effendi oversaw the completion of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Bab, and it

was his direction that led to the building of the International Baha'i Archives, the first of a "far-flung Arc of administrative buildings." The second of these, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, was finished in 1983. The Centre for the Study of the Texts and

The International Teaching Centre Building, completed in 2000.

the International Teaching Centre Building, completed in 1999 and 2000, are the most recent additions to the Arc. The current projects on Mount Carmel are now in their final year, with the public inauguration of the 19 terraces of the Shrine of the Bab set for May 2001.

The International Teaching Centre Building

Completion of the International Teaching Centre Building represented the last element in the current projects on the Arc. The final stages of work focused on finishing the four-hundred-seat auditorium, installing state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, and finishing the library and the meeting chamber of the International Counsellors. As the building's interior reached completion, crews began landscaping patios inside the building and planting grass on the external slopes.

An aerial view of the buildings on the Arc at the Bahri 'i World Centre on Mount Carmel.

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A view of the lower terraces at dusk.

The Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre occupied the building on 6 October 2000, and later that month

a reception was held in the new building to officially mark the move of that institution, "which is specifically invested with the twin functions of the protection and propagation of the Cause of God." 1 Guests included the Hands of the Cause of God 'Ali-Akbar Furutan and 'Ali Mul)ammad Varqa, members of the Universal House of Justice, and Counsellor members of the International Teaching Centre. Later, during the second week of January 2001, nearly one thousand members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and their Auxiliaries from around the world participated in the formal inauguration of the building. 2

The Terraces of the Shrine of the Bab

With the completion of most of the basic architectural features such as balustrades, fountains, and ornaments on the terraces above the Shrine of the Bab, efforts during 2000-01 centered on landscaping the inner and outer areas of the gardens. The terraces below the Shrine, largely completed, received final touches in preparation for their public inauguration.

Letter of the Universal House of Justice, 31 August 1987.

2 For an account of this conference, see pp. 41--48.

A view from the eighth terrace of the Shrine of the Bab and the surrounding gardens, April 2001 .

Lighting plays an important role in the architectural scheme of the terraces surrounding the Shrine. The illumination not only enhances the appearance of the Shrine and gardens, but also serves as a reminder of the Bab's suffering during His incarceration in prison fortresses such as Chihriq and Mah-Ku, of which He wrote, " .. In His presence, which is My presence, there is not at night even a lighted lamp! " 3

Soon after Ri-van 2000, technicians began upgrading the lighting system of the Shrine, which is centralized in a computer program that controls the buildings on the Arc as well as the Shrine and Terraces. An automated dimmer system now controls all outer floodlights. A similar electrical upgrade was also carried out in the Monument Gardens, where floodlights for the monuments were installed.

Water is another prominent feature in the design of the Terraces. The entrance plaza on Ben Gurion Avenue features 14 cascading pools and an ornamental star-shaped fountain, with surrounding stone paving and planters filled with flowers that contrast vividly with the fountain's white marble. Three large gates with double doors and four single gates, all worked in wrought iron, have been set in the wall around the perimeter of

3 The Bab, Selections from the Writings of the Bab (Haifa : Baha' i World Centre, 1982), p. 87 .

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the plaza, providing a grand facade for the terraces leading to the Shrine of the Bab.

In June 2000, the Office of Public Information moved into the west wing of the structure below the eleventh terrace, midway

up the mountain. The facility houses a visitor information center for the reception of dignitaries and special visitors, a 164-seat auditorium, and an exhibition room with displays about the history and teachings of the Baha'i Faith.

Bahji Visitors' Center

Outside of Haifa, near Acre, work progressed on the visitors' center at Bahji, which was designed in a style harmonious with that of the Shrine of Baha'u'llah and the Mansion of Bahji. The building will accommodate pilgrims and other visitors and was structurally complete by December 2000. Work also continued on the design for a monumental gate structure and courtyard leading to the Shrine of Baba 'u 'llah. The gate structure will be clad in stone, approximately five meters tall, with several arches, and two small, enclosed patios will lead to a formal, landscaped courtyard.

The entrance plaza to the Terraces,
_i-om Ben Gurion Avenue in Haifa.

By April 2001, the basic structure was completed, and work had commenced on stone cladding and landscaping.

Looking towards May 2001

As the projects near completion, public visits to the Shrine and gardens are on the rise, with estimates of a significant increase from the current 250,000 visitors per year. To accommodate these visitors, an automated booking system for walking tours of the Terraces will be instituted shortly after the public inauguration in May 2001.

Also planned for the Terraces' opening is the publication of a book on the Shrine of the Bab and the surrounding terraced gardens, produced by the Haifa Tourist Board with the assistance of the Mount Carmel Projects Office. The text of the 144-page book offers an introduction to the Baha'i Faith and describes the gardens' design concepts. It is illustrated by nearly 150 color photographs of the Shrine and Terraces.

In addition, the Philatelic Service Department of the Israel Postal Authority, with the assistance of the Mount Carmel Projects Office, will issue a special nine-centimeter stamp to commemorate the completion of the Terraces.

The
BAHA'f FAITH
ontheWORLD
WIDE WEB

The virtual landscape of the Internet has blossomed in the past decade from a mostly text-based universe used only by technophiles into a dynamic resource that is becoming more and more a part of everyday life for millions of people. Although the past year has seen many of the financial expectations of the World

Wide Web deflating, the public seems no less engaged by its potential in other areas. The rush that fueled the rapid expansion of the Internet has hinged not only on its potential profitability but also on its ability to connect people, to allow them to share ideas. It has the capacity to bring people together, to become a point of contact for people to share news and views—a digital version of the global village.

The Baha'i Faith is founded on the principles of uniting people and eliminating the prejudices that separate them. The Internet gives a glimpse, however imperfect, of the possibilities for communication across not only geographic but also political and ideological divides. This is surely not far from what Shoghi Effendi envisioned in 1936, when he wrote,

THE BAHAI-FAITH WORLD

A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvelous swiftness and perfect regularity. 1

For many, the Web has become a primary source of information, and the Baha'i International Community launched The Baha'i World Web site in 1996 in order to provide an official presence on the Web, authorized and maintained by the BIC. In the five years since, the site has experienced more than a five-fold increase in visits and by early 2001 was averaging more than fifty thousand visits per month from all over the world, with each lasting an average of 11 minutes.

The site offers in-depth information about the central figures and institutions of the Faith, its history, and its theological and social teachings. It includes a profile of the worldwide Baha'i community and its involvement in social action. Selections from the Baha'i writings are available, as are a library of statements of the Baha'i International Community and links to national Baha'i communities around the world.

In June 2000, a redesign of The Baha'i World site was launched, to provide an enhanced appearance and a more up-to-date interface. In addition to the visual changes, the content of the site has also expanded. The English material available has approximately doubled in volume, and sections of the site are available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, with a Persian version planned for the near future.

The Baha'i World site is only a part of the ever-growing presence of the Baha'i International Community on the Web. The Baha'i World News Service (BWNS) site, 2 launched in November 2000, contains news stories about developments throughout the Baha'i world. Users can subscribe to the service and have individual

stories e-mailed to them or receive a monthly digest of stories.

1 Shoghi Effendi , The World Order of Baha'is: Selected Letters, 1st pocket

ed. (Wilmette : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), p. 204.

2 <www.bahaiworldnews.org>

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The new look for
the home page of
The Baha'i World
Web site at
<www.bahai.org>.

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BWNS carries reports on activities, projects, and events in the worldwide Baha'i community and includes a searchable news and photo archive. It provides timely reports to the news media about Baha'i involvement in a broad range of issues and news about the growth and development of the worldwide Baha'i community.

Baha'i-sponsored magazines and newsletters around the world are also able to draw upon the service.

Another prominent Baha'i Web site is the electronic version of One Country, the official newsletter of the Baha'i International Community. 3 Launched in 1998, the site contains quarterly features about the Baha'i community as well as book reviews and profiles of Baha'i activities in areas such as socioeconomic development, the advancement of women, and human rights.

In addition to the general-interest and information sites, there are many more which have more specific aims. The International Baha'i Library Web site, 4 launched in June 1999, includes a general description of the Library and some of its special collections.

It outlines expansions of both Dewey Decimal System and Library of Congress classifications for categories of Baha'i books.

A Web site for the Official Opening of the Mount Carmel

Terraces in May 2001 5 features downloadable press materials and publication-quality photos for use in local and national media

3 <www.onecountry.org>

4 <library.bahai.org>

5 <www.bahaiworldnews.org/terraces>

campaigns. In addition, the site will host a live Webcast of the Inauguration.

Many of the nearly two hundred national Baha'i communities have their own Web sites (some of which are accessible via

The Baha 'i World site), and beyond these, hundreds of personal and local community pages fill out the range of sites dedicated to the Faith. Youth workshops, publishers, bookstores, directories, and Baha'i schools are just some of the entities participating in this new realm of communication by creating sites that reach out, through digital means, to other Baha'is and to the rest of the world.

The Baha'i International Community represents, at the United Nations and at other international gatherings, the more than five million Baha'is living in some 236 countries and dependent territories around the world. Its 182 national and regional administrative bodies are engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at promoting a just and peaceful society. In recent years, Baha'i International Community activities at the local, national, and international levels have centered on four major themes-human rights, moral development, the advancement of women, and global prosperity.

The Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office and its Office of Public Information play complementary roles in this work. The United Nations Office offers Baha'i perspectives on global issues, supports UN programs, and has been assisting its national affiliates to engage in shaping policies and programs that will promote progress toward global peace and prosperity in their own countries. The Office of Public Information disseminates information about the Baha'i Faith around the world, oversees production of the award-winning newsletter One Country, and maintains the official Web site of the Baha'i International Community.

United Nations

The Baha'i International Community (BIC) has consistently supported the social and educational objectives of the United Nations (UN) since its inception and has been formally affiliated with the UN since 1947. The BIC was granted special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1970, the first year such status was granted to international NGOs. Consultative status with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) was accorded in 1976, and with the UN Development Fund for Women

(UNIFEM) in 1989; that same year, the BIC established a working relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO). The BIC has United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva and maintains representations to United Nations regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, and Santiago, and to the UN offices in Nairobi, Rome, and Vienna. Its Office of the Environment, established in 1989, and its Office for the Advancement of Women, established in 1992, function as adjuncts of the United Nations Office. Over the course of the last decade, the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office has increasingly encouraged its national affiliates to expand their work with the United Nations in their own countries and regions, focusing most recently on the Decade for Human Rights Education.

Human Rights

The Baha'i International Community's Human Rights Education Campaign is a natural extension of the Baha'i commitment to justice and the belief that without a profound emphasis on human rights and responsibilities the cherished goal of creating a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world order will remain beyond our grasp. Human rights and responsibilities were, in fact, the subject of the first formal Baha'i statement to the UN, delivered in 1947. Subsequent statements have elaborated the Baha'i position on a wide variety of related issues, including such evils as

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

racism, the subject of a major global UN conference to be held in South Africa in September 2001.

Preparations for the World Conference against Racism have been monitored by the Baha'i International Community, which has participated in preparatory meetings held in Geneva in May 2000, and in January and March 2001. It is also one of the twelve NGOs on the Coordinating Committee for the Conference and its NGO Forum. Representatives of National Spiritual Assemblies attended all Regional Preparatory Meetings for the conference, except in Asia; that conference was held in Iran, where the Iranian government refused to issue visas for the members of the BIC delegation.

While promoting human rights generally, the Baha'i International Community has also sought to defend the right of Baha'is throughout the world to practice their Faith, making effective use of the United Nations' human rights machinery. For more than twenty years, the Baha'i International Community has sought to ease the suffering of the Baha'i community in Iran, whose situation remains perilous to this day. 1

The ability of National Spiritual Assemblies to intervene effectively has been enhanced by training seminars focused on coordinating efforts to defend the Faith and on strengthening the diplomatic skills of those charged with representing the Baha'i

community to their governments. The fifth such annual training session was held in September in Acuto, Italy.

This year the Baha'i International Community was compelled to expose the persecution of Baha'is in yet another nation:

Egypt, where several Baha'is were imprisoned this year. 2

Human Rights Education Initiative

The Baha'i International Community's global campaign to support the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995- 2004, has attracted the participation of national Baha'i communities. The campaign began with the publication of a 109-page human rights

1 For information about the situation of the Baha' i community in Iran, see the article on pp. 131-41 and the statement on pp. 253- 56.

2 For information about the situation of the Baha'i community in Egypt, see the statement on pp. 257- 60.

THE BAHAI WORLD

education resource manual in 1997, followed by a series of regional training sessions, which involved nearly one hundred national Baha'i communities. Sixty-two national communities have established offices for external affairs, 44 have developed a national plan for human rights education, and 50 have already undertaken some activities. In addition, 39 reported having conducted in-country training for those who, in support of the Decade, will interact with government officials and NGOs, either nationally or locally. Human rights education projects undertaken by national Baha'i communities as part of this campaign emphasize, for the most part, cooperation with government agencies, UN offices, and other NGOs rather than unilateral action. Some communities have been invited to take part in national planning processes for the Decade or for the thematically related International Year for the Culture of Peace. Others have cosponsored conferences and seminars on human rights education; still others have assisted in the distribution of the UN Declaration on Human Rights to police departments, civic organizations, and schools. Several other communities have begun working toward the inclusion of moral education and human rights education in school curricula. Sharing Baha'i statements on such related topics as world citizenship has helped some communities to engage government officials in discussions about the value of human rights education.

The Baha'i International Community's role in supporting these national efforts has included the distribution of issues of the Human Rights Education Newsletter, carrying news of diplomatic and training successes from around the world.

Advancement of Women

Throughout this year the Baha'i International Community has continued to encourage the formation of national Offices for the

Advancement of Women and to respond to requests for materials, advice, and guidance. At the last count, 58 national communities had created such offices- many others have committees or task forces- to assist National Spiritual Assemblies in their efforts to promote the full participation of women both in the life of the

B AHA'f I INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Baha'i community and in the world at large. Through its newsletter, the BIC's Office for the Advancement of Women stays in communication with national offices, NSAs, Baha'i agencies, and individual Baha'is involved in promoting the equality of women and men. This year's newsletter carried news about relevant UN activities, opportunities for involvement in upcoming regional UN initiatives, the latest Web sites and Internet resources, and stories from around the world about projects undertaken by Baha'i communities to improve the status of women.

At the UN, the BIC's Office for the Advancement of Women continued to monitor sessions of the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women, and a variety of other UN bodies addressing the position of women. The BIC was present at the UN General Assembly's special session, known informally as Beijing Plus Five, which was called to evaluate progress in implementing the platform for action adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. This special session, entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century," established the agenda for the work of the Commission on the Status of Women for the next five years: namely, to oversee the "mainstreaming of a gender perspective" into future policy and program planning. This means considering the impact on both women and men of all plans, policies, and programs developed by governments and other institutions, the goal being to ensure that women and men benefit equally and that inequality is not perpetuated.

The welfare of children has been an important focus of activity for the BIC this year, and the Office for the Advancement of Women participated in the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the September 2001 special session of the UN General Assembly- a follow up on the World Summit for Children. In connection with that event, it participated in an interreligious consultation entitled "Global Movement for Children: The Role of Religions" sponsored by UNICEF and the World Conference on Religion and Peace. While serving on the NGO Committee on UNICEF, the BIC has played a role in a major decentralization effort, underway for several years, aimed at empowering national and regional NGOs to work more closely with regional UNICEF offices on behalf of children. The plan to create

nine regional NGO committees on UNICEF came to fruition this year.

The BIC's Office for the Advancement of Women has also assumed a number of responsibilities within the NGO community at the UN. It cohosted a reception with the NGO Committee on UNIFEM in conjunction with the session of the UN committee monitoring implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The reception honored the members of the committee as well as UNIFEM's NGO representative trainees and UNIFEM's regional program advisors. The BIC cochaired, for the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, the planning group for NGO Consultation Day at the Commission. The BIC also continued to serve as convenor for the Advocates for African Food Security: Lessening the Burden for Women.

Environment and Development

Receptivity to a spiritual perspective on development, championed by the Baha'i International Community at the UN for fifty years, has been growing during the last five years. Discussions about the relationship between spiritual and material development continued for the fourth year among development experts and spiritual leaders from nine major religions, including the Baha'i Faith, under the banner of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). These consultations, sponsored by the president of the World Bank and the archbishop of Canterbury, now include the International Monetary Fund as a partner. Several ideas submitted by the BIC were incorporated into the official WFDD submission to the drafters of the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001.

Likewise, a striking convergence of thinking among government representatives and members of civil society was observed at Copenhagen Plus Five, the UN General Assembly special session called to evaluate progress since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Virtually all in attendance acknowledged that

B AHA'I I NTE RNATI ONAL C OMMU N ITY

the problems of humanity are interconnected and can only be resolved through consultation, respect for basic human freedoms, the advancement of women, universal education, and an integrated approach to human development. The parallel NGO Forum drew some four thousand participants from civil society, including members of the European Baha'i Youth Council and the European Baha'i Business Forum, both of whom had displays and sponsored seminars. The National Spiritual Assemblies of Switzerland and the United Kingdom sent representatives to the UN session, as did the Baha'i International Community.

One of the most remarkable documents produced by civil society in recent years is the Earth Charter, which was completed

this year after a 10-year, highly participatory consultative process in which Baha'is took an active part. The final Earth Charter incorporated text offered by the Baha'i International Community.

Another project that began with the Earth Summit was brought to completion this year. The Peace Monument, a gift to the people of Brazil from the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil and the BIC UN Office, on the occasion of the Earth Summit, was formally sealed after the last contribution of soil was poured into its core.

Millennial Activities

The Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office was actively involved in the three major millennial events which took place at the UN this year: the NGO Millennium Forum, the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the Millennium Summit.

Meetings

The Baha'i International Community chaired three NGO committees and three NGO task forces this year: the NGO committees on UNIFEM, Freedom of Religion or Belief, and Human Rights; and the NGO task forces on UN Reform, UN-NGO Relations, and Restructuring the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

3 For a full report of the Baha'is International Community's involvement in the

Millennium Forum, the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the Millennium Summit, see pp. 87-93. Also see the statements on pp. 235-41 and 243-47.

sessions monitored by the Baha'i International Community this year, other than those already mentioned, include the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalized World"; the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development; the 39th session of the Commission for Social Development; the substantive session of ECOSOC; the 56th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the 23rd and 24th sessions of CEDAW; the 53rd World Health Assembly; as well as meetings of the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy; the UNICEF Executive Board; and the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' Program.

Public Information

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

From 21 April 2000 to 21 April 2001, the Office arranged more than 200 special visits for some 3,308 non-Baha'i dignitaries, leaders of

thought and prominent people from 71 countries.

Visitors included government officials, diplomats, religious leaders, professors, researchers, educators, students, writers, journalists, film crews, tour operators, business people, and members of civil society and non-government organizations.

Visitors from Israel's government included seven members of the Knesset, the ambassador of Israel to the Czech Republic, the former Israeli ambassador to Brazil, the former Israeli ambassador to Fiji; the director of the budget division of the Ministry of Finance; Haifa city councillors; and mayors from various cities in Israel.

Other government ministers and officials who visited included the first lady of the Ukraine; the minister of transport of

B AHA' i I NTERNATIONAL COMM UNITY

the Ukraine; the president of the All-Ukrainian Charity Fund "Hope and Kindness"; China's minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission; the foreign minister of India; the New Zealand minister of research, science and technology; the foreign minister and the deputy foreign minister of the Czech Republic; the speaker of the Namibian government's National Assembly; a member of the New Zealand Parliament; two members of the German Parliament; a senator of the Republic of Ireland; the director of the CIS division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary; and the Slovenian ambassador to the Czech Republic.

The Office also received ambassadors from Australia, Belgium, China, the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, the Republic of Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Panama, Singapore, the Ukraine, the United States, and Yugoslavia.

Film crews, journalists, and photographers from Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Russia, the UK, and the US, representing local and national print, radio and TV media, visited.

In addition to these visits, public tours for some 2,050 people were arranged during a two-month period in 2000, in collaboration with the Haifa Tourist Board. This was a special one-time project in response to the Tourist Board's request for assistance in supporting the local economy by promoting tourism to Haifa. Special arrangements were made for these visitors to have a guided walk from the 19th terrace to the Shrine of the Bab in advance of the opening of the upper terraces to the public.

The Baha'i World Web site,⁴ now in its fifth year, averaged approximately fifty thousand visits per month in early 2001. The site underwent a redesign and relaunch in the spring of 2000. In the past four years, the English sections have approximately doubled in volume and the principal sections of the site are now available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and

Chinese, with a Persian version planned for the near future . In November 2000, the Web site for the Baha'i World News Service 4 <www.bahai.org>; for more information , see also pp. 115- 18.

was launched. 5 The site offers feature stories about the worldwide Baha'i community.

The Paris branch of the Office of Public Information continued its monthly publication of the European Public Information Bulletin, which chronicles the public information activities of Baha'i communities throughout Europe. Both the Haifa headquarters and the Paris branch of the Office, working with a network of national public information officers in Baha'i communities throughout the world, were involved in preparing press releases, holding training seminars for public information officers, and liaising with media regarding the opening of the Terraces on Mount Carmel.

The eighth European Public Information Management Seminar was held in Acuto, Italy, from 30 March to 1 April 2001 for European public information officers, with some 70 participants from 31 European countries and two French-speaking countries in Africa and the Indian Ocean.

The Paris Office continued to support the Royaumont Process project "Promoting Positive Messages through the Media," initiated by the European Union to promote stability and good relations among countries in Southeastern Europe. 6 During 2000-01 , the process continued, with follow-up activities and assessment of pilot programs in schools in Romania. In Bulgaria, the Office created two TV programs for TV Rousse in collaboration with UNICEF. Discussion and preparation of the launch of the project in Kosovo was initiated at the request of the Office of Bernard Kouchner, former special representative of the secretary-general of the United Nations and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

One Country, the official newsletter of the Baha'i International Community, entered its twelfth year of publication. Published quarterly in English, French, German, Chinese, Spanish, and Russian, it

5<www.bahaiworldnews.org>

6See The Sahaá; World 1998- 99, pp. 145- 50, for a report on the Baha' i International Communi ty 's involvement in the Royaumont Process.

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reaches more than fifty thousand readers in at least 180 countries. Its Web site 7 received an average of two hundred visits per day. During 2000-01, One Country won two prizes in the Apex 2001 Awards for Publication Excellence. "Reshaping God's Holy Mountain," which appeared in the July-September 2000 issue and

tells the story behind the construction of the new garden terraces on Mount Carmel, won an award in the feature writing category. One Country also won an Award of Excellence for its on-line version. Other articles covered the United Nations Millennium Summit and its companion conferences. In addition to a full report on the Summit itself, One Country wrote extensively about the Millennium Forum, held by NGOs at the UN in May 2000, as well as the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders in August. As well, the launch in November 2000 of the Baha'i International Community's new agency, the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, was the subject of a major article. Feature stories in One Country included a report on the Ruaha Secondary School in Tanzania and a story about three white families in the US who moved into largely black neighborhoods to consciously promote race unity.

7 <www.onecountry.org>

Update:

The Situation of the
BAHA'IS
IN IRAN

During 2000-01, the "relentless persecution" of the Baha'i community of Iran remained, in the words of the Baha'i International Community's principal representative at the United Nations, "a fact of life." ¹ Some international media coverage has touted the Iranian government's "liberalization," but whatever changes have occurred have had little effect on the Baha'is who live under the current regime. The few recent positive developments are both superficial and reversible, and the Baha'i community still faces injustice and hardship, as the following examples illustrate:

- As of April 2001, seven Baha'is were still imprisoned in Iran for their Faith, two under sentence of death. While Baha'is welcomed news of the release of Manuchihr Khulusi, who

¹ For a detailed summary of the situation of the Baha'is in Iran during the period under question, see the full oral statement of the Baha'i International Community's principal representative to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, pp. 253- 56.

had been arbitrarily sentenced to death in Mashhad, the factors that gave rise to his release and the status of the verdict against him remain unclear. ²

Couples in Iran no longer need to identify their religious affiliation when registering their marriages. This administrative procedure, while welcomed by Baha'is, nevertheless allows the government to avoid recognizing Baha'i marriages.

- The community still awaits the return of its sacred sites and

other confiscated properties, and cruel and unjustified confiscations continue. Several classrooms used by Baha'is have been seized in an effort to deny Baha'i students any kind of education. In the city of Abadih, in which two Baha'i cemeteries had been successively confiscated and destroyed, the third was bulldozed- and the colonel of the Revolutionary Guard who was responsible for the action was acquitted in the courts. A woman who had legally traveled abroad to visit her children returned to Iran to find that her house had been confiscated.

- Baha'i applicants for business licenses face long delays, and some Baha'i-owned stores and businesses have been closed.
- In one region of the country, authorities forced Baha'i families to leave their homes and farms, preventing some from harvesting their own crops and arresting and imprisoning others.

2 At the time of his arrest on 9 June 1999, Mr. Khulusi was visiting Birjand for

a meeting with Baha'is of that town. About six days later he was moved to a prison in Mashhad, where he was held in solitary confinement for some time, and his interrogation involved beating. The charges brought against Mr. Khulusi are not known, but it is clear that they related to his being a Baha'i. His trial

took place in Branch 3 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Mashhad on 7 and 8 September 1999, and the death sentence was announced on 3 February 2000. Mr. Khulusi was not permitted to meet with his lawyer, and his attempts to submit an appeal against the verdict within the required 20-day period were denied.

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The Iranian government's refusal to consider the visa application of duly appointed Baha'i delegates to the Asian Preparatory Committee meeting of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Tehran in February 2001, was perhaps the most eloquent expression of its true attitude towards its Baha'i citizens. The refusal effectively denied the delegation its right to attend this international human rights consultation-even though the Baha'is met all administrative and procedural requirements and included a letter of accreditation from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in their applications. The high commissioner, Mary Robinson, felt obliged to publicly express her dismay at this exclusion. Baha'is in Iran are not seeking special privileges; they only

desire respect for their rights under the International Bill of Human Rights-the right to life, the right to profess and practice their religion, the right to liberty and security of person, and the right to education and work. It is clear that the full implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations and the recommendations made by the UN special rapporteur on religious intolerance, Professor Abdelfattah Amor, is imperative before these rights can be assured. 3

Governmental Action

Throughout the world, Baha'i delegations continued to meet with their governmental representatives to acquaint them with or update them on the situation of the Baha'i community in Iran.

Governments in many countries took action.

In Australia, in December 2000, the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Australia put forth a motion on the situation of the human rights of the Baha'is in Iran, which was addressed by four members of Parliament. In a meeting with NGOs in October, the minister for foreign affairs outlined a number of initiatives taken by the government in the human rights field, referring to his recent visit to Iran and mentioning that he had raised the issue of the Baha'i community with ministers there.

1 See p. 254 for details regarding the special rapporteur's recommendations.

The situation of the Baha'is in Iran was twice mentioned in the German government's Fifth Report on the Human Rights Situation, which was adopted and publicly released during a meeting of the cabinet of the German government in June. The report notes that the Baha'i community continues to be persecuted and mentions that Iranian Baha'is are one of the groups to be granted asylum status in Germany on the grounds of religious persecution- a reference that strengthens the legal position of Baha'i refugees in Germany. In July 2000, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder raised concerns about human rights in Iran with Iran's President Khatami during his visit to Germany. Catholic theologian Hans Kling also took the opportunity to raise the issue of the Iranian government's treatment of the Baha'i community. President Khatami responded that while the Baha'i Faith was not recognized as a religion in Iran, Baha'is are citizens like others and he, as president, was obliged to endorse the enforcement of their rights. He did not, however, say what such rights would be or what actions he would take.

In Norway, mention of the situation of the Baha'is in Iran was included in an extensive report prepared in March 2001 for the Norwegian Foreign Department by the Forum for Human Rights, which consists of about 20 different Norwegian organizations working in that field. The report is used by the Foreign Department to prepare for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly.

In the United Kingdom, a parliamentary question tabled in the House of Commons in March regarding the treatment of the Baha'i community in Iran elicited from the minister of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office the response that the UK and its partners in the European Union "have regularly raised our concerns over Iranian treatment of Baha'is" and promised that the

government would again raise the human rights issue during an upcoming ministerial visit to Iran. And in June, two members of Parliament, Lembit Opik and Peter Luff, who are members of the All Party Parliamentary Friends of the Baha'is, met at their own

initiative with the Iranian ambassador to the UK to raise a number of issues concerning the situation of Iran's Baha'i community. A statement by United States President Bill Clinton on 1 July 2000, on the occasion of the sentencing of 13 Jewish Iranians on charges of espionage, noted that "the Iranian government has treated intellectuals, journalists, Muslim clerics and members of the Baha'i community with the same fundamental unfairness," and continued, "We are deeply disappointed that the Iranian government has again failed to act as a society based on the rule of law ... "

Later that same month, on 19 July, the Senate passed the eighth congressional resolution condemning the situation of the Iranian Baha'is. It urged the government of Iran to permit Baha'i students to attend Iranian universities and Baha'i faculty to teach at Iranian universities; it urged the government of Iran to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations on the emancipation of the Iranian Baha'i community made by the United Nations special rapporteur on religious intolerance; and it emphasized that the US regards the human rights practices of the government of Iran, particularly its treatment of the Baha'i community and other religious minorities, as a significant factor in the development of relations between the two governments. The resolution also passed in the House of Representatives on 19 September.

In November the US Commission on International Religious Freedom issued a report on Iran to President Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and leaders of Congress, which stated specifically, "Members of the Baha'i community suffer the worst forms of religious persecution at the hands of the state." The report also mentions executions of Baha'is and current death sentences; the prohibition against Baha'is teaching or practicing their Faith, attending university, or holding government jobs; and the seizure and destruction of religious sites.

International and United Nations Action

During the 88th session of the International Labour Organization (ILO) held in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2000, reference was made to the discrimination against the Baha'is in Iran in the report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions

THE BAHAI WORLD

and Recommendations. An expert mission that had gone from the ILO to Iran to examine and discuss the issues raised by the Committee of Experts was assured by a representative of the Iranian government that "[a]lthough the members of the Baha'i faith did not belong to a recognized religious minority, under the terms of the legislation on the rights of citizenship which were approved by the Expediency Council in 1999, all Iranians enjoyed the rights of citizenship irrespective of their belief." While the representative also stated that "[t]he government was making all efforts to remove difficulties within the framework of the Constitution," the Committee of Experts did not feel that the question of the Baha'is had been resolved and it will remain under its consideration next year. In its report, the Committee of Experts wrote:

The Committee notes from the mission report that the sensitivity of the subject of the Baha'i in the country goes beyond any formal restrictions and exclusions which may exist, and extends to the societal attitude towards members of this group. In the public sector, the Committee notes that formal restrictions on the hiring of the members of the Baha'is do exist (and such restrictions do not appear to exist for the recognized religious minorities) ... there remains an apparently widespread conviction among the people of the country that all members of the Baha'is work against the interest of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and thus may not be trusted at any level of government. ... In the private sector, the Committee notes that no formal restrictions on the hiring of members of unrecognized religions, including the Baha'is, appear to exist, but in practice these persons may experience difficulty in access to education, jobs and occupations. The Committee notes with interest the reported elimination of discrimination against Baha'is youth in enrolment in the pre-university year at the high school level, while remaining concerned that their entry to universities continues to be refused and that the Open Baha'is University, a correspondence school, was closed down. The Committee requests the Government to make every effort to work towards the elimination of both formal and de facto discrimination against the members of the non-recognized religious groups in education and employment in accordance with the requirements of the Convention.

On 9 November 2000, the Third Committee of the 55th session of the General Assembly passed a resolution on the human rights situation in Iran, with strong mention of the Baha'is in three operative paragraphs. In the resolution, the Committee expresses

its concern "at the discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities, in particular the unabated pattern of persecution against the Baha'is, including the continuing detention and the sentencing to death of some of them." It calls upon the government of Iran " to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the special rapporteur with regard to religious intolerance relating to the Baha'is and other minority religious groups until they are completely emancipated." And finally, the Committee decides to continue to examine the human rights situation in Iran, "including the situation of minority groups such as the Baha'is," at its 56th session.

On 5 December the UN General Assembly also passed a resolution expressing "deep concern" over Iran's violations of human rights and mentioning in particular the ongoing persecution faced by the country's Baha'i community. The vote passed with 67 in favor, 54 against, and 46 abstentions.

In their statements to the Third Committee on the situation in Iran, Australia and Canada specifically mentioned the Baha'is. The Australian ambassador to the United Nations said, "We urge the Iranian authorities to ensure that minorities, most notably the Jews and Baha'is, are accorded the full protection of the law under the Iranian Constitution." The Canadian representative stated, "Despite some recent positive changes connected with the right to legally register their marriages, we remain concerned by the ongoing discrimination against Baha'is including the imposition of death sentences for practicing their faith." The Irish ambassador also mentioned the Baha'i situation in Iran in his statement to the General Assembly, saying, "We are also concerned at violations suffered by many particularly vulnerable groups such as persons belonging to religious minorities, including the continued persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran and the restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief of many others ... "

During the 55th session of the General Assembly, Professor Abdelfattah Amor, special rapporteur on religious intolerance and discrimination, submitted his interim report, which briefly covers the situation of the Baha'is in Egypt and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The report outlines the history of the suppression of the Baha'i community in Egypt, from the Supreme Religious Court's 1925 decision that the Baha'i Faith is "a dangerous heresy," to the dissolution in 1960 of all Baha'i Assemblies, confiscation of all properties and assets, and prohibition of religious activities, to the current situation, in which, while they supposedly remain free as individuals to practice their faith, "Baha'is are reportedly not allowed to meet in groups, especially for religious observances, and their literature is destroyed. It is alleged that they cannot legally celebrate their marriages which are deemed to constitute concubinage, while the

children born of these unions are regarded as illegitimate."

Moving on to the situation of the Baha'is in Iran, Professor Amor noted the "urgent appeal" made by the United Nations' special rapporteur to the Iranian government regarding the death sentences against Sims Dhabil:ii-Muqaddam, Hidayat Kashifi-Najafabadi and 'Ata'u'llah I:Jamid Na~irizadih . In response, Professor Amor noted, the government denied verification of three death sentences, against Mr. Dhabil:ii-Muqaddam, Mr. Najafabadi, and Manuchihr Khulusi, and stated that these cases were still under consideration by the Supreme Court.

Professor Maurice Copithorne, special representative of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, submitted a report mentioning the Baha'is to the General Assembly, and then in April 2001 to the 57th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, where it was released as an official document. The Baha'is are mentioned in twelve paragraphs of the report and its annexes. It states, in part, "The Baha'i community continues to experience discrimination in areas of inter alia, education, employment, travel, housing, and the enjoyment of cultural activities." It also notes the continuing imprisonment of Baha'is, with several under sentence of death, and an

increase in the number of short-term arrests and "suspended sentences" applied to individuals participating in religious gatherings or educational activities. Positive changes such as the possibility of registering Baha'i marriages are noted, but the report urges the government to implement fully the recommendations made to it by the special representative and by the special rapporteur on religious intolerance.

Observations made by the 24th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed a report submitted by the Islamic Republic of Iran and outlined the Committee's concern at the restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, thought, conscience, and religion imposed by the Iranian government. The Committee made specific mention of discrimination against minorities, including the Baha'is, recommending "that the State party take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life." The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the special rapporteur on religious intolerance and recommended their full implementation.

The 57th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights considered the situation of Iran's Baha'is. In April 2001, the Commission adopted a strong resolution on Iran that called for the full emancipation of the Baha'i community and, making specific reference

to the Baha'is in two operative paragraphs. The resolution was adopted by 21 votes in favor and 17 against, with 15 abstentions. In the ninth paragraph, the resolution states:

While taking note of recent positive steps regarding the situation of the Baha'is, including the report that they will be allowed to re-establish their cemetery in Tehran, 4 [the Commission] expresses its concern at the still existing

-1The large Baha'i cemetery owned by the Baha'i community in Tehran was seized and desecrated following the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Since that time, small pieces of unsatisfactory land have been provided as cemeteries in that city, none matching the one previously held, and the Baha'is in Iran have no knowledge of any new developments to "re-establish" the cemetery in Tehran.

discrimination against persons belonging to minorities, in particular against Baha'is, and calls upon the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religious grounds or against persons belonging to minorities and to address the matter in an open manner with the full participation of the minorities themselves, as well as to implement fully the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance relating to the Baha'is and other minority groups until they are completely emancipated.

Further, the Commission expresses in the resolution its decision "to continue its examination of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, paying particular attention to further developments, including the situation of the Baha'is and other minority groups," at its 58th session.

A number of governmental delegations mentioned the Baha'is in their oral statements to the Commission. The US noted that "the treatment of those who are Baha'is or belong to other religious and ethnic minorities fails to meet international standards" and asserted that "both Baha'is and members of the country's small Jewish community are imprisoned on trumped-up charges." Australia urged the Iranian government "to ensure that minorities, most notably Jews and Baha'is, are accorded the full protection of the law under the Iranian Constitution." Norway stated, "Respect for human rights for all and freedom of expression are cornerstones in a democratic society. This must of course also apply to religious minorities, including the Baha'is." The Canadian delegation cautioned, "Despite some recent positive changes, we remain concerned by the ongoing discrimination against Baha'is for practicing their faith," and the delegation from Ireland referred to "the continued persecution of the Baha'i community in various parts of the world," mentioning specifically that "in Iran, despite certain improvements, concerns remain as

set out in the reports by Prof. Amor and Mr. Copithorne." The Brazilian delegation also expressed its concern about the treatment of the Baha'is. A number of NGOs mentioned the Baha'is in their oral statements, including the World Federation of United

Nations Associations, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the American Jewish Committee, the Association for World Education, and the International Association for Religious Freedom.

Conclusion

The Baha'i community of Iran has survived and maintained its identity through decades of relentless oppression. Its own strength and determination, as well as the pressure of world opinion, which has been voiced in United Nations resolutions, by the governments of many countries, and in major media worldwide, have contributed to that survival. Iran's Baha'is look forward to the day when their community will be fully emancipated and able to contribute to the well-being and advancement of their society. While a few small positive changes have taken place, it appears that the day of that full emancipation is still far in the future, despite the rhetoric of the current regime.

EssAYS, STATEMENTS, PROFILES

Robert Atkinson looks at the dynamic relationship between the development of

s culture and humanity growing awareness of its essential oneness, as seen both in works of scholars Ji-om different disciplines and in the writings of the Baha'i Faith.

CULTURE AND THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Culture is a complex, dynamic concept that is so basic to human life, so all-pervasive, that, on one hand, it is overlooked or taken for granted, while on the other hand, it can represent all of what we think we need to know to become fully worthwhile human beings. Culture includes religion as well as attitudes, values, beliefs, worldview, customs, rituals, traditions, heritage, behaviors, the vast range of expressive and material arts, and all forms of communication. It determines the myriad ways that people within clearly defined groups respond to, share, organize, interpret, and pass on life's challenges. Far from static, culture is ever changing, a constant battleground for the tensions of dynamism and conservatism.

Culture is therefore understood as a primary catalyst to the

growth and evolution of consciousness. One of the connotations of culture that best illustrates this is in modern biology, where bacteria are grown in a laboratory in an appropriate "culture." Here, culture is literally a medium for growth. Humanity, similarly, is seen as divided into separate, distinct cultures, with each person being the product of the culture in which he or she lives and each

THE B AHA' I W ORLD

culture being the primary catalyst for both individual and collective growth and evolution.

Culture, by its very nature and make up, directly impacts and influences the consciousness of the people who are recipients and carriers of it. The values, beliefs, worldview, customs, and other elements are designed to remind and instruct the people about themselves, their world, their place in it, and ultimately their purpose.

Whatever these elements of culture tell them, the degree to which the people adhere to their own stated beliefs and the way they are interpreted will determine the potential growth, stagnation, or regression that the culture will experience.

One of the most intriguing questions regarding culture is whether there is a pattern, a direction, or a governing force attached to the unfolding of culture. Some say that growth is random; others, that all of history is directional and globalization is a natural culmination of the past. The answer may not be "either/or." The actual path of evolution may be more along the lines of a combination of both randomness and purposive direction.

To explore this question in more depth, the Baha'i concept of culture as a medium for growth will be examined, paying particular attention to the nature of cultural evolution as it relates to

human consciousness. Central to the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the following, written in the middle of the nineteenth century:

"All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization." ¹ Humanity is thus admonished to nurture the noble virtues with which it has been entrusted, such as forbearance, mercy, compassion, and loving-kindness, through acts of service "towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth," so that progress will be continuous. In fact, Baha'u'llah states, "The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquility of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are amongst the principles and ordinances of God." ² Progress, tranquility, and

¹ Baha' u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 215.

² Baha'u 'llah, *Tablets of Baha 'u 'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Baha ' i Publishing Trust, 1988), pp. 129- 30.

C ULTURE & C ONSCIOUSN ESS

peace are both divine commandments, or laws, to be followed, and goals to be achieved.

Evolution may be designed to follow a process, a divine plan, moving towards an end goal, but the factor of human choice makes evolution seem either random or painfully slow, or both. Consider, for example, the innumerable wars and cultural conflicts that humanity has been, and is still, going through. Yet, these, too, can be seen as part of the process.

In a talk given in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha explains:

In this present cycle there will be an evolution in civilization unparalleled in the history of the world. The world of humanity has, heretofore, been in the stage of infancy; now it is approaching maturity. Just as the individual human organism, having attained the period of maturity, reaches its fullest degree of physical strength and ripened intellectual faculties so that in one year of this ripened period there is witnessed an unprecedented measure of development, likewise the world of humanity in this cycle of its completeness and consummation will realize an immeasurable upward progress ... 3

We are all familiar with both the advances and setbacks in all realms of society from the middle of the nineteenth century throughout the entire twentieth century that resulted from the clash between dynamism and conservatism.

The Baha'i writings directly address this dialectical phenomenon. With each new prophetic cycle, or divine Revelation, the direction and rate of the progress of society is quickened by the release of "creative energies" designed, in this case, "to instill into the entire human race the capacity to achieve its organic unification, attain maturity and thereby reach the final stage in its age-long evolution." 4 Thus, a progressive series of Revelations, from ancient, indigenous religions with unknown revelators, to the Prophets of

3 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu 'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 37- 38.

4 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 58.

THE B AHA'I W ORLD

world religions, has infused not only culture, but all aspects of civilization, from the sciences to politics to industries, with new ideas, theories, standards, and discoveries that advance civilization as a whole. Roughly every thousand years or so, the world of humanity undergoes a reformation that witnesses the passing of the old conditions and the advent of a new level of progress. 5

This forward progress is not without great struggle, however.

With each new cycle of spiritual renewal, there is greater evidence of both extremes in the dialectical tension created by the opposing forces. The twentieth century has been a time of the greatest advances of civilization to date, but it has also been "the most turbulent in the history of the human race." "The loss of life," "the disintegration of basic institutions of social order," "the abandonment of standards of decency," "the deployment of monstrous weapons of mass annihilation," and "the reduction of masses of human beings to hopeless poverty" have all occurred to a magnitude previously unknown.⁶ While this might be seen as the nature--Or result--Of individual free will operating in conflict with divine will, it is still possible to recognize the general direction of the overall path of humanity's collective evolution.

One of the more interesting literary contributions of the year 2000 that addressed the theme of evolution was Robert Wright's book *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*. Looking at human history from the perspective of science, Wright illustrates how our evolution has been a directional process of weaving people into larger and richer webs of interdependence over the course of centuries. Wright applies game theory to evolution by explaining the distinction between "zero-sum" games and "non-zero-sum" games. Zero-sum games are essentially win-lose situations, where competition places one side at the peril of the other, with no overall gain for the whole. Non-zero-sum, on the other hand, results in positive outcomes where all gain from the interaction because it is based on cooperation, or potential; it is a win-win situation. Zero-sum

⁵ 'Abdu' l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 439.

⁶*Century of Light*, prepared under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Baha' i World Centre, 2001), p. I.

C U L T U R E & C O N S C I O U S N E S S

interactions lead, at best, to random movement, while non-zero interactions result in directional movement and long-term benefits for all. Wright says the fact that the non-zero approach turns potential into positive sums often creates more potential and more nonzero-sum possibilities to follow.

Wright's thesis is that "the more closely we examine .. .the drift of human history, the more there seems to be a point to it all." He posits a "core pattern" that captures history's basic trajectory: new technologies arise that encourage new forms of non-zero-sum interactions, which stimulate evolution and help realize new potential, which, in turn, contributes to more non-zero situations, until more new technologies arise that cause a repetition and expansion of the pattern. The accumulation of these cycles constitutes growth in evolution and social complexity. Human cultural evolution points towards greater complexity and higher civilization, creating

what Wright calls "the arrow of the history of life, from the primordial soup to the World Wide Web." 7

Wright says further, from the scientific perspective:

Globalization, it seems to me, has been in the cards not just since the invention of the telegraph or the steamship, or even the written word or the wheel, but since the invention of life. The current age, in which relations among nations grow more non-zero-sum year by year, is the natural outgrowth of several billion years of unfolding non-zero-sum logic. 8

Wright's book serves as a scientific reference point in looking at whether the evolution of culture and the evolution of consciousness can be seen as logical- as part of a plan.

Cultural Evolution in Historical Perspective

Earlier in history, when cultural groups were isolated from one another, when they still remained geographically separate from each other, and when each was homogenous, they were better able to maintain their own traditions, beliefs, and values. Although they had their own internal struggles, tribal and indigenous cultural

7 Robert Wright, *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (New York: Random House, 2000), p. 7.

8 Wright, p. 7.

THE BATTLE OF WORLD

groups on their own, with their close-knit communities, typically had fewer sources of conflict or external adversarial forces to contend with, and they were therefore usually able to extend their own way of life.

Rites of passage and ceremonies in traditional communities were intentionally designed to maintain and strengthen the communities' traditions. Knowledge of the world was passed on both formally, through rites and ceremonies, and informally, through storytelling. All life cycle ceremonies were established as socially prescribed means for carrying on traditions that had already been formed and had sustained the welfare and harmony of the community. The coming together of the entire community for rites of passage served as a process for reaffirming the spiritual well-being of the community.

The ritual process has been described as a three-part pattern, consisting of separation, transition, and incorporation. There are many other versions of this pattern; in terms of myth, for example: birth, death, and rebirth; or story: beginning, middle, resolution; or mysticism: purification, illumination, union. All are metaphors of transformation. The pattern is a built-in blueprint of how growth and evolution actually occur. Timeless and sacred, it ensures that, despite difficulties, we will persist in our inherent

psychologically programmed way to continue to grow. As the pattern completes itself, it begins over again to carry individuals, communities, and civilization to further levels of growth. 9 While traditional cultures remained isolated, they not only maintained their own values, beliefs, and customs effectively but also became more complex over time. Wright notes that archaeologists have accumulated evidence of hunter-gatherer societies of six thousand to fifteen thousand years ago that shows signs of growing social and technological complexity. This directional

9 I have discussed how this sacred pattern parallels the biological principle of homeorhesis (that we persist along the specific pathway of our biological development once we have started on it, despite the environmental variations we encounter) and represents a blueprint for psychological and spiritual transformation, in *The Gift of Stories: Practical and Spiritual Applications of Autobiography, Life Stories, and Personal Mythmaking* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1995), pp. 29- 38.

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

cultural change is seen as part of a global evolutionary pattern, an upward arrow of human history illustrating "stubborn ingenuity focused on the resources at hand." One of the basic properties of cultural evolution in applying this kind of ingenuity is a parallel and simultaneous growth in consciousness, occurring in lockstep with growth in complexity. 10

Later, when cultures began to move around, to expand into others' territory, or to become imperialistic, their beliefs, values, and worldviews came into conflict and struggle became the norm, with a new culture emerging when two mixed. This is how and why the two primary forces of evolution-conservatism and dynamism-have come into play. Tradition, essentially a conservative force, is balanced by the dynamic force of change. Thus, the twin opposing forces of conservatism and dynamism can be seen as laws governing the process of change.

Change is a fundamental factor of culture and evolution.

It "occurs each time new variations are introduced," accepted, and "adapted gradually to the needs of the society and to the preexisting culture patterns, which may themselves be modified somewhat to conform to the new invention." 11 This change occurs on many levels at once, from an individual folk tale to the collective level of an entire community or culture and involving something as pervasive as a belief system.

Conservatism is the force that contributes to the retention of information, beliefs, customs, and other aspects of culture, and to maintaining them and passing them on to the next generation. Dynamism, on the

other hand, comprises all those elements that function to change the contents, meanings, and forms of culture over time. These two opposing forces can thus be envisioned as opposite ends of a spectrum. 12

Every culture is, in a way, at the mercy of these two forces and will either remain static or will change, depending on which

10 Wright, pp. 39-42 , 308- 09 .

11 Willi am R. Bascom, " Folklore and Anthropology," *Journal of American Folklore* 46 (1953), pp. 283- 90.

12 Barre Toelken, *Th e Dy namics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), pp. 34-43.

force is more dominant. At one time, perhaps in its isolated stage of development, a culture may be more conservative, while at another time, after it has interacted with other cultures, it will be

more dynamic. Cultural evolution can occur at any point on the spectrum, but the more interaction there is between the two forces, the more tension and struggle there will likely be, and the more profound the evolution will be. Like biological evolution, cultural evolution is largely a selective process that ensures that both tradition and change will prove their effectiveness to the community, whether things stay the same or change.

Throughout history, the continual interaction between the forces of conservatism and dynamism has been a fact of life for most communities and individuals. Traditional ways of life have been increasingly threatened by the spread of exploitation, oppression, and domination, which has contributed to increased conflict, chaos, and struggle. This process can also be seen as a shift in focus of both extremes of the spectrum. The struggle has gradually taken the form of a battle between sacred and secular values. A recent illustration of this is the "Jihad vs. Mc World" phenomenon, from the 1995 book of the same name by Benjamin Barber, that depicts the world as "falling apart" on the sacred level while "coming together" on the secular level. The tension between the two forces has thus created a dual process of fragmentation (tribalism) and integration (globalization), both of which have a common impetus: cultural complexity. 13

The Baha' i writings on the subject of these opposing forces are very clear. This process has its origin in the continual cycle of successive Revelations; as a former one wanes a new one waxes. Shoghi Effendi wrote in early 1941: "We are indeed living in an age which . . . is witnessing a dual phenomenon. The first signalizes the death pangs of an order, effete and godless, that has stubbornly refused ... to attune its processes to the precepts and ideals" of a new era. "The second proclaims the birth pangs of an

Wright, pp. 202- 04. See also Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. Mc World* (New

York: Times Books, Random House, 1995).

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

Order, divine and redemptive, that will inevitably supplant the former." 14

The pains of this birth process are still evident sixty years later and will continue to be so into the future, as long as the disparity between the secular and the sacred, and the extremes of wealth and poverty, are as evident as they are today, and as long as the "unthinking imitation of earlier ages" produces superstition and "religious prejudices" keep alive "in successive generations smoldering fires of bitter animosity." 15

In a Baha'i context, the two primary forces of this process are often referred to as "material" and "spiritual." One is not necessarily good and the other bad. Both are considered important and necessary to the progress of human evolution. 'Abdu'l-Baha speaks of "two calls to success and prosperity" being raised. The "call of civilization, of the progress of the material world" refers to the principles of material achievement and includes "the laws, regulations, arts and sciences through which the world of humanity hath developed."

"The other," 'Abdu'l-Baha continues,

is the soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity, and cause attributes of mercy to be revealed in the human world and the life beyond. This second call is founded upon the instructions and exhortations of the Lord and the admonitions and altruistic emotions belonging to the realm of morality, which, like unto a brilliant light, brighten, and illumine the lamp of the realities of mankind. Its penetrative power is the Word of God. 16

The key is balance and the full development of both, as 'Abdu'l-Baha makes clear: " ... until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit

14 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come* (Wilmette: Baha 'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 17.

15 *Century of Light*, pp. 5- 6.

16 'Abdu 'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha* (Haifa: Baha 'i

World Centre, 1982), pp. 283- 84.

or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained." 'Abdu'l-Baha uses vivid imagery to explain this idea further:

For man two wings are necessary. One wing is physical power and material civilization; the other is spiritual power and divine civilization. With one wing only, flight is impossible. Two wings are essential. Therefore, no matter how much material civilization advances, it cannot attain to perfection except through the uplift of spiritual civilization. 17

Historically, material advancements appear most evident. The outward expression of human capacity has been greatly developed. What is needed, from the Baha'i perspective, is the equal development of the inner forces of morality. This is what has suffered the most when tradition, when sacred values, have lost in the zero-sum game to secular change.

The forced loss of tradition has been a win-lose situation.

Clearly, it has had an adverse impact on the lives of indigenous and tribal peoples and has made their struggle to survive more difficult.

The key to progress, cultural evolution, and an ever-advancing civilization lies in the principle of moderation. Baha'u'llah made this clear over a century ago: "... civilization ... will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men ... If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation." 18

The principle of moderation in action will result in win-win outcomes, or non-zero-sum interactions, while moving the evolution of humanity more smoothly toward its goal of unity.

The Pattern of Collective Evolution

One factor that contributes to the growth of consciousness on the collective level is the pattern of growth itself. Earlier indigenous and traditional cultures generally lived in harmony with each other, interacting mostly in a mutually profitable fashion. The emphasis was primarily on their own cultural values, beliefs, and customs, maintaining these, and passing them on to the next generation.

17 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 12.

18 Baha'u'llah, *Cleanings*, pp. 342--43.

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

There are exceptions to this, of course, but while arguing and accusations occurred, "generalized reciprocity" or "reciprocal altruism" is seen to be the rule of natural selection and evolution. As Wright points out, evolutionary psychologists believe that various impulses designed for the "practical purpose of bringing beneficial exchange" are built into us, including generosity, gratitude, a sense of obligation, and empathy for those who reciprocate. These feelings and the behaviors they evoke are found in all cultures, they say.¹⁹

This observation recalls CG Jung's notion of archetypes. He says the psyche of a newborn child is not a "tabula rasa in the

sense that there is absolutely nothing in it." The child's differentiated brain "is predetermined by heredity and therefore individualized." It meets external sensory stimuli with specific aptitudes, and "this necessarily results in a particular, individual choice and pattern of apperception. These aptitudes can be shown to be inherited instincts and preformed patterns ... They are the archetypes, which ... produce ... astonishing mythological parallels." They are, therefore, "inherited possibilities of ideas" that represent "the authentic element of spirit," or "a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives." 20 The archetype is that which potentially connects us to our own divine nature. With these inherited possibilities as part of our genetic make-up, it follows that traditional and tribal cultures were founded on the principle of unity in homogeneity, or unity in sameness. They were primarily concerned with unity on the level of their own community. The beliefs and values of the world's indigenous peoples emerged originally as a consciousness of oneness, expressed on the level that they knew and within which they lived. Oneness, or unity, is thus the first phase in this pattern of collective evolution.

The qualities that define traditional cultures (morality, mutuality, complementarity, cooperation, stability, and interrelations), as well as their clearly defined, socially prescribed rites, ceremonies,

19Wright, pp. 22-24.

CG Jung, *Psychological Reflections* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 38, 42.

and traditions, contribute in an essential way to the pattern that sustains them. Traditions based upon a firm foundation of values and beliefs lead to bonding, which leads to solidification, which leads to internal strength, which leads to the further growth of internal complexity. As cultures and societies became more complex, through the natural process of evolution, and as different peoples interacted and experienced conflict, this consciousness of oneness was tested and challenged. Eventually it shifted to accommodate the introduction of greater chaos and struggle in people's lives. The consciousness of unity within, and loyalty to, one's known group was replaced, almost through force, by the expectation that members would express the same attitude towards new and larger groups with different views and values.

The Baha'i perspective on this process is expressed in this way: "Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving." 21

But this is not a smooth process; it involves a time of transition, of darkness, stress and disorder, a period of limbo between each new

level of complexity. Between the level of tribe and city-state, or of city-state and nation, for example, would be liminal periods of chaos and conflict, resulting in the second, temporary, phase of unwanted, nonreciprocal pluralism, in which distinct cultures interact, find what they think are important differences, and are nevertheless expected to get along. Such phases are characterized by separateness and collective disagreements, which have brought about long periods of oppression, prejudice, racism, armed conflicts, and wars between various cultural and ethnic groups. As this process is played out at each level, in every continent of the world, there remain pockets of resistance within each level, as we see even today in nations where brutal ethnic strife still occurs.

The process is always made up of the ongoing interaction and struggle between the forces of conservatism and dynamism, but is today taken to the grandest scale. As the conservative desire to

21Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters*, 2d rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 202.

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

keep things the way they are gives way to dynamic forces of change, conflict and struggle escalate until the change is incorporated and integrated into a new cultural system, whether or not it is welcomed by all.

While some factions within nations resist, the world moves onward towards unification. This next step in humanity's evolution will bring us to our destined climax. The Baha'i thesis is that

"A world, growing to maturity, must... recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once and for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life." 22

Completing this pattern of the collective evolution of humanity, the third phase returns us to where we began, but on the grandest scale- to oneness, or unity. The pattern as a whole can thus be described as follows: oneness followed by duality followed by oneness, or unity followed by separateness followed by unity. It could even be described as a collective version of the pattern individuals follow during traditional rites of passage (separation, transition, incorporation), and so it illustrates the principle of the oneness of creation: that what is true on the individual level is also true on the collective level.

With each new level of complexity, a new struggle is experienced, and a new level of expansion of the basic quality of the stage is reached. This is the essence of the process of the evolution of consciousness.

The Baha'i thesis is that, having moved beyond the level of unity in sameness and having experienced many phases of duality

and forced pluralism throughout the world, we are today faced with achieving unity on the final level; we are at the threshold of the third phase of the pattern: that of unity on a global scale. This is the cycle of unity in diversity, or unity in difference, entailing nothing less in our evolution than the unity of the entire human race, in which, as envisaged by Bahci'u'llah, "all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united." 23

22 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha 'u 'I/ah* , p. 202.

23 Baha' u' ll ah, cited in *World Order of Baha 'u 'I/ah* , p. 203.

To summarize, the whole pattern can be seen as one of inherent unity, followed by a temporary, transitional period of disunity, followed by intended unity. 24 The intended unity we are faced with at this point in our evolution is to understand deeply, accept, and put into action, the concept of unity in diversity on a global scale. This third stage will bring us to a practical realization of "a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units." 25

"Unity in diversity" is not just a slogan or buzzword. It is a way of explaining the principle of the oneness of humanity while honoring and cherishing all the natural and unique forms of diversity that exist within the human family, from every ethnic group to each individual temperament. Diversity in the cultural and personal realms is just as vital and essential to the well-being of humanity as it is in the realm of the human gene pool. 26 To accept and put into action the concept of unity in diversity means broadening affiliations without giving up any legitimate allegiances.

In 1931 Shoghi Effendi explained unity in diversity by saying:

It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any other that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on the one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other.²⁷

24 For 'Abdu ' l-Baha's discussion of inherent unity and intended unity, see Sel-

ections from the Writings of 'A bdu ' l-Baha, pp. 260-61, and *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 129- 30.

25 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha 'u 'llah*, pp. 42-43 .

26 See Baha'i International Community, *Valuing Spirituality in Development*

(London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998), pp. 14- 15.

27 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha 'u 'llah*, pp. 41-42 .

C ULTURE & C ONSCIOUSNESS

On the global scale, unity in diversity is founded not only upon the encouragement of the full participation of all groups and individuals in the life of the world community, but also upon the protection of the immense diversity of the human family. Baha'i communities understand the nurturing and safeguarding of diversity as "a moral responsibility," and an "inescapable obligation," 28

because, as Baha'u' llah asserts, "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. " 29

'Abdu'l-Baha makes this idea even clearer when he says,

"The most important teaching of Baha'u'llah is to leave behind racial, religious, national and patriotic prejudices. Until these prejudices are entirely removed mankind will not find rest."

Humanity's range of diversity is more a reason for unity than for discord, because it lends "a composite harmony and beauty of color to the whole." Unity in diversity, therefore, "should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord." 30

The views of some scientists accord with these spiritual principles, which have been elaborated through a succession of

Revelations that have released creative energies to guide the process. As

Wright points out, kin-selected altruism is the original source of love, and this love is based in the genes of the mother and her offspring. "Give evolution long enough," he says, "and reciprocal altruism will arise yet again- and again and again and again ... " 31 Occurring on ever greater levels each time, eventually

it is expressed as unity in diversity in the human family.

28 See Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. 35; and the statement of the Baha'i International Community,

The Protection of Diversity in the Baha'i Community, available at <www.bahai.org/article-1-3-3-4.html>.

29 Baha ' u ' llah, *Gleanings*, p. 217.

30 Abdu ' l-Baha, quoted in *The Power of Unity* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1986); *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 68- 69; and *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'A bdu 'l-Baha in Paris in 1911- 1912* (London : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 51 - 54.

31 Wright, pp. 262 , 294.

Charles Darwin echoes this view of evolution:

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. 32

To make this even clearer, Shoghi Effendi puts the collective evolution of consciousness within the framework of the transformations of the human life cycle:

The long ages of infancy and childhood, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background. Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of adolescence, when the impetuosity of its youth and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the maturity that characterize the stage of manhood. 33

This acknowledges and reminds us of the differences, difficulties, and discord of the present, helps us to remember the spiritual nature of all life and the essential unity of the diverse expressions of human life, and offers a clear direction for the future.

To recap the pattern of collective evolution: inherent unity is family and tribal unity, unity on the level of the most basic human unit. Intended unity is universal unity, on the largest possible scale. Yet only when we have achieved, or truly understood, our intended unity on the universal level, will we recognize that it, too, is part of our inherent unity. Unity on this highest level is learned, and requires, along with an acceptance of the concept of unity in diversity, a similar understanding of the concepts of a global consciousness, and a sense of world citizenship, all of which are ultimately understood and expressed as a love for humanity as a whole.

32 Charles Darwin, quoted in Wright, frontispiece.

33 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahri 'u 'Ilrih*, p. 202.

C I I L T L I R E & C O N S C I O U S N E S S

Towards a Global Consciousness

With each shift of the pattern of collective evolution towards its next level of expansion and incorporation, both cultures and individuals undergo an expansion of consciousness to accommodate the change and prepare them for the next step in their own and the world's cultural evolution. Both the expansion of cultures and shifts in consciousness are initiated by the progressive release of divine energies, or renewals of Revelation, which play the key role in shaping the course of human society.

At each new level of consciousness, humanity becomes more aware of its personal and collective destiny and makes greater efforts to express the truth of that new consciousness. The first questions of consciousness are "Who am I?", "Where am I?", "Where am I going?", and "What should I do?" If unity of family is inherent and universal unity is intended, or learned, then at each higher level of consciousness we seek to build unity on greater levels. We want "to transform situations of discord and conflict into those of harmony and fellowship" to match the truth of our new consciousness, until at the highest level of consciousness we "become champions of justice and help create a just social order" on a global scale. 34

Evidence of this movement towards a global consciousness is illustrated and supported not only in the Baha' i writings, but also by many writers in the scientific fields. For example, a thread that traces our evolution towards a global consciousness runs throughout the field of psychology. Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of experimental psychology, turned later in his life to social or cultural psychology and employed a more ethnographically based methodology that he favored over experimental methods. He capped a highly significant career with an under-appreciated but truly pioneering work on the psychological history of mankind, in which he delineated the stages of cultural development, concerning himself primarily with the evolution of the collective mind of humanity.

34 Paul Larnple, *Creating a New Mind: Reflections on the Individual, the Institu-*

tions and the Community (Riviera Beach, Florida : Palabra Publications, 1999), pp. 4-5.

T 11 E BAHA'i W ORLD

In his 1912 book *Elements of Folk Psychology*, Wundt outlines the four stages of the cultural, social, religious, and psychological history of mankind, which will culminate in a fourth stage characterized by a world consciousness. The first stage he calls "Primitive Man," or the childhood of humanity's evolution. The second is the "Totemic Age," or the era of the newly discovered symbolic world. The third is the "Age of Heroes and Gods," in which community concerns give way to national concerns. The final stage is the "Development to Humanity," when national affiliations give way to worldwide humanistic concerns. During this fourth stage, a world consciousness develops through a four-step process.

Discussing the concept of humanity, Wundt says that, on the one hand, "humanity" means the whole of mankind, while on the other, it is a value-attribute referring to the development of ethical

characteristics that transcend "the limits of all more restricted associations, such as family, tribe, or State," and in which the individual's "appreciation of human worth shall have become a universal norm." He explains further that this evolution does not "entail the disappearance of previous conditions," but that

humanitarian culture takes up into itself the creations of preceding eras, and allows them to take firmer root. Thus, the idea of a cultural community of peoples has not weakened, but ... has strengthened and enriched, the self-consciousness of separate peoples and the significance of the individual State.

His view is that national differences have led to increased dissemination of cultural products, and this has "thus enhanced the value attaching to the spiritual distinctiveness of a people and of the individual personality." 35

Raising the question of whether we live in an age of "a universally human culture," he answers: "We are on the way to this goal, but are still far from having actually achieved it." The goal is still distant because, even though phenomena in the Heroic Age

35 Wilhelm Wundt, *Elements of Folk Psychology* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), pp. 472- 73.

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

"might properly be interpreted to indicate the gradual rise of feelings of humanity," the Development to Humanity stage in our collective development is one "in which the idea of humanity, having come to clear consciousness, exercises an influence upon the various phases of culture, and is entertained by a significantly large portion of mankind to ensure its permanent effectiveness." 36

In this context, Wundt outlines the four steps leading towards world consciousness, by which the "permanent effectiveness" of the idea of humanity can be measured. The first step is the rise of "world empires." This is not meant "to refer merely to a great kingdom that results from the absorption of a number of separate States" or the extension of any single state, but the establishment of a universal society that "involves the conscious idea of a unity embracing the whole of mankind." 37

In the second step, or "world culture," the intermingling of peoples and culture results in an interest in humanity as a whole and brings the transition from folk culture to a world culture. With the third step, "world religion" makes its appearance. During this phase, "we find religions that lay claim to being universal," 38 and we have a universal human religion in which national traits become secondary to universal characteristics.

Finally, world culture and world religion form the basis of

the fourth step leading to a global consciousness, "world history," by which Wundt means not political or cultural events, but "the historic consciousness of.. the idea of mankind as a unity." 39 Thus, world empires, world culture, world religions, and world history represent the four main steps in humanity's evolution toward the conscious recognition of its unity.

In tracing the idea of a global consciousness through psychology, we encounter CG Jung and the collective unconscious.

Like Wundt's idea of humanity's development through a series of increasingly inclusive stages towards recognition of its unity, Jung's concept of the collective unconscious deals with a heritage

36 Wundt, pp. 470- 01 , 475.

37 Wundt, p. 476.

38 Wundt, p. 477.

39 Wundt, p. 4 78.

common to all human beings, which also emerges through a series of differentiations of the collective psyche. These differentiations are envisioned as a series of layers in the psychic system, moving from an inner core of unconscious "central energy," through human ancestors to ethnic groups to national groups, and from tribe to family, and finally to the individual human psyche at the most conscious level.

40

Unlike Wundt, who conceives that evolution towards humanity is conscious, Jung implies that we are born with a consciousness

of our oneness within us, but it is initially unconscious and only gradually rises to the level of awareness as it passes through each differentiation. As Jung says, "The collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution born anew in the brain structure of every individual."⁴¹

Jung's idea of the collective unconscious is that, "in addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature," a second psychic system is "of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals.

This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of preexistent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents."⁴²

Wundt and Jung are talking about the same goal, which is not merely the psychic unity of mankind but, as Wundt says, "the conscious idea of a unity embracing the whole of mankind." As Jung puts it, in comparing the basic difference between East and West,

... since there is only one earth and one mankind, East and West cannot rend humanity into two different halves. Psychic

40 Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of CG Jung* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 8, 34-35.

41 CG Jung, "The Structure of the Psyche," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 158.

42 CG Jung, "The Concept of the Collective Unconscious," in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, Part I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, 1980), p. 43.

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

reality exists in its original oneness, and awaits man's advance to a level of consciousness where he no longer believes in the one part and denies the other, but recognizes both as constituent elements of one psyche.⁴³

In his view, "Despite all the differences, the unity of mankind will assert itself irresistibly." ⁴⁴

However, Wundt and Jung describe a reverse process to reach that goal; for Wundt, it is an external, social process, while for Jung it is an internal, personal process. Both lead to the same end, and both identify the same truth; they are describing two parts of one process. We are born with this awareness of our oneness, and we gradually move towards a consciousness of this awareness as we move through the stages of our evolution. Each in his own way emphasizes a different but key element of the process as a whole, while returning us to the idea of recognizing that both inherent unity (collective unconscious) and intended unity (social consciousness) are essential in achieving the goal of our collective evolution.

Erik Erikson's concept of identity, which belongs to this same thread in twentieth-century psychology, offers yet another perspective on the evolution of consciousness. Erikson built his original theory of life cycle development around the task of identity formation in adolescence. He later moved from the personal to the social sphere, writing about "man's wider, more inclusive identity."

Erikson states, as "evolutionary background for the whole identity problem," that "instead of a consciousness of being the one species he is, man has, as far back as we know, imagined his tribe or his nation, his caste or his class, and yes, even his religion to be a superior species." Erikson uses the term "pseudo-species" to describe this tendency toward exclusivity, and adds that "identity is an issue reaching much deeper than the conscious choice of roles or the rhetorical demand for equality." He says that mankind's task now, in what we might see as its collective adolescence, is "to create a new and all-human identity" and, "beyond a technological civilization,

⁴³ CG Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, A Harvest/HBJ Book, 1933), p. 191.

44 CG Jung, The Undiscovered Self (New York: New American Library, A Mentor Book, 1958), p. 105.

an all-human culture."45 Erikson's concept of the wider identity parallels the ideas of global consciousness, world citizenship, and the oneness of humanity. As some cultures expand and others contract, or try to survive, there is an overall movement and growth towards wholeness and unity.

Building a Culture of Oneness

To move from a culture of duality, in which many cultures exist in conflict with one another, to a culture of oneness, in which many cultures exist in harmony with each other, requires conscious effort- even a transformation of consciousness. Such a transformation must consist of a new, deeper understanding of the core notion of nonduality, or the concept that reality is one and truth is indivisible. This notion is one of the most profound, fundamental verities of the world's religions. The idea of the unity of existence, or of all creation as one, can appear to be either contradictory and paradoxical or essentially true, because reality is both one and many, depending on one's point of view or the level of consciousness from which it is approached. From a temporal, cultural, or disciplinary perspective, reality is divided up into many parts; while from an eternal, divine perspective, division is an illusion, and reality, even all of existence, is one.

Humanity as a whole currently sees primarily the duality, and even the plurality, of the world, with a consciousness of the many.

At the same time, however, it appears close to being ready to move on to the next phase, that of nonduality, in which it will adopt a consciousness of its oneness, leading to a culture of concord and unity. A culture of oneness does not mean that all become the same.

It means acknowledging our oneness within our multiplicity and honoring our diversity within our common heritage as human beings. It means safeguarding our differences while recognizing that we may be more alike than we think we are unlike. 46

45 Erik Erikson, "Remarks on the Wider Identity," in A Way of Looking at Things: Selected Papers from 1930 to 1980 (New York: Norton, 1986), pp. 498, 499, 501.

46 The expression "more alike than unlike" comes from Maya Angelou's poem "Human Family" in I Shall Not Be Moved (New York: Knopf, 1990).

CULTURE & CONSCIOUSNESS

It is evident now, in both sacred and secular aspects of society, that a set of spiritual principles is needed to serve as a framework for ushering in this age of unity. Such principles would be universal, characterized first and foremost by an all-human inclusiveness

that incorporates the best interests of all. The essence of this set of principles is reflected in the pronouncements of Baha'u'llah that "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens," and "Ye dwell in one world, and have been created through the operation of one Will." 47

This primary spiritual principle of oneness is interpreted further by the Universal House of Justice:

World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, and psychology, recognize only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice- prejudice of every kind- race, class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others. 48

The secular world and its thinkers also recognize this fundamental principle of the global age. Ervin Laszlo, science advisor to UNESCO, has stated that mankind "needs a star to follow," or "standards by which we can direct our steps." These will come from "the great ideals of the world religions," he says, listing Christianity's vision of universal brotherhood; Judaism's vision of an elected people in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed; Islam's universal vision of an ultimate community of God, man, nature, and society; the Hindu vision of matter as the outward manifestation of spirit attuned to cosmic harmony; the Buddhist vision of all reality as interdependent; and the Confucian vision of supreme harmony in disciplined and ordered human relationships . He then says, "the essential goal of the Baha' i Faith is to achieve a vision that is world-embracing and could lead to

Baha ' u' ll ah, Gleanings, pp. 250, 334.

The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Wilmette:

Baha ' i Publishing Trust, 1985), pp. 28- 29 .

the unity of mankind and the establishment of a world civilization based on peace and justice." These, he concludes, "are perennial ideals based on universally human values," and must be rediscovered to guide our steps. 49

A vision that can help lead women and men away from despair, and society away from chaos, also came from the second

Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993 . The Parliament adopted a "global ethic" founded upon the principles that there can be no new global order without a new global ethic and that every human being must be treated humanely. The ethic was also based upon four irrevocable directives: commitment to a "culture

of nonviolence" and respect for life; commitment to a "culture of solidarity" and a just economic order; commitment to a "culture of tolerance" and a life of truthfulness; and commitment to a "culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women."

These directives arise from ancient values "which are found in most of the religions of the world." 50

Gender equality, economic equity, racial unity, and scientific and religious harmony are also values for a global age. Enunciated by Baha'u'llah in the nineteenth century, these values are more and more being recognized as those that will lead us from a culture of duality to a culture of oneness. In this gradual process, as with evolution itself, we have seen a shift, even a transformation, of consciousness around these values in the areas of war and peace, economy, and ecology. However, this transformation of consciousness has yet to be achieved in the area of ethics and values. Keeping the timeless, universal values alive and passing them on to future generations is the special task of religions, the Parliament also noted. 51

A global ethic, encompassing universal values meant to benefit and protect all human beings, is not something easily or immediately accepted by all. Nor is the concept of globalization, which is seen by

49 Ervin Laszlo, *The Inner Limits of Mankind* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1989), pp. 65- 67.

50 Hans Kling, ed. *A Global Ethic: Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York : Continuum, 1998), pp.17- 34.

51 Kung, pp. 34- 35.

CIILT L' RE & C ONSCIOUSNE SS

large numbers of people around the world as a threat to the future.

This is evidenced by the violence of the riots set off by the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which were due in large part to a fear of widening the economic gap even further. But, as the document *Century of Light* points out:

globalization itself is an intrinsic feature of the evolution of human society . . . It no longer requires the gift of prophecy to realize that the fate of humanity in the century now opening will be determined by the relationship established between these two fundamental forces of the historical process, the inseparable principles of unity and justice. 52

The central task of the Baha'i teachings, which have been revealed for, and have signaled the beginning of, this global age, is not only to point out the gradualness and the inevitability of the evolutionary process towards the goal of oneness, but also to assist in bringing it about. The rate at which evolution occurs depends ultimately upon the sincerity with which humanity's investigation

of reality proceeds, as this is what will bring about the needed transformation of consciousness. As more and more individuals come independently to the understanding of the essential unity of humankind and begin to live accordingly, the collective cultural and spiritual development of humanity will reach maturity. As greater numbers embrace an orientation of world citizenship and as this is reflected in various spheres of action, from interpersonal to social, cultural, and economic affairs, the principle of the oneness of humanity will become accepted, as that of nationhood was in its time.

Baha'u'llah's vision of unity came at a time when the world was still caught within the limitations of separate nations and deepseated conflicts. Its purpose was to give humanity the means to see, in very practical as well as spiritual terms, its own inherent and intended unity, and to outline a process and order that would help it bring about the next developmental stage in its collective evolution- a stage of globalization characterized by a consciousness of its interdependence and wholeness.

52 Century of light, pp. 133- 35.

Baha'u'llah's core principle, the oneness of mankind, goes beyond the popular ideas of universal brotherhood and goodwill. In the words of Shoghi Effendi:

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 constitutes a challenge .. .to outworn .. . national creeds .. . It calls for. .. a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units. It represents the consummation of human evolution .. . [It] carries with it no more and no less than a solemn assertion that attainment to this final stage in its stupendous evolution is not only necessary but inevitable, that its realization is fast approaching. 53

At the conclusion of his scientific look at cultural evolution and the logic of human destiny, Robert Wright discusses the evolutionary growth of goodness and verifies the global value of scientific and religious harmony. Noting that as cultural evolution has progressed, the size of society has grown, he reminds us that "one role of religious doctrine has always been to congeal societies." After all, he adds, "the word 'religion' comes from the Latin ligare, 'to bind.'" But is it really possible, he asks, for religion to

take society to the next moral threshold and "help congeal the world"? Here, even from "a truly scientific perspective," he considers consciousness to be a key factor in the question of purpose.

He says, "a strictly empirical analysis of both organic and cultural evolution ... reveals a world with direction."

Wright concludes his stimulating tour of human history with a reconsideration of the statement in the Gospel of St. John that reads, "In the beginning was the Word ... " He translates "word," from the Greek logos, to mean "reason" or "argument." Thus, we have "a line of reasoning, a chain of logic," or "a very long argument" which "had

53 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 42-43 .

C L'I-TI I RE & C ONSC IOUS NES S

been set in motion" several billion years ago. We can reasonably speculate, then, that "the expansion of humanity's moral compass was the purpose of history's game-theoretical argument all along. In the beginning, you might say, was the end, and the end was a basic truth- the equal moral status of all human beings." So, according to Wright, "life on earth" was designed for both "the potential for good" and "the potential for bad." Now, logic "finally shows signs of raising the ratio of good to bad." He continues, "More souls are crammed onto this planet than ever, and there is the real prospect of commensurably great peril. At the same time there is the prospect of building the infrastructure for a planetary first: enduring global concord ... Which is to say: winning will depend on not wanting other peoples to lose." 54

Such a consciousness of oneness and of world citizenship is embodied in the principle of service to humanity, which is central to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, Who wrote, in the midst of the separatism and discord of the nineteenth century, "That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race . . . Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth."55

Baha'i communities in all regions of the world are currently building a culture of oneness, as the realized goal of the process towards which humanity has been evolving since earliest times. Service to humanity, whether through humanitarian acts or social and economic development projects, is a sacred and obligatory element in the pattern of life of every Baha'i community. Such efforts to improve material and social conditions are conducted for the benefit of all humanity. Emphasis is placed on cultivating the capacity in individuals and institutions to participate in their own development. The purpose is to build both material and spiritual civilization. 56 Acts of compassion and altruistic service that promote the general welfare of humanity can be seen as the ultimate expression of a consciousness of oneness. The energies released by such

54 Wright, pp. 330- 33.

55 Baha ' u ' llah, Tablets of Baha ' u ' //ah , p. 167.

56 Lample, p. 107.

service are part of a transforming power that "can become an ocean of oneness that will cover the face of the planet."⁵⁷

Projects inspired by such Baha'i principles are currently being carried out all over the world to help to build a culture of peace, harmony, and unity. In Bosnia, students and faculty from Landegg Academy in Switzerland are conducting intensive training seminars on the principles of peace for hundreds of teachers, school administrators, and support staff in the cities of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Travnik. This is part of the Education for Peace project, designed to contribute to the collective process of recovery from the conflict of the 1990s by assisting the members of a younger generation and their teachers and parents to become peacemakers. In Cambodia, the Hope for the Heart literacy project seeks not only to improve reading and writing skills but also to instill values needed to create a nonviolent culture. In India, the New Era Development Institute approaches rural development by combining vocational training with a specialized curriculum in spiritual and moral principles, aimed at producing capable and energized individuals who return to their villages with a new vision of community service to undertake and encourage local, sustainable development efforts.

In December 1999, at the third Parliament of the World's Religions, held in South Africa, an interreligious group made up of many who were key players in the struggle against apartheid unveiled an effort called Gifts of Service to the World, which consisted of some 250 projects that reflect a commitment to interreligious and religious/secular cooperation. In Colombia, an innovative microenterprise program run by FUNDAEC, a social and economic development foundation unique for its emphasis on training that seeks to promote cooperation and a sense of service to the community at large, has granted small loans to thousands of rural farmers. EcoAg Service is a youth agricultural apprenticeship program matching apprentices with farm sites in Barbados, England, Latin American countries, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the United States. The program is designed, in part, to recognize

The Universal House of Justice, Messages of the Universal House of Justice, 1963-1986 (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1998), p. 179.

CI ' LTL 'RE & C ONSCIOUSN ESS

the dynamic coherence between the spiritual and practical requirements of life on earth.

Each of these efforts, and many more, contributes to a culture of service, which helps to overcome a culture of violence and prejudice and, in

turn, helps to establish a culture of economic equity and racial unity-ultimately, a culture of oneness. On 21 March 2001, in observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Baha'i International Community released a statement that begins:

The coming together of the peoples of the world in a harmonious and creative relationship is the crucial need of the present hour. In the wake of advances in human knowledge, which have deepened bonds of interdependence and contracted the planet, the central task now before all its inhabitants is laying the foundations of a global society that can reflect the oneness of human nature. Creating such a universal culture of collaboration and conciliation will require a return to spiritual awareness and responsibility. 58

When these principles, intentions, and actions are fully accepted in the world, our descendants will look back a century or two from now and see how the oneness of humanity makes as much sense to them as nationhood does to us.

" For the full text of this statement, see pp. 261 - 64.

£/ham Ajiwn examines the significance of the Ba ha 'f gardens on Mount Carmel in the context of the relationship between gardens and spirituality in various religious traditions.

SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION

The Gardens and Terraces
on Mount Carmel

A moving meditation penned by the Bab during His imprisonment in Mah-Ku, in the mountains of Azerbaijan, praises God for having turned a prison fortress into a noble chamber and an oppressive mountain into a heavenly garden. It reads:

How can I praise Thee, O Lord, for the evidences of Thy mighty splendor and for Thy wondrous sweet savors which Thou hast imparted to Me in this fortress ... Thou hast watched over Me in the heart of this mountain where I am compassed by mountains on all sides. One hangeth above Me, others stand on My right and My left and yet another riseth in front of Me . . . Having suffered Me to be cast into the prison, Thou didst turn it into a garden of Paradise for Me and caused it to become a chamber of the court of everlasting fellowship. 1

The terraces surrounding the Shrine of the Bab on Mount Carmel in Haifa, which are nearing completion, are a powerful

1 The Bab, Selections from the Writings of the Bab (Haifa : Baha'i World Centre, 1983), pp. 183- 84.

reminder of this transformation and thus a fitting means of paying tribute to the Bab and for enhancing the beauty of the resting place of His earthly remains. But in addition to effecting the transformation of a once barren and rocky mountain into a verdant, blooming garden, the 19 terraces also symbolize another kind of change. In the words of the Universal House of Justice in a letter regarding the significance of these monumental edifices, "The beauty and magnificence of the Gardens and Terraces ... are symbolic of the nature of the transformation which is destined to occur both within the hearts of the world's people and in the physical environment of the planet. " 2 May 2001 will witness the official inauguration of the terraces, when, following a befitting ceremony, they will be open to people of all religious beliefs, backgrounds, and nationalities, as are other Baha'i holy places. As more and more visitors come to admire these beautiful gardens, it is appropriate to consider their significance, both in spiritual terms and in relation to theories about the natural and built environment.

Visions of Paradise

The terraced gardens on Mount Carmel conjure up, for many of those who walk through them, images of the Garden of Eden, of paradise as it is described in various religious traditions. In Biblical Eden, "out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden." 3 In the Qur'an, it is promised that in paradise, "the righteous shall drink of a cup tempered at the Camphor Fountain, a gushing spring at which the servants of God will refresh themselves ... Reclining there upon soft couches, they shall feel neither the scorching heat nor the biting cold. Trees will spread their shade around them, and fruits will hang in clusters over them." 4 The influence of this vision of paradise is evident in traditional Persian gardens, which

2 Letter of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies,

4 January 1994.

3 Genesis 2:9- 10, King James Version .

4 Qur 'an 76:8- 9, trans. N.J. Dawood.

S YJ IBO LS OF TRANSFORMATION

had "one central unifying purpose: praise of the Divine. " 5 In fact, the word paradise itself "derives from the old Persian word pairidaeza ... which meant the royal park, enclosure, or orchard of the Persian king." 6 Essential features of such gardens included:

running water. . . and a pool to reflect the beauties of sky and garden ; trees of various sorts, some to provide shade merely, and others to produce fruits; flowers, colorful and sweetsmelling; grass, usually growing wild under the trees; birds to fill the garden with song; the whole cooled by a pleasant breeze. The garden might include a raised hillock at the centre ... often surmounted by a pavilion or palace.⁷

This could almost serve as a description of the gardens on Mount Carmel. Here one's eyes are indeed delighted by the sight of every kind of tree and flower, and one's ears soothed by the murmur of running water and the song of birds. And at the center, more majestic than any palace, stands the golden-domed Shrine of the Bab, dedicated to the praise of God. As in Eden, where Adam and Eve "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," many feel that this, too, is a place where God can be found. The terraces are, indeed, as Howard Adelman has described them, "the approach to a sacred place."⁹

However, as Louis Greenspan points out in a perceptive commentary on the locales of religious expression, in the Bible the garden is never an unmixed blessing. Eden is the archetypal garden for which humanity longs, but it is also the place of temptation, fall, and expulsion. The hanging gardens of Babylon- literally, "the Gate of God"- were considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, but they are associated on the one hand with sensual pleasure and on the other with the labor of slaves,

5 Julie Scott Meisami, "Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami , Rumi , Hafez." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 2 (1985), p. 242.

6 Meisami, p. 231.

7 Meisami, p. 231.

8 Genesis 3 :8.

9 Howard Adelman, narrating, "Baha' i Hanging Gardens." Television program, first broadcast on Israel Today, Canada, 6 December 1999.

among them captive and exiled Jews. Another Biblical garden, Gethsemane, is the scene of Christ's agony and His betrayal. "The garden by itself is not paradise; the city is also needed with its energy," says Greenspan. ¹⁰ And indeed, the ideal city is a parallel and related theme in religious traditions as well as in secular visions of the world. It finds expression in disciplines as different as religious millennialism, utopian literature, and urban planning.

The Ideal City

In Christianity, the Golden Age of innocence and plenitude represented by the Garden of Eden is balanced by the expectation of an

apocalypse followed by the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, taking the symbolic form of the City of God, "New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." 11 The New Jerusalem has the features of an ancient city—a great and high wall, many gates, and strong foundations— but it also incorporates the elements of a garden: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal . . . In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits . . . and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." 12 This is Eden, complete with the tree of life and a river, transposed into a city setting, where, in contrast with the original garden, there shall be no more sorrow or pain. In this garden-city, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." 13

Parallel to the messianic vision of Christianity, we find a long tradition of utopian thinking in the West. Broadly speaking, the quest for utopia is the quest for a better society and "has always implied a faith in progress." 14 Although the historical events of the last century have made it hard to sustain such a faith, utopian thinking and utopian literature— as well as experiments in utopian

10 Louis Greenspan, on "Baha' i Hanging Gardens."

11 Revelation 21:2.

12 Revelation 22:1-2.

13 Revelation 21:3.

14 Peter Ruppert, *Reader in a Strange Land: The Activity of Reading literary Utopias* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. 99.

SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION

living—continue to flourish even today. In many cases, they are quite far from the popular notion that equates utopianism with naïve escapism at best or oppressive totalitarianism at worst. Rather, they are often agents of change that appeal to people to embrace dynamism and diversity as necessary elements of social progress and the attainment of an ideal society.

The classic example of a literary utopia, the one that has given the genre its name, is Thomas More's *Utopia*, a description of an imaginary island that enjoys perfection in laws, politics, and economy. More's work and that of many subsequent writers within the genre are not only "descriptions of a future utopian world" but are also "frequently seen as guides to action." 15 A feature of More's utopia is the balance between urban and rural life. The island has "fifty-four spacious and noble cities," as well as farmsteads throughout the countryside, where "each citizen in his turn must reside." 16 Furthermore, cities such as the capital, Amaurot, combine

typically urban elements such as walls, towers, fortifications, streets designed for carriage travel, and buildings of several stories, with extensive gardens:

Behind the houses are spacious gardens, and each house has a door to the garden as well as one to the street. .. The Utopians place great value on their gardens in which they grow fruits , herbs, and flowers . These gardens are extremely well arranged and I have never seen anything more suitable for the pleasure of the citizens. 17

The placement of natural landscapes within an urban setting, once again merging the garden and the city, is a feature of many subsequent utopian worlds, including William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and Aldous Huxley's *Island*, to name but two.

Utopian thought has also had an influence at the practical level, on city planning. For many modern city planners, as for many utopian visionaries, the ideal city is one in which the urban structure

15 Ian Tod and Michael Wheeler, *Utopia* (London: Orbis, 1978), p. 120.

16 Thomas More, *Utopia and Other Writings*, ed. James J. Greene and John P. Dolan (New York: New American Library, 1984), p. 54.

17 More, p. 56.

fits a given ideological system based on "assumptions about human nature, equality, happiness, fulfilment and work." 18

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many thinkers, including philosophers, social reformers and city planners, were concerned by overcrowding in cities, rural depopulation, the depression of agriculture, and people's alienation from the land, and they recommended that as many as possible should regain their contact with the land. 19 One plan for achieving this closer contact was the Garden-City Movement initiated in Britain by Ebenezer Howard. His plan for a garden-city consisted of "a series of concentric circles with six boulevards radiating from the centre ... In [the] city centre, situated in a park, lay the civic buildings, with residential, shopping, commercial and industrial areas located in different parts of the city ... The outermost circle was an agricultural belt which would supply the city with food." 20 Howard's aim was to create an alternative to the duality of town and country, one which combined positive aspects of each- the beauty of the country and the activity of urban centers.21

Although the utopian vision of the garden-city seemed gradually to degenerate into a series of mere town planning techniques,

the concept of the ideal city as a symbol of an environment conducive to creating a healthy and happy society has remained. Leon

Krier suggests that architecture is about creating "patterns that support communal life in a spiritual and ecologically healthy way." 22

To take it a step further, architecture, in the words of Antonio

Sant'Elia, is an "effort ... to make the material world a direct projection of the spiritual world." 23 The architectural structures that make up a city can be a means of reflecting spiritual virtues onto the

1~ Tod and Wheeler, p. 127.

19 Tod and Wheeler, p. 122.

10 Tod and Wheeler, p. 120.

21 Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities a/Tomorrow* (London: Faber, 1945).

11 Leon Krier, quoted in Leo R. Zrudlo, "The Missing Dimension in the Built Environment: A Challenge for the 21st Century," *Journal of Baha'i Studies* 3, no. 1 (1990- 91), p. 56.

23 Antonio Sant'Elia. "Antonio Sant'E lia, Manifesto 1914," in *From Futurism to Rationalism- The Origins a/Modern Italian Architecture* 51 , nos. 1/2 (1981), p. 21.

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physical world, thereby spiritualizing the social structures that flourish in the material world. As suggested by the examples above, one of the most significant ways in which spiritual qualities can be expressed is by making gardens and natural landscapes part of the architecture of a city and, in some cases, even making the city into a garden. Baha'u'llah, Who was Himself deeply fond of nature and the beauty of gardens, is quoted as saying that "the country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of bodies."24 Creating beautiful gardens in a city is like bringing soul to the body of that city.

The terraces and gardens surrounding the Shrine of the Bab perform this function. Their architect, Fariborz Sahba, believes that "art is an expression of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit," 25 and he and his colleagues set out to make these gardens the material projections of the spiritual as they reflect such qualities as the love of God, beauty, illumination, and unity in diversity. These are qualities that are destined, through the influence of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, to transform the hearts of the peoples of the earth. At the same time, they find their physical and visual manifestation on Mount Carmel and, ultimately, in the environment of the entire planet.

The Mystic Encounter with God

The most notable feature of the terraces is that they lead the eye to the Bab's Shrine, which, no matter the vantage point on the terraces, never ceases to be the dominant center of the mountain. Mr.

Sahba compares the design of the terraces to the setting for a precious gem, like a golden ring for a valuable diamond. He says, "If a diamond is not set properly, its value does not show. The Terraces provide both the physical and spiritual setting for the Shrine." 26 The 19 terraces---one on the same level as the Shrine of the Bab, nine above it, and nine below---"form a grand series of

24 Baha'u'llah, quoted in JE Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, 1950 ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 35.

25 Fariborz Sahba, "Art and Architecture: A Baha'i Perspective," *Journal of Baha'i Studies* 7, no. 3 (1997), p. 54.

26 Fariborz Sahba, quoted in "Reshaping 'God's holy mountain' to create a vision of peace and beauty for all humanity." *One Country* 12, no. 2 (July-September 2000), p. 11.

brackets, which accentuate the Shrine's position in the heart of the mountainside." 27 An aerial view reveals them to be designed as nine concentric circles with the Shrine at their center. Symbolically, too, they center on the Bab, representing Him and the Letters of the Living, His first 18 followers. On the ninth terrace, just below the Shrine itself, stand two orange trees, propagated from the seeds taken from an orange tree in the courtyard of the Bab's house in Shiraz, Iran, before it was destroyed during the Islamic Revolution. In the Shrine, one is reminded of the Bab's sacrifice and martyrdom; these young trees are reminders of His early life and of the declaration of His mission in the house of His youth. By thus focusing the pilgrims' and the visitors' attention on the Bab, the terraces reflect the attitude that the Baha'i Faith seeks to create in the hearts of people, namely that their thoughts should center on God, as He is revealed through His Messengers, and that their lives should be dedicated to the glorification of their Lord.

In the Baha'i writings, gardens are sometimes used as metaphors for divine revelation and the Manifestations of God referred to as divine Gardeners. Baha'u'llah writes, for example, "Magnified, O Lord my God, be Thy Name, whereby the trees of the garden of Thy Revelation have been clad with verdure, and been made to yield the fruits of holiness." 28 'Abdu'l-Baha further describes the Prophets of God as "the divine Gardeners Who till the earth of human hearts and minds." 29 Gardens have, throughout the history of the Baha'i Faith, been associated with the proclamation of God's new revelation and the beginning of a new dispensation. The three gardens at Badasht, where a conference of the followers of the Bab was held in 1848, witnessed the abrogation of the law of Islam and the proclamation of the advent of a new order.

27 Fariborz Sahba, quoted in "Reshaping," p. 11.

Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 160-61.

28 Baha'u'llah,

29 '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, 1995), p. 295.

8 YI'IBO LS O F TRANSFORMATION

The Garden of Ric;ivan in Baghdad was the site of Baha'u'llah's open declaration of His station as the Promised One of past religions and the Manifestation of God for this age. Gardens have often been the site of mystic encounters with God and thus symbolic of the purpose of human life, which is to know and worship God. What better place, then, to tum one's heart and mind towards God than in a garden?

Spiritual attributes are as much part of the material world as they are of the human. In His Tablet of Wisdom, Baha'u'llah writes, "Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discemment."³⁰ If we learn to see the Creator in nature, then we come to see our physical environment in a new light. The change that has taken place in Western culture's dominant metaphors reflects, though indirectly and unconsciously, the influence of the Baha'i revelation. The last three centuries have witnessed a gradual movement in the West towards an organic view of the world, in which reality is seen to be fluid, dynamic, and composed of "mutually interacting systems."

³¹ This organic worldview finds expression in the Baha'i writings. Shoghi Effendi writes, "Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it." ³² The gardens on Mount Carmel illustrate this nexus between human beings and the natural world and symbolize the harmony that is possible between them when humanity's actions are spiritually directed and based on an awareness of the divine presence in nature. If the reverence and awe that one experiences in these gardens are reflected in an attitude of respect for all of creation, the physical environment of the planet will indeed be transformed.

³⁰ Baha'u ' llah, Tablets o(Baha 'u '//ah revealed afier the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette:

Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 142.

³¹ N Katherine Hayles, Th e Cosmic Web: Scientific Models and literary Strat- egies (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 47.

³² Conservation of the Earths Resources, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (London : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), p. iii.

The Beauty of Diversity

One of the qualities of the Baha'i gardens that creates this sense of awe and wonder is their beauty. Beauty is one of the attributes of God, and in the Baha' i view the impulse to create beauty and the inclination to be drawn to it are signs of human nobility. The beauty of the Baha'i gardens derives to a great extent from the

harmony between different elements and styles, what 'Abdu'l-Baha calls "the beauty in diversity, the beauty in harmony." 33 The terraces embody this principle of unity in diversity in every detail. The central axis is a formal garden. The stairs leading up to the Shrine of the Bab and thence to the crest of the mountain, together with the fountains, flowerbeds, and paths immediately surrounding them, are symmetrical in design and convey an impression of geometric order. As one moves outwards, however, the landscaping becomes increasingly varied and irregular until it merges into the mountain's natural environment. The paths are winding; wildflowers, bushes, and trees grow in profusion; and the impression is one of naturalness and spontaneity. Both the man-made and the natural, the formal and the informal, have their place here. Within each terrace, too, one finds a union of divergent elements. The steps are made of stone, but along their sides run streams of water whose murmur gives life to the stone. And while the overall design of the terraces is harmonious, no two levels are exactly the same. Each garden has a unique design, including a color scheme of its own, and is yet integrated into the whole.

Such harmony between different entities is a perfect symbol of the unity in diversity that is the goal of the Baha'i Faith. In the World Order of Baha'u'llah, people, lands, and cultures will preserve their unique characteristics while harmonizing together to form a whole greater and more beautiful than the sum of its parts. 'Abdu'l-Baha's explanation of the unity of humankind uses the metaphor of a garden:

33' Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahci in Paris in 1911-1912 (London : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 52.

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Diversity of hues, form, and shape enricheth and adometh the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character are brought together under the power and influence of one agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. 34

'Abdu'l-Baha's powerful metaphor has implications for the physical environment of the planet as well. If the garden is a symbol of a harmonious, joyous, and spiritual mode of living, then what would it mean to transform the whole world into a garden?

Respect for Nature

In his classic utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*, nineteenth-century English author William Morris writes that his country "was once a country of clearings amongst the woods and wastes ... It

then became a country of huge and foul workshops ... It is now a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is spoilt."³⁵ A garden is clearly an antithesis to the mechanized, polluted urban wasteland that many fear the world is becoming. But it is also at variance with a primitive and undeveloped wilderness where technology is rejected and progress denied. A garden is a place of living, growing things, where science and art are used to cultivate nature while at the same time serving human needs, both physical and spiritual. The gardens and terraces on Mount Carmel fulfill these purposes. Their existence is the result not only of an inspired artistic sensibility but also of a high order of technological advancement that has allowed a rocky mountainside to be transformed into a verdant and productive garden.

Martin Palmer, secretary-general of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, describes the terraces as a "fascinating model of bringing order out of chaos." ³⁶ However, every aspect of the mountain's transformation is marked by close attention to the ecology of the area and respect for nature's diversity. The plants are

34 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), pp. 291 - 92 .

35 William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ed. James Redmond (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 61.

36 Martin Palmer, quoted in "Reshaping," p. 12 .

chosen not only for their beauty but also for their suitability to the environment. For example, the informal sections of the terraces feature wildflowers that blossom in the fall and winter, and flowering trees and perennial bushes that assume prominence in the spring and summer, while the outer areas have been left free to develop into natural forests that serve as wildlife corridors for a variety of native animals, birds, and insects. The plants contribute to improving the city's environment by providing a high degree of air filtration and by giving sanctuary to beneficial insects and birds, which in turn provide natural pest control and reduce the need for pesticides. Although the gardens are designed to bloom throughout the year, the choice of appropriate plants together with a judicious combination of ancient and modern gardening practices (such as mulching and composting, computerized irrigation systems, and water recycling) minimize land erosion and place a high priority on water conservation.

Mount Carmel was known to the ancient Hebrews as a symbol of fruitfulness and prosperity. Following a long period of deforestation, during which it turned into a dry, rocky landscape, it has regained its former verdure and beauty. Once again it embodies its Hebrew name "kerem-el," meaning "vineyard of the Lord." The harmonious patterns created in the terraces bring pleasure to the

senses and peace to the soul, and help create an environment conducive to prayer and meditation. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that "it is natural for the heart and spirit to take pleasure and enjoyment in all things that show forth symmetry, harmony, and perfection." 37 The gardens channel this sense of pleasure into the worship and service of God. At the same time, they demonstrate the role that responsible stewardship must play in the conservation of the planet's resources. As mentioned above, they provide a model for the use of appropriate technology to maintain biodiversity and water and soil conservation. On a symbolic level, they point out the importance of fulfilling universal and basic human needs: the orange trees are sources of nourishment, the fountains provide clean running water, the ornamental

37Bahri 'i Writings on Music, comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Oakham, United Kingdom : Baha ' i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 8.

SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION

seats along the terraces provide shelter and rest. Here, then, is a perfect balance between the preservation of nature and the development of its resources for human use. For the world at large to reflect the qualities displayed by the terraces, its people must learn to achieve harmony between the development and cultivation of land and the natural diversity of the environment, between "agriculture and the preservation of the ecological balance of the world." 38

"A Spiritually Charged Landscape"

Beyond their function as a model for the transformation of the earth into a harmonious and healthy environment, the gardens on Mount Carmel and the Shrine they embosom constitute the spiritual center, not only of the Baha'i Faith, but of the whole world. Thomas Beeby, writing about urban form, notes that the ancient Greek cities "grew around their raised holy place" and were "constructed in a spiritually charged landscape." 39 From the Baha'i point of view, a world transformed by the Revelation of Baha'u'llah will circle around the Shrine of the Bab, a holy place that spiritually charges not only its immediate surroundings, but the entire landscape of the globe. The nine concentric circles radiating from the Shrine were designed to symbolize the entire planet as it is described in the following mighty statement, written by Shoghi Effendi in a letter dated 29 March 1951:

For just as in the realm of the spirit, the reality of the Bab has been hailed by the Author of the Baha'i Revelation as "The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve," so, on this visible plane, His sacred remains constitute the heart and center of what may be regarded as nine concentric circles ...

The outermost circle in this vast system ... is none other than the entire planet. Within the heart of this planet lies the "Most Holy Land," ... the center of the world and Qiblah of the nations. Within this Most Holy Land rises the Mountain of God of immemorial sanctity, the Vineyard of the Lord ...

3' Conservation, p. 13.

39 Thomas Beeby, "The Cultural Implications of Urban Form: 1984" *Cross - Currents of American Architecture* 55, nos. 1/2 (1985), p. 86.

Reposing on the breast of this holy mountain are the extensive properties permanently dedicated to, and constituting the sacred precincts of, the Bab's holy Sepulcher. In the midst of these properties ... is situated the most holy court, an enclosure comprising gardens and terraces which at once embellish, and lend a peculiar charm to, these sacred precincts. Embosomed in these lovely and verdant surroundings stands in all its exquisite beauty the mausoleum of the Bab Within this shell is enshrined that Pearl of Great Price, the holy of holies, those chambers which constitute the tomb itself. .. Within the heart of this holy of holies is the tabernacle, the vault wherein reposes the most holy casket. Within this vault rests the alabaster sarcophagus in which is deposited that inestimable jewel, the Bab's holy dust. 40

The Shrine of the Bab truly resembles a jewel when it is illumined at night. When the hundreds of lights placed throughout the terraces are lit, they outline the shape of the terraces and form a halo above the dome of the Shrine. They seem to trace the rays of the light shining from the Shrine and illuminate the mountain as a whole. The symbolism is deliberate: this brilliant illumination is in sharp contrast with the conditions in which the Bab was imprisoned in the remote fortress of Mah-Ku in northern Iran, where, according to His own testimony, "there [was] not at night even a lighted lamp." 41 The dark prison has been symbolically transformed into a luminous garden from which the Sun of Truth, shining forth in the person of the Bab, sheds the light of guidance on those who accept and follow Him.

A Model for Development

These gardens not only exert a spiritual influence on those who visit them, they also have a practical influence on their surroundings. The effect on the city of Haifa is already visible. At the foot of the terraces, the German Templer Colony, built in the nineteenth century by millennialists expecting the return of the Messiah, is being restored and developed, from Haifa's port to the first terrace's entrance plaza. As part of the restoration, the municipality has

40 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947- 1957* (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 95- 96.

SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION

moved Ben Gurion Avenue 1.86 meters to bring it into alignment with the terraces' central staircase. Alongside the construction of the Baha'i gardens, efforts have been made throughout Haifa to beautify and develop the city's streets, parks, beaches, and other areas. At the upper entrance to the terraces, Panorama Drive, which commands an impressive view, has been renovated and further beautified by the construction of the Louis Promenade on its other side. From this spot, 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision that "A person standing on the summit of Mount Carmel. . . will look upon the most sublime and majestic spectacle of the whole world" 42 is indeed realized. Further afield, the gardens in Haifa provide a model for reexamining horticultural practices in gardens of Baha'i Houses of Worship around the world to see how they might further conserve water, be weaned from the use of chemical pesticides, and minimize the use of chemical fertilizers. Finally, one may hope that the gardens will encourage individuals and communities to consider ways of beautifying their own physical environments, including both homes and public properties.

The terraces are part of a complex of gardens that surrounds the Baha'i holy places in Haifa and Acre. The Shrine of the Bab and the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji, near Acre, which is the holiest spot on earth for Baha'is, constitute the spiritual center of the Baha'i Faith. On Mount Carmel, four administrative buildings form an arc near the Shrine of the Bab. These buildings, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, the International Archives building, the International Teaching Centre building and the Centre for the Study of the Texts, house the institutions that constitute the world administrative center of the Baha'i community. According to their architect, Hossein Amanat, these structures, built in the classic Greek style, create the effect of pavilions adorning the gardens surrounding them. 43 Here, the atmosphere of peace, harmony, and contemplation that characterizes both the gardens and the buildings helps redefine the concept of religious "administration" as something grounded in a spiritual relationship with God. Shoghi Effendi wrote that the "vast and irresistible process" associated

42 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in *Star of the West* 24, no. 10 (January 1934), p. 307.

43 "Reshaping," p. 14.

with the work on the Arc, including the surrounding gardens, "will synchronize with two no less significant developments—the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the evolution of Baha'i national and local institutions."44

Baha'is believe that beyond the practical example they provide, the symbolism

they offer, and the influence they exert on individuals, the Mount Carmel projects are destined to have effects on the world at large that are as yet indiscernible and unimaginable. Altogether, the Baha'i gardens offer a glimpse of the type of world that the Baha'is are working for: one that expresses in its harmonious blend of architectural and horticultural styles the principle of unity in diversity, emphasizes in its beauty the precedence of spiritual values over materialism, and, in its open invitation to all, embraces all peoples and cultures. 45

As the vital importance of these principles is gradually recognized and they are put into practice in all the different spheres of human life, an unprecedented transformation will indeed occur both within the hearts of the world's peoples and the physical environment of the planet. Then will the world fulfil its ancient promise and its destiny, as described by 'Abdu'l-Baha: "The Lord of all mankind hath fashioned this human realm to be a Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise."46

44 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'is of the World, 1950-1957* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 74.

45 "Reshaping," pp. 9-10.

40 Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 275.

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The Institute Process

in the Baha'i Community

The Baha'i sacred writings say, "Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom," and "Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words." 2 Baha'is see education as the means for all people to achieve their potential, and they believe that knowledge should be used in service to humanity. For the past six years, since 1996, the administrative institutions of the Baha'i community have been engaged in guiding the development of an action-oriented distance education system that aims to train individuals, institutions, and communities around the world to become more effective agents of social transformation. This effort, which has fostered a Baha'ullah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah* revealed earlier the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette:

Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 162.

2 Baha 'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 26- 27.

culture of learning and growth in the worldwide community, is known as the institute process.

Training institutes have been set up to develop the capacity of large numbers of participants to express the Baha'i teachings in their personal lives. A sequence of courses, with each course building on the previous ones, is the method generally adopted. Programs seek not only to impart knowledge but also to provide spiritual insights and to endow participants with skills and abilities of service, building their capacity to look at the world and its conditions from the point of view of the Baha' i teachings rather than from the perspectives offered by their diverse backgrounds. While different materials will be produced around the world as the process takes deeper root, many institutes are currently using courses developed through some 15 years of experience at the Ruhi Institute in Colombia. The material, which has proven to be useful to people from a wide variety of cultural and educational backgrounds, is based on connecting participants to the Baha' i sacred writings, and the sequence of courses offers a coherent approach to topics such as the development of spiritual qualities, prayer, the soul and the afterlife, carrying out acts of service, training teachers to promote the spiritual education of children, understanding events in historical perspective, and teaching the Faith. Some courses are held in central locations, but in many countries decentralization has proven to be key to the effective extension of the institute process to the grassroots. This has been accomplished through extension courses, institute campaigns, and

In the

- Democratic Republic of Congo, Bahri 'is study the sacred writings of the Faith as part of their study circle.

Baha 'is in the Nicobar Islands study Ruhi materials as part of' the

country's
institute
program.

study circles. In extension courses, Baha'is from an area comprising a number of nearby villages and towns come together to take part in the national or regional institute's program, working with a trained tutor from the institute, or the tutor may travel to the different villages and towns to conduct courses. Institute campaigns offer a more intensive approach to the study of the courses, with a series of classes offered over the period of a few weeks. In study circles, small groups gather in their own localities on a regular basis, progressing through a sequence of courses in collaboration with a trained tutor.

Study circles, which are the most flexible and low-cost delivery systems for providing institute courses in each locality, have been particularly effective. They have been used successfully in settings ranging from isolated rural villages to large urban centers and have involved people from many different educational levels. In addition to meeting regularly to study together, circle participants engage in service and other extracurricular activities that promote unity and fellowship. Membership of the group is neither exclusive nor static. Baha'is and others are welcome to participate, and the composition of the circle may gradually change as people join or drop out as the group progresses through the sequence of courses. Experience has shown that study circles have a catalytic effect on community building.

To achieve a balance between the quality and quantity of endeavor in all their activities, communities are encouraged to engage in a process of reflection on what they have accomplished, assessment of approaches taken, and modification of those approaches, if

needed, in light of their experience or new circumstances. Such an action-reflection model contributes to the ongoing evolution and improvement of the institutes' overall effectiveness. In this way, people become active participants in their learning and in charting their own path of development.

This kind of educational process differs in important ways from other models, seeking as it does to ensure that the energies generated are channeled into active service. It aims to increase the number of Baha'is who are able to teach their Faith with dedication and knowledge, to train participants to acquire specific capabilities, and to offer courses open to all on subjects such as the meaning of spirituality in the modern world, moral leadership, the spiritual education of children and youth, the dynamics of prayer, and the nature of the soul and the afterlife.

Institutes' efforts to train community members in development work and in the administration of social and economic

development projects focus initially on learning about the fundamental spiritual qualities with which all human beings have been endowed. Further training conveys knowledge and skills necessary for effective action. The result is the empowerment of participants to chart their own path of progress on a firm basis of spiritual principles. Such efforts in social and economic development will evolve further as Baha'i communities acquire experience and strength in this area.

By April 1998 the effects of training institutes were becoming evident in the strengthened faith, the conscious spiritual identity, and the deepened commitment to Baha'i service of followers around the world- a demonstration of "the importance of knowledge of the Faith as a source of power for invigorating the life of the Baha'i community and of the individuals who compose it."³ Attention being given by institutes to literacy, primary health care, and the advancement of women was both contributing to a global process of learning about social and economic development and increasing institutional capacity to administer development

3 Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Ri9van 155 BE (April 1998).

Baha 'is
studying Ruhi
course
materials in
the Baha 'i
institute
building in
Santo,
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programs. It was clear that the Baha'is were learning how to apply the Creative Word, the transformative source of the institute concept, to the process of community building.

By February 2000, 350 institutes had been established in 170 countries, with some one hundred thousand people having, at that point, completed at least one course. In April 2000, the Universal House of Justice stated that the development of the system of training institutes around the world was "the single greatest legacy" in the field of expansion and consolidation of the Four Year Plan that had just concluded. By increasing the capacity of individuals to teach the Faith, improving the ability of Local Spiritual Assemblies, regional councils, and committees to guide the community, and by introducing new patterns of thought and action that influenced communities' collective behavior, institutes had promoted a "change in the culture

of the community" as more and more members had become involved. Now, the House of Justice stated, the process must be augmented.

In a letter to the members of the Continental Boards of Counsellors in January 2001, preparing them for the launch of the community's new Five Year Plan in April 2001, the Universal House of Justice wrote, "The continued development of training institutes in the diverse countries and territories of the world ... must be a central feature of the new Plan." 4 Envisioning the institute as

4Letter of Universal House of Justice to the Conference of Continental Boards of Counsellors, 9 January 2001, paras. 2, 4 .

THE B AHA'I W ORLD

"a center of learning intensely engaged in the spiritual education of the friends from the tenderest age through adulthood" and as an agency that promotes a "combined process of action, learning, and training," the House of Justice described it as contributing to "a culture of growth" in which "mutual support, commitment to learning, and appreciation of diversity of action are the prevailing norms." 5

The number of active, confident workers whose capabilities have been nurtured through the institute process is steadily increasing in Baha'i communities all over the world. By April 2001, the number of people who had completed at least one institute course had risen to 120,000.

As Baha'is look ahead to the further evolution of the institute process, a glance at representative changes that it has already brought to Baha'i communities in different parts of the world provides some illuminating snapshots of progress made to date.

In Ecuador, at the outset of the Four Year Plan, the training institute began by working with several rural communities in one region, focusing both on their development and on the transformation of a number of youth who had arisen to give a year of their lives in service to their Faith. To meet the needs that grew out of this effort, the institute developed a three-level, two-week basic training course for youth and adults, offered twice a year; a two-level year of service training course for the youth, offered at the beginning of their service and after six months; special junior youth camps; and formal training courses for members of Local Spiritual Assemblies. After four years, trained youth volunteers were serving in local communities in nine regions of the country. Materials from the Rubi Institute have been used, and others have also been developed and integrated into the curriculum, as needed. The institute has taken on responsibility for a number of social and economic development activities and is facilitating a Higher Studies program for Baha'i youth who have completed

their year of service to continue their formal academic and spiritual training while simultaneously staying connected to and serving their Faith.

5 9 January 2001 letter, paras. 7- 9.

In the highly urbanized setting of Canada, after experimenting with the development of its own materials, the National Spiritual Assembly decided early in 2000 that the six training institutes across the country should adopt the Ruhi Institute curriculum. Initial skepticism that the materials might not be sophisticated enough for an educated Western population was quickly allayed at a national meeting held in May 2000 for those interested in the institute process. The gathering brought together several hundred members of the Canadian community with a number of Counsellors and facilitators from Latin America who had deep experience with the Ruhi Institute materials. The clarity of vision and energy generated by this meeting gave impetus to the formation by April 2001 of at least 405 study circles with more than 2,200 participants. As a consequence, Baha'is have reported deeper understanding of and connection to the Baha'i sacred writings, greater fellowship and energy in Baha'i communities, involvement with people of other faiths and backgrounds who are studying with them, an increase in a wide variety of service activities initiated by individuals and Local Spiritual Assemblies, and community growth. Some communities have reported improvement in their ability to plan systematically, take action, and then evaluate their actions and make appropriate adjustments.

India, with a Baha'i population of some one and a half million, faced a tremendous challenge in developing training institutes that would meet the needs of tens of thousands of people. The success of the community's efforts thus far is evident in the fact that by April 2001 approximately fifty thousand participants had completed at least one institute course. Key to the process has been the spirit of collaboration among all the institutions and agencies involved. The National Assembly, consulting with the Counsellors, has defined the nature and direction of the institute process throughout the entire country and tracks developments in the states and regions, while State Councils look after the administration of the institutes, setting broad policies, appointing governing boards, approving institute plans, and allocating resources. The governing boards appointed by the Councils see to the detailed month-to-month activities and the delivery of courses, and coordinators and assistant coordinators deal with issues connected to the practical, day-to-day management of the institute. Throughout the development of this mode of functioning, Counsellors and members of the Auxiliary Boards have offered their support at every level, and

the whole organizational structure has allowed all institutions and agencies to draw on each other's strengths and abilities to grow in maturity, capacity, and experience, while avoiding clashes over power or jurisdiction. This "careful but flexible" manner of operation has also provided room for changes and adjustments, where required.

The institute process has encouraged a great deal of creativity at the local level. Throughout the Four Year Plan, the Swindon Baha'i community in the United Kingdom made significant advances in planning systematically, then acting and reflecting on actions taken. All of this has promoted a culture of learning. Seeking an effective way to reach the population of their town, the Baha'is tried a number of approaches. They eventually found that they could provide a useful and welcome service to the wider community by hosting gatherings called "Tranquility Zones" that allow attendees to experience the Baha'i sacred writings in peaceful, beautiful surroundings. Through the years, in response to the needs and experiences of the community, these devotional programs have undergone many changes and have expanded to include outreach programs in local schools, hospitals, and businesses- all well received by the local residents, government, and other organizations. A recently developed six-week "Discover your own Spirituality" course at the college of continuing education has been popular, as has a project called "Discovery Zone" for youth with problems at home or school who are referred by social agencies to a ten-week series of sessions that helps them understand their spiritual nature. Participants in the "Tranquility Zones" who wish to study the Baha'i teachings more intensively are welcome to join study circles sponsored by the training institute. As a result of all of these activities, the Swindon Baha'i community has become known as a group capable of identifying and addressing the needs of the town's citizens in a creative, uplifting way.

These examples offer a glimpse at the wide-ranging process of systematic growth and development in which the worldwide Baha'i community is currently involved. Similar progress has been made in many other countries, regions, and localities, and no doubt the coming five years will see even greater advances as the Baha'is further develop the culture of learning, transformation, and growth that they have been nurturing through the institute process.

Ann Boyles looks at terrorism, the threats that it poses to contemporary nation-states, and the various means of addressing this global challenge.

wr. WORLD
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Bombs planted in parked cars explode near crowded marketplaces. Trucks loaded with explosives, driven by suicide bombers, crash through barriers into embassies and wreak devastation. Kidnappers abuse and manipulate the innocent. The nerve gas sarin is released in a subway station of a huge city, resulting in agonizing deaths and widespread casualties. Airplanes are hijacked and passengers are threatened with violence or death if the hijackers' demands are not met. These and similar events have occurred with such frequency in recent decades that one writer has speculated that terrorism could become "the incendiary torch and the devastating storm of the coming century." ¹ Indeed, the rise of the power and reach of terrorist threats throughout the twentieth century ranks as one of the most unsettling developments of current times. What, if anything, can be done about this pernicious and multidimensional phenomenon, with its many global ramifications?

¹Walter Z. Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 282.

A clear definition of the problem would aid in the formulation of appropriate and effective plans to combat it. Terrorism has been described as "a special kind of violence designed to create a climate of fear among a wider target group than the immediate victims, usually for political ends," ² and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation defines it as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." But while many definitions have been advanced, none has proven universally satisfactory. Such violence may be seen as both "a special kind" and "unlawful" by internationally accepted standards, but, depending on particular political affiliations and aspirations, one nation's "terrorist" may be another's "freedom fighter" and the terrorist's actions, rather than regarded as reprehensible, are justified as part of the heroic struggle for a noble cause. As long as governments or their peoples hide behind such rhetoric and countenance such actions, effective international response will remain beyond reach. In the meantime, the need to address the issue has become increasingly urgent as terrorists' actions generate wider and wider destruction. Their motives are often complex and sometimes unclear, but political theorist CJM Drake has identified separatism, religion, liberalism, anarchism, communism, conservatism, fascism, specific single issues, and/or organized crime as the most common ideologies embraced by contemporary terrorists. ³ Commitment to such ideologies enables the "true believers" to dehumanize their targets and transform them into representative symbols. Ideology also provides a measure by which terrorists

can easily identify "enemies" and determine the relative "innocence" or "guilt" of people and organizations. This, Drake says,

2 Paul Wilkinson, "Security and Terrorism in the 21st Century: The Changing International Terrorist Threat," 13 January, 1996; see <www.st-and.ac.uk/academic/international/research/cstpv/publications1a.htm>, p. I.

3 CJM Drake, "The Role of Ideology in Terrorists' Target Selection," *Terrorism and Violence* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 53-85; see <www.st-and.ac.uk/academic/international/research/cstpv/publications4.htm>, pp. 3-4.

allows them to identify particular people and things as "legitimate targets." 4

Such targets include business, industry, various government facilities, and civilians who happen to be in the vicinity. Paul Wilkinson, of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at St. Andrews University, Scotland, describes a trend towards "massive car and truck bombings in crowded city areas and 'spectacular' terrorist attacks, for example, on civil aviation, airport facilities or military or diplomatic facilities ... " 5

Overall objectives generally extend well beyond destruction of immediate targets, however. Terrorists' acts are designed to shock, to outrage, and to provide leverage for perpetrators' demands. Wilkinson lists the following as characteristic objectives:

massive and immediate publicity as a result of an outrage or a series of atrocities; to inspire followers and sympathizers to further acts of terrorism or insurrection; to provoke the authorities into repressive over-reaction which the terrorists can then exploit to their political advantage; as a means of extortion to force the authorities into making concessions, such as the release of imprisoned terrorists or the payment of ransoms; to sow inter-communal hatred and conflict; to destroy public confidence in government and security agencies; and to coerce communities and activists into obeying the terrorist leadership. 6

As more and more of the world's nation-states operate on a commonly understood platform of conduct, bound together- albeit imperfectly- by international conventions, treaties, and other kinds of protocols, terrorists know basically what kind of behavior to expect from their targets and what they may or may not expect from them in retaliation. With such widely accepted standards, terrorists possess perhaps the greatest weapon of all: the ability to create a climate of fear and to intimidate and/or coerce others on a wider scale than ever before in history. And terrorist

4 Drake, pp. 3 and 6.

5 Wilkinson, p. 8.

6 Wilkinson, p. I.

acts have a disproportionate impact. While only a handful of people perished in Aum Shinri Kyo's sarin attack on the Tokyo subway system in 1995, for example, the entire population of the city- and the country- was terrified at the thought that if this had occurred in one subway station, there was no telling when and where it might happen again. Similar fear could easily be generated through media reports of the release of even a small amount of biological or chemical toxins almost anywhere in the world, even though the actual efficacy of such attacks has so far been limited by inadequate delivery mechanisms.

While the popular notion is that terrorism is a recent phenomenon, experts are quick to point out that it has a long history, reaching back at least to Biblical times. Secret societies in China and India also engaged in violence to achieve political ends- activity that, in various guises and in support of various causes, can be traced throughout history.⁷ The end of the nineteenth century was perhaps one of the "high points" in this long chronology. With the assassinations of a number of European leaders, including members of royalty and the US president, "it seemed no one was safe from terrorist attack." Walter Laqueur writes, "Terrorism became the leading preoccupation of politicians, police chiefs, journalists, and writers from Dostoevsky to Henry James. If in the year 1900 the leaders of the main industrial powers had assembled, most of them would have insisted on giving terrorism top priority on their agenda . . ." ⁸

Terrorism has continued to flourish during the twentieth century, leaving almost no area of the world untouched. It has been used as a tool by both left- and right-wing causes and by groups of every conceivable stripe- anarchists, fascists, nationalists seeking independence, communists, extra-legal militias, and ecoterrorists- in places ranging from Europe to Asia, from South America to the Middle East, from the US to Africa. ⁹

⁷ See Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, pp. 8--48 for a useful discussion of the history of terrorism.

⁸ Walter Laqueur, "Postmodern Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 5, p. 24.

⁹ See Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, pp. 19- 36, for a summary of various terrorist movements throughout the twentieth century.

WORLD WATCH

One alarming recent development, noted by former US ambassador for Counter-Terrorism Paul Bremer in 1995, is the evolution of "a new form of decentralized, religion-motivated terrorism." ¹⁰ Other writers, too, have remarked that religion and nationalism have combined to become a powerful motivating force for contemporary acts of terror. One has noted, for example, that in 1968 there were no identifiable religious terrorist groups, while by

the early 1990s almost one quarter of the world's active terrorist groups were motivated by their religious beliefs. The number of terrorist acts committed by such groups has risen sharply since 1988; they are estimated to be responsible for more than half of the 64,319 recorded incidents that occurred between 1970 and 1995. 11 Terrorism has been called the poor man's way to wage war.

While less affluent states are reluctant to be drawn into conflicts, some have found that they can best pursue their objectives by sponsoring terrorist activities. However, the inherent risks of such state-sponsored terrorism (terrorists turning on their hosts, for example) and actions by the international community, including diplomatic and economic sanctions, have worked to isolate state sponsors of terrorism. A few "rogue states" still do harbor terrorists, but the number of such havens is dwindling. While experts generally agree that state-sponsored terrorism is in decline, the number of transnational terrorist networks is proliferating- a development related to the upsurge in religiously motivated terrorism. The Report of the National Commission on Terrorism to the 105th US Congress (1997- 98) noted, for example, that "today's terrorists ... are ... forming loose, transnational affiliations based on religious or ideological affinity and a common hatred of the United States." 12 The detection and

10 L Paul Bremer III , "The New Faces of Terrorism," *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Summer 1995), p. 7.

11 See Bruce Hoffman , "Holy Terror": The Implications of Terrorism Motivated by a Religious Imperative (Santa Monica: RAND, P- 7834, 1993) , p. 2; cited by Magnus Ran storp in "Terrorism in the Name of Religion," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (Summer 1996), pp. 41 - 62.

1 ~ "Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism ," the Report of the National Co mmi ssion on Terrorism to the I 05th US Congress, p. iv.

prevention of attacks carried out by such networks is very difficult. The development of global communications systems and of technology that allows the production of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, radioactive, chemical, and biological weapons, has provided terrorists with access to more powerful tools than they have ever had at their disposal. Coupled with this, the destabilization of various governments and a general sense of social, political, economic, cultural, psychological, and spiritual crisis in the world have given them fertile new ground in which to flourish. The fragmentation of the world in the years since the end of the Cold War and widespread fear of globalization have radicalized various groups, and, in the words of one writer:

The uncertainty and unpredictability in the present environment as the world searches for a new world order, amidst an increasingly complex

global environment with ethnic and nationalist conflicts, provides many religious terrorist groups with the opportunity and ammunition to shape history according to their divine duty, cause, and mandate while it indicates for others that the end of time itself is near. 13

Some commentators, however, offer a more prosaic explanation. In the particular case of the Arab world, for example, Fouad Ajami writes:

We have looked to the heavens, and we have looked in the scripture, for explanations for the appeal of political Islam. We have spent a generation speaking of "Islamic fundamentalism," of that theocratic force that has come into Arab life. But the truth lies in material circumstances. Theocratic politics blew in when economic growth faltered ... When a deep recession hit in the mid- 1980s, due to the fall of oil prices, a politics of panic and resentment overtook the newly urbanized and newly prosperous ... In the cities and in the no man's land trapped by the recession, the newly urbanized were strangers living on their

13 Ranstorp, p. 12.

WORLD W ATC I I

nerves. Their children were available to the politics of millenarianism and turmoil. 14

The ascendancy of the United States- the so-called Great Satan- as the world's sole superpower has given focus to fundamentalist Islamic groups. The resentment of Western prosperity and the perceived threat of secularization, combined with the influence of charismatic, militant clerical leaders, has provided a fertile breeding ground for terrorism. Most Muslim terrorists, who are young, single men, have grown up in what they perceive as a climate of social injustice, oppressed by the Western powers, and the religious fervor-or fanaticism- that moves them is cultivated in the schools that they attend. Their education promotes a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and emphasizes the duty of the individual to engage in "jihad." While some Islamic scholars interpret "jihad" primarily as "the righteous struggle" within the individual between the good and darker forces operating within the self, fundamentalists emphasize the interpretation of the term as struggle in a military sense, in which the "true faith" does battle against satanic forces (e.g. Western civilization with its "corrupt values" and "imperialism," the state of Israel, or other targeted groups). The vision that these young men acquire through their schooling provides them with an alternative to submission to the modern, secular forces they see not only as causing their own oppression but also as perpetrating evil throughout the entire world.

An act against even one small element of those forces then becomes holy, virtuous. Death- even suicide- for such a cause is martyrdom. Their objective, as Paul Bremer writes, is "not a shift in American policy but the destruction of American society." 15 Terrorists have sometimes been depicted as "idealistic and courageous young people, patriots and social revolutionaries, driven by intolerable conditions, by oppression and tyranny, to undertake desperate actions." But more than one writer has credited fanaticism, indiscriminate murder, and sheer aggression as

14 Fouad Ajami, "The Arab Inheritance," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1997), pp. 139-40.

15 Bremer, p. 7.

the motive force behind contemporary terrorist acts. This kind of "apocalyptic nihilism" represents a pure urge to destroy-terror for solely terror's sake. 16

Whether the destruction wrought by terrorists is the result of economics, ideology, or sheer aggression, the question remains: What is the most effective way to combat this transnational problem, to which modern states are extremely vulnerable? As stated earlier, terrorists trade on the fact that most states in the world today abide by a general code of conduct and that a general climate of trust and openness exists among many countries. People pass across borders with great frequency; international business deals are routine; and instantaneous communication occurs across the entire globe. Western citizens regard their freedoms as sacred, and curtailment of civil rights and liberties is not likely to be well received. Such a climate presents a real dilemma to democratic states attempting to address terrorist threats:

On the one hand, the democratic government and its agencies of law enforcement must avoid the heavy handed over-reaction which many terrorist groups deliberately seek to provoke: such a response would only help to alienate the public from the government and could ultimately destroy democracy more swiftly and completely than any small terrorist group ever could. On the other hand, if government, judiciary and police prove incapable of upholding the law and protecting life and property, their whole credibility and authority will be undermined. 17

Confronting such issues, nation-states must decide whether terrorist attacks actually constitute acts of war or criminal activity and, in consequence, what kind of response is appropriate. If a terrorist attack is seen as an act of war and a government responds to pressure from its constituents to retaliate with extreme military force (even where evidence is not conclusive), such a reaction could quickly result in the escalation of conflict, either at home or abroad.

Civil violence could erupt, instigated by citizens who do not agree

16 Sec, for example, Laqueur, *The New Terrorism*, p. 274.

17 Wilkinson, p. 9.

with the government's actions. And the nation's defenses could be weakened by the diversion of military personnel from other roles. In the worst-case scenario, such a response could trigger an international conflict.

Pursuing military action in response to the kind of "asymmetrical warfare" represented by a terrorist attack is likely to be problematic for a number of reasons. Terrorists can easily move their bases of operations and, while the infrastructure of their host country and its civilian population bear the brunt of retaliatory attacks, they may well escape unscathed. Furthermore, if the terrorist group is transnational, destroying just one cell in one country will not wipe out its operations. It is difficult, if not impossible, for countries to fight a traditional war against such an adversary.

If, however, the world chooses to view terrorist attacks not as acts of war but as criminal activity, then it needs to establish effective mechanisms to prevent, respond to, and punish the perpetrators, and to address root causes of terrorism. At present, few such mechanisms exist, either within or among nation-states.

One starting point for their formulation could be international agreement on strategic principles for states seeking to reduce terrorism. Such principles might include the following, as suggested by one writer: refusal to surrender to terrorists' demands; resolve to use law and the democratic process to defeat terrorism; refusal to make deals or concessions, even when intimidated and blackmailed; persistent efforts to bring terrorists to justice through the legal process; penalization of state sponsors of terrorism; and refusal to allow terrorists' activities to block international diplomatic efforts to resolve political conflicts. Embrace of such principles would allow the mechanisms for combating terrorism a chance to

18 Wilkinson, pp. 12- 13. The report of the US National Commission on Terrorism, "Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism," also recommends specific measures that should be taken, including improvement of intelligence gathering capabilities, the use of legal means to disrupt and prosecute terrorists and their support networks, efforts to convince other nations to stop supporting terrorists, and ensuring the readiness of officials at all levels for attacks that could result in large numbers of casualties.

THE BALIA'f WORLD

evolve, including the formulation of a universally applied standard by which to

punish perpetrators.

Key to whatever process is pursued will be "the quality of the political leaders and the moral strength and determination of democratic societies," who must show

consistency and courage in maintaining a firm and effective policy against terrorism in all its forms. They must abhor the idea that terrorism can be tolerated as long as it is only affecting someone else's democratic rights and rule of law. They must adopt the clear principle that 'one democracy's terrorist is another democracy's terrorist.'¹⁹

It seems, in fact, that events are impelling most Western nations towards consensus in regarding terrorism as criminal activity. "During the 1970s," Paul Bremer notes, "the West lacked a conceptual basis for meeting the terrorist threat that had begun to besiege it. By the 1980s, however, Western countries had reached two vital conclusions: That terrorists are criminals and that government-sponsored terrorism is unacceptable."²⁰ Such a "shared perception," he says, was the basis for successful applications of diplomatic, political, economic, and military measures that controlled the spread of terrorism during the 1980s.

While the adoption of such measures is important, it is not in itself sufficient to bring an end to conflict, whether traditional or "asymmetrical." In a 1985 statement on peace, the international governing body of the Baha'i Faith, the Universal House of Justice, wrote:

Flaws in the prevailing order are conspicuous in the inability of sovereign states organized as United Nations to exercise the specter of war, the threatened collapse of the international economic order, the spread of anarchy and terrorism, and the intense suffering which these and other afflictions are causing to increasing millions.

The same document states emphatically:

¹⁹ Wilkinson, p. 12.

²⁰ Bremer, p. 7.

WORLD WATCH

Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war. However important such practical measures obviously are as elements of the peace process, they are in themselves too superficial to exert enduring influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent yet other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another in an endless quest for supremacy and dominion. Nor can the present massive dislocation in the

affairs of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted.²¹

Collaboration in the gathering of accurate information through intelligence, the signing of international treaties and protocols, and the application of various kinds of sanctions undoubtedly represent forward movement in efforts to combat terrorism. However, addressing problems such as terrorism in isolation from the many other issues that disrupt and destabilize society will ultimately prove a futile exercise. Nations must look beyond simply responding separately to disparate problems and move towards the building of a comprehensive international order based on social justice and collective security, in which all can live in dignity. This will be the most decisive factor in the creation of enduring change. There is evidence that the world is slowly moving towards that "genuine universal framework." The Universal House of Justice sees hope in the "tentative steps towards world order" made by nations since World War II, especially the "increasing tendency of groups of nations to formalize relationships which enable them to cooperate in matters of mutual interest."²² The establishment of an international war crimes tribunal in The Hague is a definite positive step. The rising influence of organizations of civil society and their participation in international gatherings such as the forums for non-governmental organizations that have been held in conjunction with United Nations summits for

21 The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1985), Section II, para. I.

22 *The Promise of World Peace*, Section II, para. 3.

government leaders on issues such as social development, habitat, human rights, women, the environment, and sustainable development show an increasing demand for a "new order." One need only look at the extraordinary gatherings held in 2000—the Millennium Forum, the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, and the Millennium Summit of government leaders and heads of state—to see evidence of the yearning of civil society, the major faith groups, and the nations of the world to live in greater harmony one with another. Initiatives such as UN proposals for a standing international rapid-reaction force (a kind of prototypical international police force) and efforts to set up an international criminal court, have, however, met with resistance—evidence that acceptance of a framework for a peaceful world is far from universal.

Resistance to such change should not be unexpected. As a document released by the Universal House of Justice in 2001, entitled *Century of Light*, points out:

It was against the most intense resistance at every level of society, among governed and governors alike, that the political, social and conceptual changes of the past hundred years were achieved. Ultimately, they were accomplished only at the cost of terrible suffering. It would be unrealistic to imagine that the challenges lying ahead may not exact an even greater toll of a human race that still seeks, by every means in its power, to avoid the spiritual implications of the experience it is undergoing. 23

At the root of this resistance, the House of Justice says, lies a deep-seated conviction of the inevitable quarrelsomeness of mankind, which has led to the reluctance to entertain the possibility of subordinating national self-interest to the requirements of world order, and in an unwillingness to face courageously the far-reaching implications of establishing a united world authority. It is also traceable to the incapacity of largely ignorant and subjugated masses to articulate their desire for a new

23 Century of Light, prepared under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Baha ' i World Centre), p. 90.

order in which they can live in peace, hannony and prosperity with all humanity. 24

This reluctance, the House of Justice states, must be "carefully examined and resolutely dealt with."

The genuine acceptance of a universal framework that can bring real, enduring stability- stability that allows people to live in peace, allows for a more equal distribution of wealth, promotes literacy, and provides education and training that will equip people to earn a livelihood- must spring from a new mindset. If the world's leaders do not sincerely believe that the peoples of the world can learn to overcome their differences and live in harmony, how will they ever agree to cede their power to any kind of wider authority?

The foundation of Baha'i belief is that the Prophets or Manifestations of God have been sent by an all-loving Creator to "bestow universal moral training" 25 through which men and women acquire "new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities"26 that help society advance. The ultimate purpose of this course of divine education is "that men should live in unity, concord and agreement and should love one another." True religion provides the one source of moral discipline that is capable of welding together the disparate peoples of the world with ties that cannot be broken. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that "the bonds which hold together the body politic are not sufficient" for such a task; rather,

The real bond of integrity is religious in character, for religion indicates the oneness of the world of humanity.

Religion serves the world of morality. Religion purifies the hearts. Religion impels men to achieve praiseworthy deeds.

24 The Promise of World Peace, Section 11, paragraph 2.

25 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Saha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 401.

20 Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 119.

Religion becomes the cause of love in human hearts, for religion is a divine foundation, the foundation ever conducive to life. The teachings of God are the source of illumination to the people of the world. Religion is ever constructive, not destructive. 27

Here is an antidote to the nihilism that seeks to destroy lives and institutions through acts of terror.

Recognition of the inherent nobility of each human being, the conviction that all people have a role to play in developing an "ever advancing civilization," and unswerving commitment to spiritual principles as the basis of that civilization are the only foundations upon which a universal framework can be built. As 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote, "Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit. . . ." 28 Century of Light takes up this same analogy in the context of the end of the twentieth century:

... this Body of humanity's material civilization calls aloud, yearns more desperately with each passing day, for its Soul. As with every great civilization in his story, until it is so animated, and its spiritual faculties awakened, it will find neither peace, nor justice, nor a unity that rises above the level of negotiation and compromise. 29

Belief in the nobility and unity of humanity is not common today, but future generations can be taught to think in these terms. As the constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." Giving attention to people's moral and spiritual development is crucial to the creation of a peaceful, secure world.

27 'Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 32, 344.

28 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Wilmette:

Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 3 17.

29 Century of Light, p. 94.

WORLD WATCH

In a recent statement on sustainable development, the Baha'i International Community cautioned, "Any strategies for overcoming such constraints and challenges as war, poverty, social disintegration, extreme nationalism, greed, corruption, and apathy, which do not take into account spiritual principles will prove ephemeral, at best." It urged the holding of international consultations among religious representatives and leaders to examine the spiritual dimensions of development, which "would undoubtedly produce innovative ideas and approaches and might possibly generate a powerful vision based on spiritual principles- principles which, because they resonate with the human soul, have the power to motivate the sacrifices and changes that will be needed if humanity is to overcome the seemingly intractable problems it faces." 30 Another initiative that has been promoted by the Baha'i International Community is the development and global implementation of a children's education program in world citizenship. Such a program could contribute to effecting change over only a few generations, enabling the young people of the world to see each other as members of one human family, all with the same rights-and the responsibility to guard others' welfare as well as their own.

We are now moving through a difficult and dangerous time of transition, but while the world faces grave problems, it is also making progress, however halting the pace and whatever the temporary setbacks it suffers. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'Abdu'l-Baha referred to seven "candles of unity," which, He said, were even at that point "dawning upon the world's darkened horizon":

The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle

30 See pp. 229- 33 for the full text of this statement, which was presented by the Baha'i International Community to the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in New York in April/ May 200 !.

is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor. The fifth candle is the unity of nations- a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races,

making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization. 31

While the world still has far to go before it realizes this vision in anything like its complete form, Century of Light affirms that the processes involved in several of these seven areas "are far advanced, however great may be the resistance in some quarters." 32

According to the Baha'i perspective, the world is currently engaged in "simultaneous processes of rise and of fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos," which have "continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other." 33 These processes are necessary, as outworn social structures, suited to a prior age but no longer adequate for today's reality, are discarded. In 1936 the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, Shoghi Effendi, wrote in these terms about the principle of the oneness of humankind that must underlie a new order:

It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds-creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized

31 Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 32.

32 Century of Light, p. 83.

33 Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1990), pp. 72- 73.

world- a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units. ' 4

The struggle of the world to resist this fundamental principle and the revolutionary changes it entails is evident in the upsurge of nationalism, racism, religious fundamentalism, and terrorism seen today. Yet Baha'is believe, as a matter of faith, that "world peace is not only possible but inevitable" and that "the current world confusion and calamitous condition in human affairs [is] a natural phase in an organic process leading ultimately and irresistibly to the

unification of the human race in a single social order whose boundaries are those of the planet." 35 But whether that stage of unity and peace "is to be reached only after unimaginable horrors precipitated by humanity's stubborn clinging to old patterns of behavior, or is to be embraced now by an act of consultative will, is the choice before all who inhabit the earth." 36 How the nations of the world choose to deal with the threats that terrorism poses to their peoples will be one clear indicator as to the path that humanity will choose.

34 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1991), pp. 43.

35 *The Promise of World Peace*, Introduction, paras. 6-9.

36 *The Promise of World Peace*, Introduction, paras. 1 and 2.

In Madhya Pradesh, India, the Sarli Development institute is assisting rural women through programs that combine practical training and moral education.

PROFILE:BARLI
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE for
RURAL WOMEN

Despite its advances in the more than 50 years since the end of British colonialism, India still faces tremendous problems. The country is crowded with a billion people, and more than a third of them live in a condition of poverty, unable even to afford a proper diet. In the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, one of India's "sick states," these social and economic factors are especially pronounced. The Baha'i community in Indore, a region within Madhya Pradesh, sought some means of remedying the health of its peoples and uplifting their spirit. In the Baha'is' vision, the best way to improve lives hinged on the empowerment of people. They saw the conditions as being caused by more than simple economics, but rather as result of psychological, social, and spiritual problems. A large part of the solution, in the view of the Baha'is, hinged on the advancement of women in the region, whose position as the first educators of each successive generation makes them invaluable to the successful revitalization of the society. Changes in their attitude would then serve as a catalyst to the other members of the women's communities, including their husbands, parents, and children.

In 1983, the Barli Development Institute for Rural Women (BDIRW) in Indore was established with a vision of initiating improvements in the socioeconomic conditions of the tribal communities in the

districts around Indore. Among rural women in the state there is a less than four percent literacy rate and they are victims of traditional attitudes and practices that relegate them to a secondary place in Indian society; for these women, empowerment means things like learning to read and write, fostering a sense of self-reliance and self-worth, and understanding the importance of their own spiritual life.

"In India, as is well known, women are generally treated as second-class citizens," said Dr. Tahirih K. Vajdi, who helped to found the Institute and is a professor of economics at the University of Indore. "The woman is seen as someone to look after the home and bear children. But at the Institute, they receive a lot of love and attention, and come to understand the principle of the equality of men and women."

"We try to imbue them with self-confidence," said Dr. Vajdi, "so that they know they are very important as individuals, and that they can play an important role in improving their own homes and helping their villages to grow and develop."

The seeds of the project were planted in the 1960s, when Hand of the Cause of God RaJ:imatu'llah Muhajir purchased a building and some surrounding land in Indore for use by the Baha'i community. Partly due to the low participation of women in Baha'i activities in the area, early efforts began to assist the tribal women in Indore through experimental programs in income generation and health education.

Formal inauguration of the project occurred in 1983, when guidance from the Universal House of Justice recommended that socioeconomic development projects be integrated into the regular

1 It was originally called the Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women. The name change coincided with the Institute's application to become an officially recognized non-governmental organization.

B A H A ' I ~ L I ~ D I : V E L O P M E N T I N S T I T U T E

The Baha'i
Development
Institute for
Rural Women
in Indore,
India.

pursuits of the Baha'i community. During the first few years of the operation, focus was primarily on developing income-generating skills, but it has since grown and developed a comprehensive curriculum that offers women in this region knowledge and a variety of skills to improve their own lives, as well as those of their families and communities.

By 1988 the school had finished the first phase of its development, which consisted primarily of the establishment of the Institute's physical infrastructure and the operation of training programs. While funding for the program comes almost exclusively from voluntary contributions from the Baha'i community of India and Baha'is around the world, some assistance in establishing the infrastructure came from the Department of Science and Technology of the government of India, the government of Madhya Pradesh, the Council for the Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), the New Era Foundation, and individual contributions. 2

The second major phase of the Institute's development began in 1990 with a proposal to the Swedish International Development

~ Other organizations that provided support and funding include the Canadian High Commission, the Australian High Commission, the World Community Foundation, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Mottahedeh Development Services, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), War on Want, and UNICEF.

Authority (SIDA) funding agency. Through this proposal, the institute began to diversify the training it offered by initiating a continuing education program, establishing a boarding school for tribal and rural girls, and continuing as a training center for Baha'i community development. Preparations for the third phase of development are being finalized, which will see the evolution of the Institute into a non-governmental organization in 2001.

The Institute operates on a six-acre plot on the outskirts of Indore, where it runs its residential course entitled "Community Volunteers," which combines training in practical skills with the development of spiritual qualities. The course stimulates change by encouraging each individual to acquire an awareness of her own innate worth and to develop practical abilities.

The vocational aspects of the program include literacy training and the development of income generating skills like cutting and tailoring, weaving, basic computer skills, machine knitting, embroidery and fabric design, growing and marketing vegetables, and making herbal shampoos and various other household items. These skills, which help the women to earn a living and assist their families, are not only important because of their impact on the economy, but they are also an important step in encouraging the confidence and independence of the women. Health and nutrition are also stressed, along with pre- and postnatal care, which is especially important due to the high rate of infant mortality in the state.

"Although literacy, vocational, and health training are essential, we believe that one of the most important things we do at the

Institute is to help these young women recognize their full potential as human beings," said Janak Palta McGilligan, director of the Institute. "This is where the element of moral education comes into play."

To accomplish this goal, the women take part in personality development classes, which help them to develop leadership, consultation, and organizational skills, and to become active decision-makers. They are taught sensitivity to social development issues and the importance of individual responsibility for

BAI~LI DJ; VELO PME NT JNSTITI I TE

social progress. They also learn communication skills such as public speaking and the principles of consultation, which help them to recognize their self-worth and to develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

All of their training, whether it be the immediately practical principle of using clean water, or long-term goals, like assisting in the health of the environment, is based in their study of the Baha'i writings. The systematic study of these writings gives the participants a firm moral and spiritual framework upon which to make improvements in their lives and the life of the world.

The women are taught the principle of equality between men and women as part of the curriculum, and are encouraged to share all of their training with their families and communities. The issue of equality is one where having a basis in the Baha'i teachings is especially important, because the resistance confronted is so longstanding. But with their training at the Institute, the women are able to study passages such as this, from 'Abdu'l-Baha: "Know thou, O handmaid, that in the sight of Baha, women are accounted the same as men, and God hath created all humankind in His own image, and after His own likeness. That is, men and women alike are the revealers of His names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them." 3

Because the women experienced resistance to such ideas, the Institute began couples training, for married couples or those about to be married. The courses are either conducted on the BDIRW campus or in the communities themselves and deal with issues that often corrode marriages, such as lack of mutual partnership and communication, and with problems such as alcoholism and domestic violence.

Beyond individual development, the importance of assisting society and participating in a greater world is emphasized. Environmentally sound agricultural and energy practices are sorely needed in India. Care for the environment is presented as a spiritual responsibility and is given in the context of sustainable

3'Abdu 'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha (Wilmette: Baha'i

Publishing Trust, 1997), pp. 79- 80.

THE BAHARI WORLD

development, care for resources, and service to the community.

The trainees learn through gardening and tree planting projects the means of sustaining the soil, including composting, vermiculture, and the use of biodegradable materials.

In the gardening programs, they learn how to grow and maintain the plants in the garden. The practicality of this is immediately demonstrated, as all of the fruits and vegetables for the Institute's meals are provided by the community gardens.

Solar box cookers are used in the preparation of meals, and solar storage batteries allow the use of solar cookers even past sunset. A full solar energy park is planned for future installation, making the Institute ever more self-reliant while addressing the need for environmentally sound energy practices.

Commemorations of the United Nations World Environment Day, International Women's Day, and International Literacy Day are a part of the women's training. These commemorations reinforce the lessons of the Institute while orienting all of the training in a global context. Last year, a two-day training workshop called "Environmental Millennium- A Time to Act" was held for World Environment Day. The workshop, in June 2000, focused on land and water diseases caused by pollution, the effects of deforestation, and environmental changes due to pollution.

Two six-month "Community Volunteers" courses are offered each year for 25- 30 participants. Since its establishment, the Institute has trained more than 1,500 women in two hundred villages.

Future plans are for the Institute to increase the number of trainees in each session to 60 and to extend the current six-month program to a full year. Eventual expansion of the programs to other areas of India is planned.

Those women who complete the Community Volunteers course have the opportunity to be trained as community facilitators or to be assisted to continue their formal education through India's Open School system. The BDIRW has been accredited by the Indian government as a National Open School, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Education. The most promising trainees are encouraged to continue their education through the National

BARLID DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Open School system, and 75 percent pass the National School Exam. Because of their raised awareness about the importance of education, more and more women have started sending their children to school.

In 2000, 26 graduates from the Institute entered the Open School. Of these, half were illiterate prior to their training in the BDIRW, and all but two had previously dropped out of school.

Twenty-three of them passed the November exam and graduated from the Open School.

One of the ways the BDIRW follows up on the progress of its graduates is through the publication of its monthly newsletter, Kokila (Nightingale). The newsletter, now in its ninth year, includes news, opinions, and stories of Institute graduates, as well as announcements of upcoming courses, educational messages, and songs in a local tribal language about various development themes. To prevent them from falling back into illiteracy, they are encouraged to write postcards to the Institute.

"We have found that, indeed, when these women return to their villages, they affect their entire communities," Dr. Vajdi said.

"They bring back new ideas about health and hygiene. They promote the importance of educating children."

For years the Institute has placed special emphasis on teaching villagers about the prevention and eradication of guinea worm caused by contaminated water. When the program began, 752 people were infected and more than two hundred thousand

Participants
in the
Community
Volunteers
program
doing
agricultural
work at the
Institute.

THE B AHA' I W ORLD

were at risk. By 1992 the district was completely free from guinea worm. That same year, the Institute was awarded "The Global 500 Roll of Honor" by the United Nations Environment Program for outstanding environmental achievement, specifically in health education. The recent surveys of the Institute's progress reveal that more than 95 percent of the graduates now use safe drinking water and are using their income generation and related skills; 46 percent are involved in entrepreneurial or small business work. Many of them are growing and selling vegetables as a means of self-support. They have raised the immunization rate of children in their communities from 26 to 67 percent, and the number of women going for regular health check-ups has also increased. More than two-thirds now include leafy vegetables in their diet.

Another way the women contribute is by returning to the BDIRW as facilitators, continuing the cycle of learning. All the trainers of the Institute were once trainees and are well aware of the challenges that women in the region must face, but these problems are being

evil advance together and maintain the same pace." 1

The Baha'i International Community is convinced that unless and until spiritual issues become central to the development process, the establishment of a sustainable global civilization will prove impossible. For the vast majority of the world's people the idea that human nature is fundamentally spiritual is an incontrovertible truth. Indeed, this perception of reality is the defining cultural experience for most of the world's people and is inseparable from how they perceive themselves and the world around them. It is, therefore, only by bringing a focus on the spiritual dimension of human reality that development policies and programs can truly reflect the experiences, conditions, and aspirations of the planet's inhabitants and elicit their heartfelt support and active participation.

On the one hand, the governments of the world have, collectively, begun to acknowledge a spiritual dimension to development. This can be seen in the global action plans that emerged from the great world conferences held in the 1990s by the United Nations. Agenda 21, for example, calls for "social, economic and spiritual development," recognizing that "individuals should be allowed to develop their full potential, including healthy physical, mental and spiritual development." Subsequent declarations and action plans have reinforced this call and gone further. For example, in the Copenhagen Declaration the governments of the world unambiguously affirm that "our societies must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live . . . not only as a matter of urgency but also as a matter of sustained and unshakeable commitment through the years ahead." In the Beijing Platform for Action they agree that "[r]eligion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of millions of women and men, in the way they live and in the aspirations they have for the future." And in the Habitat Agenda, the world's governments commit to "achieving a

1 'Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahri during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 109.

SL ' STAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

world of greater stability and peace, built on ethical and spiritual VISION. "

On the other hand, beyond such general statements and commitments, these global agreements offer little understanding of what the terms "spirituality," "spiritual vision," and "spiritual development" mean in principle or in practice. If, indeed, spirituality is as crucial to sustainable development as these global action plans have avowed, then it is time to move beyond

generalities, to explore, in depth, the spiritual principles at the heart of development and to consider fully their ramifications for all stages of the development process.

This exploration of spiritual principles is completely in line with the PrepCom's mandate to "identify major constraints hindering the implementation of Agenda 21" and to "address new challenges and opportunities that have emerged" since the Earth Summit. Any strategies for overcoming such constraints and challenges as war, poverty, social disintegration, extreme nationalism, greed, corruption, and apathy, which do not take into account spiritual principles will prove ephemeral, at best. In considering new opportunities for overcoming these constraints and challenges, the PrepCom should look to the remarkable development of interfaith relations and the expansion of interfaith initiatives. Religious and spiritual traditions are increasingly coming together to foster friendliness, fellowship, and understanding among their diverse communities. They are also increasingly working together on policies, programs, and initiatives with secular bodies ranging from private enterprises and organizations of civil society, to governments and international institutions. In such work, religious and spiritual value systems are viewed not as separate from "real world concerns," but as vital sources of knowledge and motivation, as wellsprings of values, insights, and energy without which social cohesion and collective action are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

This blossoming of interfaith work can be seen in such initiatives as the World Faiths Development Dialogue; the World Conference on Religion and Peace; the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC); the Parliament of the World's Religions;

THE BAHAI WORLD

and the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. It can be read in the numerous joint declarations and agreements in which the religions have articulated a common vision of humanity's future based on such universal principles as love, justice, compassion, moderation, humility, sharing, service, peace, and the oneness of the human family.

In seeking to incorporate spiritual principles into its deliberations, the PrepCom should take advantage of this new stage in the relations among the world's religions. It might do so by making the topic "Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension" one of the main themes for the Summit. It could then initiate a major review of international agreements, proclamations, and statements which focus on religious and spiritual values, particularly as they relate to and impact the development process. This review should begin with the global action plans of the world conferences of the 1990s, since it was here that the governments of the world publicly

acknowledged the importance of spiritual values in development. It should then be expanded to include major interfaith declarations and agreements and other relevant initiatives.

While this review is being conducted, the PrepCom could facilitate a series of consultations involving both representatives and leaders of various religious and spiritual traditions. These consultations, which might be held before the next PrepCom, should focus on spiritual principles as they relate to Agenda 21 and sustainable development. A series of regional consultations followed by an international consultation might be held, or, if that is not feasible, then, at the very least, an international consultation should be organized. The results of these consultations and of the "documents review" should be issued as a UN document for use by the PrepCom in its deliberations.

Although these proposed efforts are modest, the world's governments would, by supporting them, be sending a clear message that they are serious about their previous commitments to incorporate spiritual considerations into the development process. More important, however, the "documents review" and the global consultations would undoubtedly produce innovative ideas and approaches and might possibly generate a powerful vision based

Sustainable Development

on spiritual principles- principles which, because they resonate with the human soul, have the power to motivate the sacrifices and changes that will be needed if humanity is to overcome the seemingly intractable problems it faces .

Ultimately, the creation of a peaceful and just global civilization, in which the diverse peoples of the world live in harmony with one another and with the natural world, will require a significant reorientation of individual and collective goals and a profound transformation in attitudes and behaviors. Such far-reaching changes will come about only by addressing the nonmaterial dimension of reality and drawing on humanity's vast spiritual resources.

Albert Lincoln, secretary-general of the Baha'i International Community, presented this statement to the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held in New York, 28- 31 August 2000.

Address to the
MILLENNIUM WORLD
PEACE SUMMIT
of Religious and
Spiritual Leaders

Over a century ago, a venerable religious figure confined in a remote outpost of the Ottoman Empire articulated a vision that may inspire our deliberations at this historic gathering. Addressing one of his followers, Baha' u' llah penned these words:

Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely-afflicted world the remedy it requireth. ¹

Our world is undergoing rapid and far-reaching changes, drawing humanity ever closer together, into what some have called a global village. Cultures and peoples that, for most of history, have lived in isolation from one another are now interacting face-to-face, on a daily basis. Sadly, however, social progress and

¹ Baha' u' llah, Tablets of Baha' u' llah revealed ajier the Kitab-i-Aqdas (Wilmette:

Baha'i Publi sh ing Trust, 1997), p. 168.

the growth of wisdom and understanding have not kept pace with material advances, so that our global village is not a happy or a peaceful place. Indeed the time has come for its elders to take counsel together and think of the future.

Our Children Are the Future

Looking beyond immediate crises and conflicts, one of the greatest dangers facing mankind comes from a generation of children growing up in a moral vacuum. Our hearts go out to the child-soldiers of Africa, the child-prostitutes of Asia, and the desperate scavengers of the world's countless slums and refugee camps, victims of a poverty which is both spiritual and material. But we must not forget the millions of young people growing up in societies whose traditional value systems lie in ruins, or those deprived of spiritual training by generations of dogmatically materialistic education.

And lest we oversimplify the causes or the remedies, let us also call to mind the young products of permissive liberalism in the West, some of whom are as well-armed and violence-prone as their agemates in less prosperous lands.

Each child is potentially the light of the world, and its darkness. Lighting the lamps of these souls is a responsibility we must collectively assume if civilization is to thrive. Children must not be deprived of the light of moral education, especially the girl-child, who is the transmitter of values to future generations. Indeed, educated women are one of the most important keys to world peace. ²

What Will Be Our Response?

Here, I would submit, is a challenge to which we who have gathered at this

summit can and must respond.

Above and beyond a remarkable maturation in interreligious dialogue, this meeting of spiritual leaders in the Hall of the United Nations General Assembly, on the eve of the Millennium Summit of the world's heads of state and government, marks an historic and vital step forward in creating the necessary mutual respect and cooperation between religious and political leadership, conditions

2 The Baha'i writings explain that women are "advocates of peace" ('Abdu'l-Baha, Star of the West, Vol. 14, August 1923, p. 133). When women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, war will cease.

MILLENNIUM PEACE SUMMIT

without which world peace and the prosperity of humankind are probably unattainable. 3

Kindly do not mistake my meaning. We advocate no blurring of lines, no mixture of religion and politics. The harmonious cooperation of these two groups of leaders is all the more essential because their roles are both contrasting and complementary.

The Role of Religion

In all fairness, it must be acknowledged that much injustice and suffering have been inflicted throughout history in the name of religion. Even today, religious propaganda and incitement contribute to fear, hatred, and warfare in many regions of the world.

In the Baha'i writings, it is said that, should religion become a cause of enmity, it is better to do without it. 4

Yet, when examined in a fair-minded manner in the historical context of their times, the teachings of the Founders of the great religions provide no support for the contentions and prejudices convulsing much of humankind. Intolerance and fanaticism represent, at best, distortions of true religious values. 5

Writing of religion as a social force, Baha'u'llah declared:

"Religion is the greatest of all means for the establishment of order

3 The establishment of global peace and security involves much more than creating procedures and institutions that bring about the cessation of conflict. It

calls for drawing on intellectual, moral, and spiritual resources. For a detailed

discussion of this question see the statement of the Universal House of Justice,

The Promise of World Peace. The transformation necessary to bring about global peace and prosperity must occur simultaneously within human consciousness and social institutions, which requires concrete policies and programs

to promote the building of both moral capacity and technical capacity. Such efforts will call for partnerships among religions, organizations of civil society,

and public agencies working at all levels. For an exploration of the role of religion in building human capacity see *The Prosperity of Humankind*, a statement of the Bahá'í International Community; and *Valuing Spirituality in Development*, a paper written by the Bahá'í International Community for the World Faiths and Development Dialogue.

4 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by*

'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), pp. 167-68.

5 Bahá'í International Community, *Who Is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century*, p. 8.

in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein." 6 "The purpose of religion," He affirms " .. is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife." 7

The true and lasting peace toward which we all aspire depends on unity. 8 When we are united-in a unity that embraces and honors diversity- all problems can be solved. For a start, the conscientious application of the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated- a principle at the heart of all religions- would bring about a radical change in the world.

To play a constructive role in shaping humanity's future, religious leadership must focus on the core of positive moral values

held in common by all religious traditions, rather than on differences. We may each believe our religion is best, but we must

respect the spiritual choices of others, even if we think that they err.

If there must be competition among religions, let each strive to excel in guiding people to peaceful coexistence, moral rectitude, and mutual understanding.

Religion wields the power to mobilize the hearts and minds of the people and to urge them forward on the path toward peace and mutual understanding. It has a moral authority and an ethical sensitivity that complement the resources and expertise of governments and civil groups. Indeed, religion has been at the heart of many of history's great social movements.9 The special role of religious and spiritual leadership is to take a long view, not from an ivory tower, but with a perspective that is detached from immediate exigencies and the often partisan struggles of day-to-day political life.

6 Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh:*

Selected Letters, 1st pocket ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991),

p.

186.

7 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 129.

8 Bahá'u'lláh affirms that "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security,

are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah (Wilmette : Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1994), p. 286.

9 For example, individuals and communities acting on their religious beliefs played a fundamental role in the abolition of slavery, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the anti-apartheid struggle.

MILLENNIUM PEACE SUMMIT

Our disordered world is in desperate need of a moral compass that is above passing fashion and untainted by the pervasive materialism of the modern era. The convening of this summit suggests that the world has become aware of this need and of the capacity latent in the world's religious traditions. 10 Shall we not arise together to take up this challenge? If the task seems daunting, let us think of the children, our most precious trust.

Specific Recommendations

The proposed International Advisory Council of Religious and Spiritual Leaders should function as a vehicle to channel the power of religion to bring about a better world, for all, including the children. The Regional Councils could serve the same purpose at the regional and national level. Given the unique potential of these new agencies for concerted and sustained action by religious leaders in support of the processes leading toward world peace, we have made them the focus of our specific recommendations.

The membership of the Advisory Councils should be broadly based and representative of the world's religious and spiritual traditions. We recommend that the Councils function on a consultative basis and, to the extent possible, by consensus. 11 We also believe it would be preferable to avoid the election or appointment of permanent officers. Essential to all the functions of the Advisory Councils would be the task of identifying the core values that are common to all religious and spiritual traditions. The resulting shared understanding would constitute a firm foundation for united effort in a spirit of service to humankind as a whole.

10 Some will think this assessment overly optimistic, but consider the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, the World Faiths Development Dialogue (religions collaborating with the World Bank in combating poverty), the work of the Parliament of the World's Religions culminating in the document A Call to Our Guiding Institutions, and HRH Prince Philip's remarks in the BBC Reith Lectures 2000 series.

11 This recommendation is based on our experience with the process of consultation in the administration of the worldwide Baha'i community. For an explanation of this unique process, see the Baha'i International Community's statement, The Prosperity of Humankind, pp. 9- 10.

Among their most urgent assignments would be to cooperate

with appropriate UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank in addressing the need for appropriate curricula and delivery systems for the moral education and training of children and youth. To this end, the Regional Advisory Councils could be instrumental in nurturing consultative processes at the national and regional levels involving educational experts and representatives of the religious and spiritual traditions espoused by the relevant populations.

The Councils could be called upon to offer or arrange mediation services in conflicts and potential conflicts where religious differences are at issue or where religious or spiritual guidance would be effective.

They could also recommend and encourage the development and use of programs aimed at bringing about reconciliation and restoring trust as part of the reconstruction of societies torn by past conflict.

The mandate of the International Advisory Council should include the authority to review and offer advice on the full range of United Nations policies, programs, and processes, bearing in mind that, despite its many impressive achievements, the world body and its agencies often reflect and promote a materialistic worldview which is at variance with the spiritual values held by the majority of mankind. We submit that the harmony of United Nations operations and the effectiveness of its programs would only be enhanced by a more spiritual approach based on the common core values of the world's religious traditions.

Conclusion

If the human race is to meet the challenge of establishing world peace, the spiritual energy latent in each and every one of us must be released and directed to this noble task. Religion can provide the vision and unleash the spiritual energy necessary to guide humanity to a new world order worthy of its destiny.

To build a global commonwealth based on unity in diversity, animated by both love and justice, is no easy task. But it is one that we must undertake, for ourselves, for the children of today and for generations yet unborn. In so doing, we may surely rely

on the almighty assistance of the Sovereign Creator of the Universe, whatever may be the name by which we call Him.

Our role as participants in this historic gathering is as simple as it is challenging. Let me leave you with this exhortation from the Baha'i writings:

With the utmost friendliness and in a spirit of perfect fellowship take ye counsel together, and dedicate the precious days of your lives to the betterment of the world ... 12

Techeste Ahderom, principal representative of the Baha'f international Community to the United Nations, and cochair o/the Millennium Forum for NGOs, presented this statement on behalf of organizations of civil society to th e M illennium Summit of heads of state and go vernm ent at th e United Nations on 8 September 2000.

Address to the
United Nations
MILLENNIUM
SUMMIT

L ast May, representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations from all over the world gathered in this great hall to consult about humanity's common future and, particularly, about the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The meeting was called the Millennium Forum, and, in light of the wide-ranging concerns of its participants, the geographic reach they embodied- including broad representation from developing countries- and the depth and breath of the organizations they represented, it was one of the most diverse and significant gatherings of civil society organizations ever held. The Forum was significant for its attempt to accelerate the process among NGOs of networking and coalition building across issue areas that has proved to be such a powerful force for change and social action in today's world. The issues we considered included how to establish a just and lasting peace; how to eradicate poverty; how to set humanity on a path of sustainable development while protecting our shared environment; how to see that human rights everywhere are upheld- at all times, by all nations; and how to face up to the urgent challenges of globalization.

THE B AHA'f W ORLD

In the end, despite our great diversity, we successfully agreed on a powerfully worded "Declaration and Agenda for Action." It offers a bold vision for humanity's future and outlines a series of concrete steps that the United Nations, governments, and members of civil society themselves can take to address the global problems facing humanity today. After hearing your speeches here over the last three days, I must say that our vision and plan of action are consonant with much of what has been said here. I am personally heartened by this and feel that this historic Summit may well be remembered as having opened the door to a long-awaited era of peace, justice, and prosperity for all humanity. This new era will, of course, require concrete deeds and not just words.

We in civil society stand ready to work with you and your governments, side by side, in a strong new partnership to create this new world. At the same time, civil society also stands ready to hold you to your commitments if you do not deliver on your words.

Throughout history, from the abolition of slavery to the recognition of the equality of women and men, most great social movements have begun not with governments but with ordinary people.

Even the idea of creating an international organization to end war and establish a permanent peace originated with civil society. Before the outbreak of the First World War, the leaders of a number of international NGOs argued for the establishment of a "Commonwealth of Nations" or "League of Nations" in which all states would band together in collective security. These same organizations actively supported the work of the League of Nations in the late 1920s.

In 1945, civil society again played an important role in shaping many of the key articles found in the Charter of the United Nations, especially in the area of human rights.

More recently, NGOs have played a leading role in shaping and supporting an International Criminal Court, in the movement for debt cancellation, and in the International Campaign to Ban

MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

Landmines. Likewise, NGOs have led in creating such partnerships with the UN and governments as with the NGO Steering

Committee for the Commission on Sustainable Development.

On a number of occasions, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said that civil society participation in and partnership with the United Nations is not an "option," but a "necessity."

We appreciate his efforts to facilitate effective partnership with civil society at the United Nations. We thank him especially for opening the UN to the Millennium Forum last May. As many of you know, the idea for our Forum essentially originated with Mr. Annan some three years ago when he called for a "companion People's Assembly" to this Summit. And we thank Mr. Annan for making the Millennium Forum Declaration available to this Summit as a UN document.

The Millennium Forum itself grew out of long-established NGO committees and networks. Planning began with the Conference on Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), and included the UN DPI/NGO Executive Committee. We sought to build upon an impressive series of global NGO gatherings held last year, such as the Hague Appeal for Peace, the Seoul International Conference of NGOs, the World Civil Society Conference, and the Young People's Millennium Assembly, as well as all of

the great global NGO forums held in parallel with the major United Nations conferences of the last decade, including the Earth Summit, the Beijing Women's Conference, and the Social Summit, among others. We ask that you review carefully our Millennium Forum Declaration. I think you'll find that, for the most part, we are simply calling on governments to live up to the commitments and the principles that they agreed to in the great global conferences of the 1990s. We are also seeking increased NGO access to the UN General Assembly and its main committees.

Allow me to give you a few highlights of what the Forum called for in its Declaration.

The Forum's participants believe that, when a billion people go to bed hungry, it is a gross violation of human rights. The Declaration calls for immediate debt cancellation. It also calls for a

"Global Poverty Eradication Fund," aimed at offering the poor access to credit.

On globalization, the Forum took the view that, while it offers "significant opportunities for people to connect, share and learn from each other," in its currently unregulated form it increases "inequities between and within countries, undermines local traditions and cultures, and escalates disparities between rich and poor, thereby marginalizing large numbers of people in urban and rural areas. "

The Declaration urges governments to make serious "commitments to restructure the global financial architecture based on principles of equity, transparency, accountability, and democracy," stating clearly that the United Nations should be the preeminent international organization overseeing the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

The Declaration also calls for a greatly strengthened and democratized United Nations, the most important global institution in the world today- and the only one currently capable of providing the international framework and coordination needed to address the critical challenges ahead.

Specifically, the Forum called for a strengthened peacekeeping regime, with the establishment of permanent police and peacekeeping forces. It also calls for a reformed Security Council, invigorated through an enlarged membership, more democratic procedures, and eventual elimination of the veto. It also urges the formulation of a draft proposal for global disarmament, to be discussed in a special session of the General Assembly.

In this day of global interdependence, a much strengthened United Nations is our best protection against global calamity, be it economic, environmental, the spread of a new epidemic, or a major new conflict.

To conclude, the Millennium Forum Declaration seeks to articulate the hopes and

aspirations of the peoples of the world. As
its opening paragraphs state:

Our vision is of a world that is human-centered and genuinely democratic, where
all human beings are full participants
and determine their own destinies. [In our vision we are one

human family, in all our diversity, living on one common
homeland and sharing a just, sustainable and peaceful world,
guided by universal principles of democracy, equality, inclusion, voluntarism,
non-discrimination, and participation by
all persons ...

Thank you for your attention.

This statement was presented by the
Baha'i International Community to the
45th session of the Commission on the
Status of Women, held in New York
6- 16 March 2001.

ENDING RACE & GENDER DISCRIMINATION

The Baha'i International Community is pleased that the Commission on the Status of Women is focusing global attention on the impact of racism on women at its 45th session. Baha'is the world over- regardless of gender or ethnicity- have longed for and promoted both the advancement of women and the elimination of all forms of prejudice, including those based on race, ethnicity, and gender.

A world that promotes the equality of women and men will lift much of the burden from women. Likewise a world free of racism will further lighten women's load. But the benefits extend even further. While women are the ones primarily affected when race and gender inequalities coincide, the human race as a whole is disadvantaged and its progress retarded by these injustices. As the Baha'i writings state, "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." 1

1 'Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912, 10th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 133.

THE BAHAI WORLD

Women throughout the world find themselves greatly disadvantaged in a socially stratified world by the compounding of discrimination based on race, gender, class, and age. Within what has been termed a "matrix of domination," or "a range of interlocking

inequalities" that defines gender, women belonging to an oppressed group feel the effects of these disadvantages most keenly, as they belong simultaneously to two groups that are discriminated against. Racism creates basic social divisions and power structures, and the inequality promoted by racial divisions is reinforced by structures that also limit opportunities for women. Because of this double jeopardy, women belonging to minority races or ethnic groups often live in virtual invisibility. Neglecting their history and using the media to reinforce gender stereotypes exacerbates the problem.

The disadvantages and injustices suffered by women of oppressed groups living in societies where resources are limited have been highlighted over the past two decades in international fora such as the United Nations. These women endure discrimination in education, particularly where tradition decrees that girl children are not "worth" educating. Their health is jeopardized through poor nutrition, poor reproductive health care, and ineffective protection from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases all a result of their social status. The brutal practice of female genital mutilation causes pain and suffering and endangers women's health in the name of "cultural practice," and if the procedure renders them infertile, they are stigmatized as of little value in societies that measure women's worth largely by their ability to produce children. The perilous situation of women in the midst of armed conflict, who are subjected to violence, the trafficking in women and girls for the purposes of prostitution, the exploitation of women laborers—all of these have been documented and examined at length.

Women positioned at the intersection of race and gender are most glaringly affected by the social structures that sustain discrimination and exploitation, but these injustices affect everyone.

For example, disadvantages experienced by women oppressed because of race produce unacknowledged benefits for women and

men belonging to favored groups. The reluctance to acknowledge these privileges perpetuates injustice and hinders society from developing in healthy ways. When women everywhere, in every culture and society, are welcomed as full partners with men in all fields of endeavor, conditions that promote real justice and peace will prevail.

Since the founding of the United Nations, the Baha'i International Community has spoken many times in international fora

about the baneful effects of discrimination, especially racism, and about the need for women's equality. The Baha'i community is dedicated in principle and practice to the abolition of racism and the promotion of the equality of women and men at all levels.

Within the family, Baha'is seek to teach their children the

values of oneness, equality, and justice. Baha'is value interracial marriage for its positive effect on society and educate their daughters in the same curricula as their sons. If the family is not able to provide for the education of both, parents are encouraged to give preference to the girls, as they will be the first educators of the next generation.

In local communities, Baha' i institutions are charged with promoting both the equality of women and men and the abolition of racial prejudice. If Baha' i parents are remiss in providing for the education of their daughters, the local Baha'i community must arrange for it. Women are fully eligible to elect and to serve on local and national governing councils. In Baha'i elections, if the vote results in a tie between two people, one of whom is a member of a minority group, that person is automatically considered as elected. In Baha' i communities both women and men learn the art of "consultation," or the frank and courteous exchange of views. Social and economic development projects have established schools specifically for girls and training institutes for women that not only teach literacy and practical skills by which they can earn a livelihood but also strengthen moral values and spiritual capacities to assist them to contribute to the advancement of society. Village health care programs promote the well-being of women and children in remote areas of the world, thereby benefiting the whole society.

THE B AHA'I W ORLD

In international fora, the Baha'i International Community has long encouraged a fundamental change in beliefs and attitudes about race through education and the promotion of the concept of world citizenship. It has also worked in these fora to advance the status of women.

Baha'is believe that civilization is ever advancing, and the achievement of unity at all levels and in all aspects of life is of paramount importance at this stage in human development. As Baha'u' llah has written, "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." 2

Baha' is do not regard themselves as experts in this endeavor, but if their more than one hundred and fifty years of experience can be of service to others pursuing this goal, they are happy to offer it for study. It is clear that only when "The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all," 3 will the human race have addressed the challenges inherent in social structures based on domination, in which injustice is accepted as the natural order of things.

2 Baha' u' ll ah, Gleanings jiwn the Writings of Baha 'u 'llah (Wilmette: Baha' i

Publi shing Trust, 1982), p. 11 6.

3 'A bdu ' l-B aha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Ta lks delivered by

'Abdu 'l-Baha during His Vis it to the United States and Canada in 191 2, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha' i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 168.

Th e S aha 'i International Community presented this oral statement to the 5 7th session of the United Na tions Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, 29 March 200 1.

CURRENT
SITUATION
OF THE
BAHA'fS
rNJRAN

I t is with great regret that we must inform the Commission that the relentless persecution of the Baha'is in Iran is still a fact of life.

Although it would be correct to say that there have been some improvements since the last session of the Commissionsome prisoners have been released, two death sentences have been commuted, and measures were taken by the government which, by consequence, made it possible for married Baha' i couples to be registered as husband and wife, and for their children to be registered- persecutions, deprivations, and sufferings remain the everyday lot of Baha'is, and this has been so for the past 21 years. Throughout those years this persecution has taken all possible forms , ranging from death sentences and imprisonment to a wide range of deprivations including the rights to work, to education and to inheritance, not to mention the right to profess one's belief. All thi s is being perpetrated against the Baha'is purely on the basis of their religious beliefs.

We also need to note that although the registration of marriages has had the effect of meeting some of the urgent needs of Baha'i couples, it also allows the Iranian government to avoid the issue of recognition of Baha'i marriages.

Furthermore, seven Baha'is are still in prison, and two of them are under sentence of death. The charges brought against all the prisoners are clearly and solely based on the fact that they are members of the Baha'i community.

After his visit to Iran in 1996, the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, specified a comprehensive set of measures that the government should take to

remedy the situation of the Baha'is. Mr. Amor called on the government of Iran to grant the Baha'is the following:

- freedom to bury their dead
- freedom of movement
- no impediment to access to education or employment
- security of the person and physical integrity
- civil rights and, in particular, the freedom to manifest their belief
- the review and setting aside of the death sentences
- a return of community properties and compensation for the destruction of places of worship
- a equal treatment by the judiciary
- equal rights for all, regardless of their beliefs or the community to which they belong
- a reestablishment of Baha'i institutions

We would like to emphasize that reestablishment of Baha'i institutions is particularly critical, as they constitute the core around which Baha'i community life revolves. Because the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the arbitrary dissolution of these institutions, ordered by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1983, was equivalent to abolishing cardinals, bishops, and parish priests in Christian communities. These institutions not only guide the community and nurture the individual members, but they perform such canonical functions as marriages and burials.

However, there has never been the political will nor any form of sustained commitment on the part of the government of the Islamic Republic to implement seriously and systematically the recommendations of the Special Representative on Iran and the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

In fact, the government refused the very simple gesture of issuing visas to members of the delegation of the Baha'i International Community to the Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Conference Against Racism, which was held in Iran. It should be noted that the delegation was composed of three indigenous members of our national affiliates from India, Korea, and Japan, and myself, a native of Eritrea. We had submitted all the documents needed well in advance and even complied with additional and non-necessary requests. All of this to no avail. No visas were issued. This, when the subject of the meeting was combating racism and intolerance.

Thus we are compelled to conclude that, despite the promises made last year by representatives of the Islamic Republic in various UN fora, including this Commission, the situation of the Baha'is in Iran has not improved, and Baha'is remain non-persons under the law. The above-mentioned new developments appear to be cosmetic steps taken by the government of the Islamic Republic in the

hope of presenting a new face to the Commission, while in reality there has been no fundamental change in attitude towards the Baha'is.

In fact, the past year witnessed more examples that the policy of the government of Iran towards the Baha'is is chronic and its aim, as formulated in the 1991 memorandum of the Iranian Supreme Revolutionary Cultural Council on "the Baha'i question," is to destroy the Baha'i community as a viable entity. These violations, some of which have been reported by the special representative, Maurice Copithorne, have been amply documented, and these documents are available for close examination.

Therefore, we regrettably have to reiterate that a systematic pattern of persecutions remains, which needs to be addressed, and that until the Baha'i community, the largest religious minority in

Iran, is granted legal protection, its situation will remain precarious. Thus, continued monitoring by the UN, and especially by the Commission on Human Rights, constitutes a vitally important source of protection for this community until it can finally be fully emancipated.

The Baha'i International Community presented this statement to the 52nd session of the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, held in Geneva, 2 August 2000.

CURRENT
SITUATION
OF THE
BAHA'IS
IN EGYPT

It is with great reluctance that we bring to the attention of the Sub-Commission the discrimination and persecution of the Baha'i community in Egypt. We do this only after patient efforts, conducted in a quiet and constructive manner with the relevant diplomats and government authorities over a period of several years, have failed to resolve this half-century-old situation. Since we are addressing this issue at the Sub-Commission for the first time, it may be helpful to give you a brief history of the persecution of the Baha'i community in Egypt.

The persecution of the Baha'i community in Egypt started in 1960 when former President Nasser decided, through Presidential Decree No. 263, to dissolve all Baha'i institutions. Because the Baha'i Faith has no clergy, the arbitrary dissolution of these institutions was equivalent to abolishing cardinals, bishops, and parish priests in Christian communities. These institutions not only guide the community and nurture the individual members, but they perform such

canonical functions as marriages and burials.

At the time of the decree, all Baha'i properties and assets were confiscated-some appropriated for the benefit of certain Muslim organizations- and the Baha'i activities previously conducted by these institutions were banned. It was officially stated that the restrictive measures were directed only at the Baha'i administrative institutions and their activities, and that individuals remained free to believe in and practice the Baha'i Faith in accordance with the religious freedom constitutionally guaranteed to all. In practice, however, Baha'is have been imprisoned on charges related solely to their religious convictions on six occasions in the past 30 years. Homes were searched, and all Baha'i materials seized. Accusations focused on attempting to teach their religion or holding Nineteen-Day Feasts, which are religious celebrations observed by Baha'is in their homes at the beginning of every month of the Baha'i calendar. The Egyptian Baha'is have challenged in court the legality of Decree No. 263 on the basis of its unconstitutional discriminatory dispositions, its interference with their religious freedom, its nonconformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the failure of the president to submit it to the Parliament, as required by the Egyptian Constitution. On 1 March 1975 the Supreme Court rejected the case brought by the Egyptian Baha'is and ruled that the Decree was constitutional. Moreover, the Administrative Court and the Supreme Court designated the Baha'i Faith an unrecognized religion and in so doing completely ignored the fact that the Egyptian government had treated the Baha'i community as a recognized religious community for over half a century. Furthermore, the Supreme Court's determination that the Baha'i Faith was against the public order and/or the social order ignored entirely the fact that the Baha'i community had existed in Egypt since 1868 without once drawing such an accusation. The actions of the government seem to be intended to pacify a few religious extremists at the expense of a peaceful, law-abiding Baha'i community. This is an abdication of state responsibility to protect the rights of all its citizens.

At this time the entire community in Egypt is under strict and constant police surveillance. Baha'is are not permitted to gather for any purpose, not even to commemorate the most holy occasions of their religion. Periodically, their homes are searched and their Baha'i literature taken away and destroyed. As part of their systematic intimidation of the community, the police often remind the Baha'is that informers have been recruited from their community. As the Baha'is cannot legally marry unless they declare themselves to be adherents of one of the three recognized religions- Islam, Christianity, or the Jewish Faith, which they are not willing to do, the entire Baha'i community is without legal

means for controlling such matters as family allowances, pensions, inheritance, divorce, alimony, or custody of children.

Baha'i marriage is considered to be concubinage, and Baha'i children are regarded as illegitimate. Moreover, government-controlled news media, including the State-owned radio and TV stations, periodically orchestrate hate campaigns against the Baha'i Faith, calling for its extermination. Because of emigration to escape such gross violations of human rights, the once-vibrant Egyptian Baha'i community has, within a few decades, been reduced to only several hundred.

In 1993 the UN Human Rights Committee, when considering a report submitted by the Arab Republic of Egypt under article 40 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, expressed anxiety over the treatment of Baha'is. We note in paragraph 12 of the Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/79/Add.23) dated 9 August 1993 the following statement: " .. .the Committee is worried about restrictive legal provisions existing in Egypt with regard to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, assembly, and association. Restrictions not in conformity with article 18 of the Covenant regarding various religious communities or sects, such as Baha'is, are a matter of particular concern."

Seven years have passed since the Human Rights Committee submitted its Concluding Observations. According to our information, the situation of the Baha'is in Egypt has failed to improve and has even, in some instances, deteriorated. We would

like to bring to your attention a "fatwa" dated 19 May 1998 issued by the Azhar Council of Islamic Research, Fatwa

Committee. This document, which has recently come to light, presents the distorted view of the Fatwa Committee on the Baha'i Faith, thanks the Government of Egypt for issuing Presidential Decree no. 263, and implores it to continue to enforce its provisions. The fatwa was in answer to a letter to the Azhar written by several professors protesting the planned hiring of a Baha'i lecturer at the University of Cairo. The Baha'i maintained that she had a right to apply for this position regardless of her religion. Despite the fatwa, the lecturer was hired, which demonstrates that when there is a will on the part of the government, even a fatwa may be disregarded.

In light of the above, the Baha'i International Community believes that the following grave breaches of freedom of religion suffered by the Baha'is need to be addressed by the Government of Egypt.

- The Presidential Decree of 1960 dissolving the Baha' i institutions and making illegal the performance of any of their activities should be repealed, and the right of the Baha'i community to form

its religious institutions restored.

á A civil authority needs to be assigned responsibility for registering the marriages of Baha'is, or such authority should be given to Baha'i institutions.

á In matters pertaining to identity, birth, and official documentation, Baha'is must be given the same treatment as the members of other religious minorities.

- Finally, the government-controlled media should cease disseminating incorrect information designed to stir up hatred against the Baha'is.

The Baha'i International Community asks that the Sub-Commission express its grave concerns to the Government of Egypt.

This statement was presented by the Baha'i International Community at the request of Mary Robinson, UN high commissioner for human rights, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March 2001 .

ELIMINATION OF RACISM

The coming together of the peoples of the world in a harmonious and creative relationship is the crucial need of the present hour. In the wake of advances in human knowledge which have deepened bonds of interdependence and contracted the planet, the central task now before all its inhabitants is laying the foundations of a global society that can reflect the oneness of human nature. Creating such a universal culture of collaboration and conciliation will require a return to spiritual awareness and responsibility. More than a century ago, Baha'u'llah declared that humankind was entering a new era in its history when accelerating processes of unification would soon compel recognition that humanity is a single people with a common destiny. In appealing to humanity to accept the central truth of its oneness, and to set aside the barriers of race, religion, and nationality, which have been the principal causes of conflict throughout history, Baha'u'llah urges, " ... regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch." There is, He said, no possibility of achieving world peace until the fundamental principle of unity has been accepted and given practical effect in the organization of society: "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." 1 And: "Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship ... So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." 2

The unity that must underpin a peaceful and just social order is a unity which embraces and honors diversity. Oneness and diversity are complementary and inseparable. That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inhering diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. Acceptance of the concept of unity in diversity, therefore, implies the development of a global consciousness, a sense of world citizenship, and a love for all of humanity. It induces every individual to realize that, since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the human race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. It further suggests that if a peaceful international community is to emerge, then the complex and varied cultural expressions of humanity must be allowed to develop and flourish, as well as to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization. "The diversity in the human family," the Baha'i writings emphasize, "should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord." 3

From this basic principle of the unity of the earth's peoples are derived virtually all concepts concerning human liberty and well-being. If the human race is one, any notion that a particular racial, ethnic, or national group is in some way superior to the rest of humanity must be dismissed; society must reorganize its life to give practical expression to the principle of equality for all its

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

2 *Gleanings*, p. 288.

3 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahti in Paris in 1911-*

1912 (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), p. 53.

ED)M_I NATION O F R ACISM

members regardless of color, creed, or gender; and all individuals must be given the opportunity to realize their inherent potential and thereby contribute to "an ever-advancing civilization."

For too much of history, the evil of racism has violated human dignity. Its influence has retarded the development of its victims, corrupted its perpetrators, and blighted human progress. Overcoming its devastating effects will thus require conscious, deliberate, and sustained effort. Indeed, nothing short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, and prayerful reflection will succeed in effacing its pernicious stain from human affairs.

"Close your eyes to racial differences," is Baha'u'llah's counsel,

"and welcome all with the light of oneness."⁴

Clearly, the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding among the diverse segments of the human race cannot be a passive or rhetorical exercise. All forms of provincialism, all insularities, and prejudices must be directly confronted. The implementation of appropriate legal measures that safeguard the rights and opportunities of all and the adoption of educational initiatives that foster human solidarity and global citizenship should be among the first practical steps taken by all nations. The moral leadership provided by religious communities must undoubtedly be a key component of any such effort. To ensure a constructive role for religion, however, the followers of all faiths must acknowledge the strife and suffering caused by those who have appropriated the symbols and instruments of religion for their own selfish purposes. Fanaticism and conflict poison the wells of tolerance and represent corrupt expressions of true religious values. The challenge facing all religious leaders is to contemplate, with hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of social justice and peace. In His exhortation "to

4Baha'u'llah, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1993), p. 37.

observe tolerance and righteousness,"⁵ Baha'u'llah affirms that it is possible both to believe in God and to be tolerant.

The path of unity and reconciliation is the only path available to the human family. A world in which all nations, races, creeds, and classes are closely and permanently united is not utopian vision but an inevitable and vital necessity. "Illumine and hallow your hearts; let them not be profaned by the thorns of hate or the thistles of malice," Baha'u'llah warns. "Ye dwell in one world, and have been created through the operation of one Will. Blessed is he who minglith with all men in a spirit of utmost kindness and love."⁶

⁵ Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah* revealed after the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette:

Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1997), p. 36.

⁶ *Gleanings*, p. 334.

INFORMATION

RESON

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OBITUARIES

Martin Aiff

On 13 March 2001, in Windhoek, Namibia. Martin Aiff was born in Darmstadt, Germany, on 21 March 1919. He became a Baha'i in 1946 and soon after was appointed to the National Youth Committee in Germany. In 1948, he married Gerda Hartmann and they had six children together. He was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and served as a member of that body from 1957 to 1959, when he left Germany to live and teach the Baha'i Faith in Africa during the Ten Year Crusade. The family settled in South-west Africa (later Namibia) in the capital of Windhoek and remained there until 1967 before moving to Leuderitz and later Tsumeb. Mr. Aiff had a variety of jobs in Namibia, working as a commercial salesman, general manager of general stores, school ad-

ministrator, and manager of arts and crafts centers. For seven years he and his wife had served as caretakers of the German national center, and they performed the same duty at the national center in Windhoek during their residence in that city. Mr. Aiff served on the National Spiritual Assembly of South and West Africa in 1973-74 and was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Namibia upon its formation in 1981. He was a member of that National Spiritual Assembly from 1981 until 1984 and in 1985. In 1986 he was appointed to the Auxiliary Board, serving that institution until 1996. In its message after his death, the Universal House of Justice wrote that his persistent activities in Africa would "serve as shining examples of devotion for generations to come."

Najmieh Ala'i

On 4 September 2000, in Auckland, New Zealand. Najmieh Lameh was born on 12 March 1908 in Tabriz, Iran. She was a fourth generation Baha'i and served the Baha'i Faith in many capacities during her life.

Her

in Iran. She was a member of many administrative committees, including the Advancement of Women Committee, Young Women's Education Committee, and the Armenian Teaching Committee. She graduated as a trained nurse and around 1955 became the head of nurse training for the Baha'i-run Mithaqiyyih Hospital. She married Ra'~matu'llah Ala'i

moved in 1928 and the two had three children before Mrs. Ala'i was widowed in 1940. In the early 1980s, when

cousin of 'Abdu'l-Baha, was impris-

oned along with Him in Palestine. The year of her birth, 'Abdu'l-Baha was released from imprisonment and her family settled near the Sea of Galilee. She married Muhammad Baha'i and together they had six children.

professional nursing training enabled her to serve many people in the area, especially with her fluency in

English, Hebrew, and Persian. Consequent to the kidnapping of her husband during the 1948 War of independence, she and her family accepted an offer to stay with Shoghi Effendi. After the war, with her husband safely released, the family

moved to Nazareth while Mr. Baha'i assisted Shoghi Effendi with the construction of the International Baha'i Archives

the persecution of Baha'is in Iran and the superstructure of the Shrine was at its height, she moved to New Zealand, settling in the city of Auckland, in Haifa. Because the family was able to acquire some of the land surrounding the Shrine of Baha'u'llah at Bahji,

for teachers of the Baha'i Faith. which they donated to the World Centre, the Baha'i community was able to protect the Shrine and its surrounding properties. After the death of her

her passing, the Universal House of Justice recalled her "staunchness of Faith" and "dedication ... to the Baha'i community." husband, she moved to Oakville, Ontario, Canada in 1966, and from 1968 to 1974 she was the hostess of the national Baha'i center in Canada.

She later pioneered to Guadeloupe and St. Lucia in the Caribbean but returned

On 18 November 2000, in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. Husnieh Zikru'llah Irani was born in Tiberias, Palestine, in 1908. Her grandfather was Mirza Muhammad-Quli, the youngest half-kind brother of Baha'u'llah. Her father, a

to Canada when her health began to fail. In Canada, she was known as "Mama Baha'i" and was remembered by the Universal House of Justice for her "characteristic generosity, kindness, and hospitality."

OBITUARIES

Massoud Berdjis with the goal of establishing a Local Spiritual Assembly there. He traveled extensively through Germany, giving lectures and seminars on the Faith, and until the end of his life was dedicated to assisting the Baha'i community.

On 1 February 2001, in Saarlouis, Germany. Massoud Berdjis was born to a Baha'i family in Kashan, Iran, on 9 January 1927. He moved to Zurich, Switzerland, in 1947 to pursue his studies and was very active in the Baha'i community there; for one semester he interrupted his studies to assist Hand of the Cause of God Adelbert Miilschlegel to Victranslate the Kitab-i-iqan. He graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1951 and obtained a doctoral degree in Germany, where he met and married Hermine Mayer, with whom he had four children. The family moved to Vienna, Austria, and Mr. Berdjis served on the first National Spiritual Assembly of

Victor de Araujo
On 4 January 2001, in Norwalk, Connecticut, the United States.
Victor de Araujo was born near London, England, on 19 February 1922. He spent his childhood in Brazil and went to the United States in 1946 in his capacity as the vice-consul at the Brazilian Consulate in Chicago. He became a Baha'i that same year, and a year later married Betty Scheffler. They had two children. He earned a

that country in 1959- 60 and again from 1964 to 1968. He also served on the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany from 1972 to 1994 after returning there from Austria. He worked for various engineering firms and research centers in Germany and was able, due to the flexibility of his work, to make trips throughout German-speaking Europe to teach the Baha'i Faith. He was appointed as the J:luququ'llah representative in Germany and served in that capacity from 1970 until his death . During the Iranian Revolution , he was instrumental in coassisting the Baha'i community of Germany to establish good relations with the German government to present the case of the Baha' is persecuted in Iran. In 1985, he resettled in the Gennan town of Saarlouis, spirit"

and "dignified bearing" and praised the "efficacy of his tireless, exemplary exertions" in the service of the Baha'i International Community. relocated to South Africa and

Habib Esfahani

On 11 January 2001 , in Cote d'Ivoire. Habibu'llah Esfahani was born to a Baha ' i fami ly in Port Said, Egypt, on 9 August 1922. He failworked as an accountant and served on the Local Spiritual Assembly in Port Said, until his decision to depart in April 1954 for Senegal , where he stayed before moving to Cote d'Ivoire, then 'Abdu'llah Mesbah

known as French West Africa, in

On 12 October 2000 , 1n Saint-1960. He was the first Baha ' i to louis, France. ' Abdu 'llah Mes bah settle in the country and was named was born to a Baha'i family in 1910

master's degree in English from Northwestern University in Chicago and later a PhD in English from the University of Washington in Seattle. He taught at Yakima Community College and later the University of Washington before taking an assismany tant professorship at the University of Michigan. In 1967, he became the principal representative of the Baha 'i International Community (BIC) to the United Nations and served in that position for 23 years, representing the Baha'i community and chairing numerous committees on behalf of the BIC. He also authored many statements by the Baha ' i International Community, which presented Baha'i views on a wide range of issues. In its message after his death , the Universal House of Justice recalled his "gentle

1960 she went to Switzerland, where she stayed for six years and helped to establish the Local Assembly of Locarno. She eventua lly

served as the secretary of the Na-

tional Teaching Committee and on the National Spiritual Assembly of that country from 1973 until 1985.

In the face of poor health and ing eyesight, she returned to the United States in 1986, joining her family in California , where she continued to serve the Baha'i Faith until the end of her life.

by Shoghi Effendi as a Knight of
in Tehran, Iran. He served on many
Baha'u'llah for French West Afcommittees in Iran during his time
rica , remaining in Cote d'Ivoire
there, including the Translation
until his death .

Committee and the National Youth

Rose Perkal Gates

On 2 February 2001, in Orange,
California, the United States. Rose
Gates was born in the United States
on 13 April 1904. She became a
Baha'i in 1948 and in 1953 re-
sponded to a call for Baha'is to
settle in remote areas during the
Ten Year Crusade by moving to
Kodiak , Alaska , where she stayed
for seven years. As the first Baha'i
in the Kodiak Islands , she was
named a Knight of Baha'u'llah by
Shoghi Effendi . She assisted in the
establishment of two Local Spirit-
tual Assemblies in Alaska and
served for two years on the Na-
tional Spiritual Assembly there. In

Committee. He left for France in

1931 to earn a degree in mathemat-
ics, and stayed four years before
returning to Iran. He spent two
years in Iraq , from 1943 to 1945 ,
before leaving Iran for good in
1954, moving first to Belgium, then
Morocco , and later to Lebanon.

During his travels, he worked as a
professor of mathematics in several
universities and was active in the
Baha ' i communities, teaching the
Faith and serving on various ad -
ministrative bodies as a member of
the Auxiliary Board serving Hand
of the Cause Musa Banani. In 1968,
he was invited to work at the
Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, to

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assist in the establishment of the
Research Department of the Uni-
versal House of Justice, and he
remained for twenty years. After
leaving Israel he lived in the Neth-
erlands for ten years before moving
to France for the last two years of
Hans Odemyr
his life.

On 24 January 2001, in Stockholm,

Feizollah Namdar

On 22 March 2001, in Lenzberg,
Switzerland. Feizollah Namdar was
born in Baku, Russia, on 23 Decem-
ber 1919. He moved to Iran in 1943 ,
where he worked as a radio techni-
cian and broadcaster. After
becoming a Baha ' i there, he relo-
cated to Europe, where he worked
several engineering firms. In

Sweden. Hans Odemyr was born in

Stockholm, Sweden, on 25 August
1921 . He managed a family-owned
clothing industry throughout his life,
assisted by his wife, Saga, with
whom he had two children. His first
contact with the Baha'i Faith came in
1948, when he met two American
Baha'is who had pioneered to Swefor
den . He maintained close contact

1954 he moved to Germany and met Ursula Mauthe, who he married in 1956. Mr. Namdar was a member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of Luxembourg from 1961 until 1963, when he moved to Switzerland, serving on the National

Spiritual Assembly there from 1965 until his death . He made frequent trips to his native Russia, returning in 1989 as a representative of the Baha'i International Community to meet with the Russian Council on Religious Affairs about the official registration of the Baha'i community in Russia several times during the 1990s and served as a liaison between the Baha'i community and the government. He also assisted the development of Baha'i institutions in

Russia, served as a lecturer at

Both of these goals had been emphasized by Shoghi Effendi. During his lifetime, he gave many talks and interviews about the Baha'i Faith and On 5 October 2000, in Monza, Italy. Augusto Robiati authored pamphlets about the Faith. Augusto Robiati was born in Milan, Italy, in 1912. As part of his work as Universal House of Justice lauded his a civil engineer, he left Italy in 1936 efforts, which "played a vital role in to undertake a vast project to build the . . . establishment of the Baha'i roads and bridges between Asmara, community" in Sweden.

Ethiopia, and Massawa, Eritrea. A

Audrey Robarts

On 22 August 2000, in Rawdon , Quebec, Canada. Audrey FitzGerald

with the Stockholm Baha'i community and finally became a Baha'i in January, 1953 ; his wife became a Baha' i the following month. He was elected to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Stockholm in 1953 and remained on that body until his death

In addition , he served on the Reunited Regional Spiritual Assembly of Scandinavia and Finland from 1957 until 1962, and on the National Spiritual Assembly of Sweden from the time of its formation in 1962 until 1992. He also worked on a number of committees, including the National Teaching Committee and the National Publishing Committee. He initiated and oversaw the publication of the Swedish Baha' i newsletter. Mr. Odemyr's actions were instrumental in the purchase, in 1957, of the national Baha'i center and of the temple site in Stockholm in 1958.

Botswana, which addressed her as the "beloved mother of our country."

member of the engineering corps of the Italian army during the Second World War, he was captured and

was born in Montreal, Quebec, in 1904. In 1928, she married John Robarts, the marriage producing four children. She and her husband became Baha'is in 1937 and both were active teachers of the Faith. In 1953, at the beginning of the Ten Year Crusade, they became the first Baha'is to settle in Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and for this were named Knights of Baha'u'llah by Shoghi Effendi. After Mr. Robarts was appointed as a Hand of the Cause of God in 1957, the family travelled extensively throughout Africa to teach the Baha'i Faith and assist in the consolidation of young Baha'i communities. They returned to Canada in 1967 and settled in the small French Canadian town of Rawdon, but continued their world travels for many years. In 1992, after her husband's death, Mrs. Robarts travelled to four countries in southern Africa to teach the Baha'i Faith, in response to a request from the National Spiritual Assembly of

held in Asmara while building roads for the Italian military. Shortly after escaping captivity, he met his wife, Alma. The two had four children, all born in Asmara. It was also in Eritrea that he first learned of the Baha'i Faith, declaring his belief in 1959. He traveled throughout Eritrea to teach the Baha'i Faith and upon his return to Italy in 1961 undertook numerous trips throughout that country to spread the Faith. He was elected to the first Italian National Spiritual Assembly in 1962 and attended the first International Convention to elect the Universal House of Justice. In addition to his work as a civil engineer, he was also the dean of the poetic and artistic coterie of Monza. He contributed regularly to the Italian journal *Opinioni Baha'i* and published ten books about religion and the Baha'i Faith, including *Gli Otto Veli* (The Eight Veils), *L'Islam e il Corano* (Islam and the Qur'an), and a recent two-volume work entitled *le*

OBITUARIES

Grandi Tappe dell'Evoluzione del Pensiero e dello Spirito (The Great Stages in the Evolution of Thought and Spirit). Mr. Robiati also lectured at schools and universities throughout Italy on the Baha'i Faith and on other topics dealing with the problems of mankind, such as drug abuse, violence, and famine. After his death, the Universal House of Justice wrote of his "staunchness of Internafait, his indefatigable endeavors in their teaching and administrative fields, and the purity of motive which characterized his manifold activities."

and Isobel later moved to Kenya, but left Africa in 1983 when he and Isobel were invited to serve at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa. There he was instrumental in establishing the Office of Social and Economic Development, in which he served for 13 years. Isobel, with whom he had a son and daughter, had been a Continental Counsellor in Africa and served as a member of the National Teaching Centre during their time in Haifa. She died in 1992. He married Betty Goode in 1994 and the couple served at the Baha'i World Centre until 1996, when they moved

to the United Kingdom. Following Hassan Abdel-Fattah Sabri Jus-

On 11 November 2000, in Heme! Hempstead, Hertfordshire, the United Kingdom . Mr. Sabri was born into a Baha' i family in Cairo, Egypt, on 31 March 1922. He served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Cairo while he trained as a mechanical engineer. He went to the United Kingdom for postgraduate studies in 1945 and between 1945 and 1950 served on a number of Local Spiritual Assemblies, the National Youth Committee, and the National Teaching Committee. He married Isobel Locke in 1951 , and that same year moved to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as Baha' i pioneers. In 1954, the couple relocated to Kampala, the

Uganda. During his time in Uganda, Mr. Sabri worked as for the Ford Motor Company as an engineer and was later a lecturer at the local technical busicollege, eventually becoming head of the engineering department. He

both active in teaching the Baha'i Faith in Brazil although they had little fomlal education and were not fluent in Portuguese. During one two-month teaching project in the Amazon, close to two hundred people declared their belief in Baha'u'llah. The Soltanis were inspired by their meeting with Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha Ruf_Jiyyih Khanum at an international Baha ' i conference in Manaus. Afterwards, Mr. Soltani and his wife, despite their advancement , embarked on many teaching trips through the states of Parana, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina from 1985 to 1991 .

his death, the Universal House of

tice sent a message praising his life of service and requesting that memorial services be held in the United Kingdom and the African countries where he had lived.

Fatollah Soltani

On 18 June 2000, in Londrina, Brazil. Fatollah Soltani was born to Baha'i parents in 1925 in Hamedan, Iran. At age 25 he married Fatemeh Masnoui and the two had one daughter. Mr. Soltani worked for the government in Tehran but lost his job because of government opposithey tion to the Baha' i Faith. The family decided to move to Brazil in 1977 and a year later he was elected to first Local Spiritual Assembly of Ribeirao Preto, Sao Paulo. The famtor ily soon moved to the city of Londrina, where they started a ness making traditional Brazilian food. Mr. Soltani and his wife were

the "Adam and Eve of the Faith in Cameroon." Mr. Tanyi had been working as a bookkeeper, but left Cameroon with his wife in 1955 to teach the Baha'i Faith in Benin, then moved to Ghana in 1957 and stayed there for many years, and the couple eventually settled in Kumesi. In Ghana, he worked as a shoemaker until he became certified as an accountant and got a job in the Finance Department of the University of Science and Technology. At various times he served on Local Spiritual Assemblies in Cameroon and Ghana, was a member of the Auxiliary Board and was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ghana . In

Although he suffered a stroke in 1991 after a heart operation, he continued to be active in the community, teaching and assisting with the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Baha'i Faith in Brazil.

South Africa. Margaret Peregrine

David Tanyi Randall was born 3 August 1907 in On 3 June 2000, in Bakebe village, Cameroon. Nyenti David Tanyi was born on 1 January 1928, in Bakebe village, in the Southwest Province of Cameroon. Mr. Tanyi became a Baha'i in 1953, taught by Hand of the Cause of God Enoch Olinga. Mr. Tanyi and his wife, Esther Oben Tabi, had twelve children together, although only two survived to adulthood. Mrs. Tanyi was the first woman to embrace the Baha'i Faith in Cameroon and she and her husband were nicknamed by Mr. Olinga

recognition of his being the first Baha'i to settle in French Togoland (now Togo), he was named by Shoghi Effendi as a Knight of Baha'u'llah.

Medford, Massachusetts, the United States. By her own account, she became a Baha'i at the age of five, when she had the opportunity to meet 'Abdu'l-Baha, who had come to visit her sick mother. She went on pilgrimage to Haifa at age 12 and later published an account of it called My Pilgrimage to Haifa: 1919. During her pilgrimage, 'Abdu'l-Baha gave her the name Bahiyiyih (Arabic for "beautiful"). She was appointed to the National Youth Committee in the US in 1926

QBITL 'ARIES

and served on the Local Spiritual Assembly of Boston after she turned 21. In 1952, Shoghi Effendi requested that she visit 15 European countries where Baha'is had pioneered. For the length of the four-month trip, she gave two lectures a day in cities and towns throughout Europe. Shoghi Effendi further directed her to settle in South Africa, and she arrived there with her second husband, Harry Ford, whom she married in 1938. She was followed to South Africa by her mother and stepfather, her daughter from her first marriage, and her brother. Her husband passed away in Johannesburg in 1954. She married Godfried Winckler in 1973, who died in

Kay Zinky On 10 May 2000, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the United States. Edith "Kay" Mehring was born 25 March 1903 in Rocky Ford, Colorado. She was trained as an operatic singer. A skillful seamstress, she invented and patented a method for making silk stockings that did not run. Her marriage to Raymond Zinky in 1922 produced twin sons. She became a Baha'i in 1947 and served on many Baha'i committees and institutions in Colorado, including managing the Temerity International Baha'i School in Pine Valley. In 1954, she left the United States and was one of the first two Baha'is to settle in the Magdalen Islands, Canada, an act for which she was named as a Knight

Sabie in 1986. She traveled widely in Africa and became an expert on African beadwork and a renowned speaker on African art, making a business of acquiring and promoting it. She was a member of the first Local Spiritual Assembly in South Africa and secretary of the first National Teaching Committee, also serving on the National Spiritual Assembly from 1960 to 1966 and 1967 to 1968. In 1968, she was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors and served that body for 17 years. After her death, the Universal House of Justice sent a message advising that memorial services should be held in her honor throughout South Africa.

of Baha'u'llah by Shoghi Effendi. Upon returning to the United States after a year in the Magdalens, she traveled extensively throughout the country. Always active in the Baha'i community, she made compilations of Baha'i writings for publication and teaching in Baha'i summer and winter schools. Her research in the British Museum Library helped to uncover some three hundred previously unknown Baha'i Tablets. Later in life, she traveled to Africa and Europe to teach the Baha'i Faith. The Universal House of Justice, in its message after her death, remarked that her "inimitable spirit will certainly remain a source of inspiration for generations to come."

STATISTICS

General Statistics

Worldwide Baha'i population	more than 5 million
Countries/dependent territories where the Baha'i Faith is established	190 countries/ 46 territories
Continental Counsellors	81
Auxiliary Board members serving throughout the world	990
National/Regional Spiritual Assemblies	182
Local Spiritual Assemblies	11,740
Localities where Baha'is reside	127,381
Indigenous tribes, races, and ethnic groups represented in the Baha'i community	2,112
Languages into which Baha'u'llah's writings have been translated	802
Publishing Trusts	33

Geographic Distribution of Local Spiritual Assemblies by Continent

Australasia 856

Growth in the Number of Localities Where Baha'is Reside

agriculture, the environment, or microenterprise. Some of these projects are administered by nascent development organizations which have the potential to grow in complexity and in their range of influence.

Organizations with Capacity to Undertake Complex Action

Certain Baha'i development efforts have achieved the stature of development organizations with relatively complex programmatic structures and significant spheres of influence. They systematically train human resources and manage a number of lines of action to address problems of local communities and regions in a coordinated, interdisciplinary manner. Also included in this category are several institutions-especially large schools- which, although focusing only on one field, have the potential to make a significant impact. In this category there are currently 45 such organizations.

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DIRECTORY

Associations for Baha'i Studies

ARGENTINA

Centro de Estudios Baha'is
Studies

Otamendi 215
1405 Buenos Aires
Argentina

E-mail: camabs@hotmail.com

AUSTRALIA

Association for Baha'i Studies
PO Box 319
Baha'is

Rosebery, NS W 2018
Australia

E-mail: abs@bahai.org.au
lepac.net

BRAZIL

Association for Baha'i Studies
Baha'is

Rua Dom Pedro II, 1641
CP 233
90,000 Porto Alegre
Brazil

@colombianet.net

EAST, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Baha'i Studies Association

CAMEROON

Association for Baha'is

c/o Mr. Enoch Tanyi
BP 4230

Yaounde, Cameroon

CHILE

Asociación de Estudios

Casilla 3731, Santiago 1

Chile

E-mail: uninet@chi

COLOMBIA

Asociación de Estudios

Apartado Aereo 51387

Santa Fe de Bogota DC

Colombia

E-mail: bahaicol

INDIA

Association for Baha'i Studies

e/o Professor MD Teli

PO Box 42846 Flat 16, New Building
 Nairobi Mumbai University's
 Kenya UDCT Campus
 ECUADOR Matunga-400 019
 Asociaci6n de Estudios Baha'is India
 c/o Peter Newton E-mail: absindia@bom5.vsnl.net.in
 Apartado 1142 JAPAN
 Quito Association for Baha'i Studies
 Ecuador c/o Jane Nishi Goldstone
 ENGLISH-SPEAKING EUROPE Banberu 603
 Association for Baha' i Studies 2-8-4 Momijigaoka
 27 Rutland Gate Fuchu-shi, Tokyo
 London, SW7 IPD Japan
 United Kingdom
 MALAYSIA
 E-mail: nsa@bahai.org.uk
 Association for Baha'i Studies
 FRANCOPHONE EUROPE 4 Lorong Titivangsa 5
 Comite de l' Association pour les Setapak 53000
 etudes baha'ies Kuala Lumpur
 Dufourstrasse 13 Malaysia
 CH-3005 Bern E-mail: nsa-sec@ nsam.po.my
 Switzerland
 NEW ZEALAND
 GERMAN-SPEAKING EUROPE
 Association for Baha'i Studies
 Gesellschaft flir Baha'i Studien
 PO Box 21-551
 clo Markus Mediger
 Henderson
 Wirichsbongardstr. 40
 Auckland 1231
 52062 Aachen
 New Zealand
 Germany
 E-mail: natsee@nsa.org.nz
 E-mail: medi@gi.rwth-aachen .de
 GHANA NORTH AMERICA
 Association for Baha'i Studies Association for Baha'i Studies
 PO Box 7098 34 Copernicus Street
 Accra-North Ottawa, Ontario KIN 7K4
 Ghana Canada
 E-mail: abs-na@ istar.ca
 HAWA/I
 Association for Baha'i Studies PHILIPPINES
 c/o Robert McClelland Association for Baha'i Studies
 2142 Aluka Loop 20-D Macopa Street

Pearl City, HI 96782-1317 Basak Engineering
USA 6000 Cebu City
E-mail: ramabm@aloha.net Philippines

PUERTO RICO WEST AFRICA
Asociación de Estudios Baha'is Association for Baha'i Studies
c/o Dr. Cesar Reyes c/o PO Box 2029
Chemistry Dept. Marina-Lagos
University of Puc110 Rico Nigeria
Mayaguez 00708

Puerto Rico ZAMBIA
Association for Baha'i Studies
RUSSIAN FEDERATION c/o Mr. Vahdat Alavian
Association for Saha ' i Studies Box 51170
PO Box 55 Lusaka
Moscow 1295 15 Zambia
Russia
E-mail: secretariat@bnc.glasnet.ru

SINGAPORE
Association for Baha ' i Studies
c/o Dr. Anjam Khursheed Baha'i Publishing Trusts
B, #09-02 , Kent Vale
I 05 Clementi Road ARGENTINA
Singapore 129789 Editorial Baha'i
E-mail: khur@po.pacific.net.sg Indolatinoamericana (EBILA)
Otamendi 215

SPAIN
1405 Buenos Aires
Asociación de Estudios Baha ' is de
Argentina
Espana
E-mail: ebila@ciudad.com.ar

Matias Turrión, 32
ES-28043 Madrid AUSTRALIA
Spain Baha ' i Publications Australia
E-mail: 173 Mona Vale Road
aen.secretaria@com-bahai .es Ingleside NSW 2101
Australia

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
E-mail: bpa@bahai .org.au
Association for Baha ' i Studies
PO Box 755 BELGIUM
Port of Spain Maison d'Editions Baha ' ics
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West Indies B- I 050 Brussels
E-mail: hfarabi @carib-link.net Belgium
E-mail: Center.bahai @skynet.be

VENEZUELA

Association for Baha'i Studies BRAZIL
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08 BP 879 Shinjuku-ku
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Cote d'Ivoire Japan
E-mail: asnbahai @ci .refer.org E-mail: nsajpn@tka.att.ne.jp

FIJI ISLANDS

Baha'i Publishing Trust KENYA
PO Box 639 Baha'i Publishing Agency
Suva PO Box 47562
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Kenya
E-mail: bpakenya@alphanet.co.ke

GERMANY

Baha'i-Verlag KOREA
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D-65719 Hofheim 249-36 Huam-Dong
Germany Yongsan-ku
E-mail: office@bahai-verlag.de Seoul 140-190

HONGKONG

Baha'i Publishing Trust Korea
C-6, 11th Floor, Hankow Center E-mail: nsakorea@nuri.net
IC Middle Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

Kowloon LEBANON*

MALAYSIA*

Hong Kong
E-mail: bahaihk@asiaonline.net

NETHERLANDS

INDIA Stichting Baha'i Literatuur
Baha'i Publishing Trust Riouwstraat 27
F-3/6, Okhla Industrial Area NL-2585 GR
Phase- I, New Delhi 110 020 The Hague
India The Netherlands

E-Mail: bptindia@del3.vsnl.net.in E-mail: nsaneth@tref.nl

*Address communication to Baha'i World Center, PO Box 155, Haifa 31001, Israel.

DIRECTORY

NIGER

Maison d' Editions Fada' il
BP 12858
Niamey
Niger
E-mail: mef@intnet.ne
E-mail: bahai@mail.soroscj.ro

ROMANIA

Casa de Editura ~i Tipografia
Baha'i
CP 124 OP 1
3400 Cluj-Napoca
Romania

NIGERIA

Baha'i Publishing Trust
PO Box 2029
Marina-Lagos
Nigeria
E-mail: ngrbahai@yahoo.com

RUSSIAN FEDERATION
Unity Baha'i Publishing Trust
PO Box 288
198 013 St. Petersburg
Russia

NORWAY

Baha' i Forlag
Drammensveien 110 A
N-0273 Oslo
Norway
E-mail: bahaiforlag@c2i.net
E-mail: bpt@bahai.org.za

E-mail: unity@mail.wplus.net
SOUTH AFRICA
Baha'i Publishing Trust
PO Box 902
Worcester 6849
South Africa

PAKISTAN*

SPAIN

PHILIPPINES
Baha'i Publishing Trust
PO Box 4323
1004 Manila
Philippines
E-mail : nsaphil@skyinet.net

Arca Editorial
Joan d'Austria, 95-97 , 5° la
08018 Barcelona
Spain
E-mail: edibahai@ arrakis.es

SWEDEN

POLAND
Baha' i Publishing Trust
ul. Barbackiego 93
33-300 Nowy Saez
Poland
E-mail: bahainsa@medianet.com.pl

Baha'i FORlaget AB
Box 60
S-194 21 Upplands Yasby
Sweden
E-mail: forlaget@bahai.se

TAIWAN

PORTUGAL
Editora Baha'i de Portugal
Avenida Ventura Terra, No. 1
1600-780 Lisboa
Portugal
E-mail: aen@bahai.pt

Baha'i Publishing Trust
3/F, # 149- I 3 Hsin Sheng South
Road
Section 1, Taipei 106
Taiwan
E-Mail: bpt@ms38.hinet.net

UGANDA
Baha'i Publishing Trust
PO Box 2662
Kampala
Uganda
E-mail: bahai @ spacenetuganda.com
USA

Baha'i Computer and
Communications Association
c/o New Era Communications
attn: Don Davis
5 Ravenscroft Drive
Asheville, NC 28801

UNITED KINGDOM
E-Mail: bcca-cc@bcca.org
Baha'i Publishing Trust
Web: <www.bcca.org>
4 Station Approach

Oakham
Leicestershire
LEIS 6QW
England
E-mail: bpt.enquiries@bahai.org.uk
United Kingdom

Baha'i Health Agency
27 Rutland Gate
London
SW7 1PD

UNITED STATES
Baha'i Publishing Trust
415 Linden Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091
USA
E-mail : bpt@ usbnc.org
Israel

Bah:i'i International Community,
Haifa Offices:
• Secretariat
• Office of Public Information
PO Box 155
31 001 Haifa

E-Mail : opi @bwc.org
Miscellaneous Addresses

Web: <www.bahai.org>

Association medicate baha'ie
c/o Mirabelle Weck
• United Nations Office
26 rue de Paris
• Office for the Advancement of
F-78560 Paris
Women
France

Baha'i International Community,
New York Offices:

• Office of the Environment
Bahaa Esperanto-Ligo (BEL)
Eppsteiner Strasse 89
D-65719 Hotheim
Germany

866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120
New York, NY 10017-1822, USA
E-Mail : bic-nyc @bic.org

E-Mail : bahaaeligo@ bahai.de
Baha'i Association for the Arts
Dintel 20
7333 MC
Apeldoorn
Netherlands

Web: <www.onecountry.org> and
<www.bic-un.bahai.org>
Baha'i International Community,
Geneva Office:
• United Nations Office
Route des Morillons 15
CH- 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva

E-Mail: abuys@wxs.nl

Switzerland

Web: <bahai-library.org/bafa> E-Mail: bic@geneva.bic.org

Baha'i International Community, Health for Humanity
Paris Office: 415 Linden Avenue, Suite B
•Office of Public Information Wilmette, IL 60091-2886
45 rue Pergolese USA
F-75116 Paris E-Mail: health@usbnc.org
France

E-Mail: opiparis@club-internet.fr International Environment Forum
c/o Sylvia Karlsson

Baha'i Justice Society Sigmund Freudstrasse 36
PO Box 79684 D-53127 Bonn
Houston, TX 77279 Germany
USA E-mail: ief@bccca.org
E-mail: Web: <www.bcca.org/ief>

info@bahaijusticesociety.org

Web : <www.bahaijustice.org>

Hong Kong Baha'i Professional
Forum

Baha'i Medical Association of C-6, J1 th Floor, Hankow Center
Canada Middle Road,
931 Beaufort Ave Tsim Sha Tsui
Halifax , Nova Scotia B3H 3X8 Kowloon
Canada Hong Kong

Baha'i Office of the Environment Landegg Academy
for Taiwan CH-9405 Wienacht/AR
149- ! 3 Hsin Sheng South Road

Switzerland

Section I , Taipei ! 0626

E-Mail: info@landegg.edu

Taiwan

Web: <www.landegg.edu>

E-Mail: tranboet@asiaonline.net.tw

Mottahedeh Development Services

European Baha'i Business Forum

Baha'i Unity Center

c/o George Starcher, Secretary

2370 Wesley Chapel Road

35 avenue Jean-Jaures

Decatur, GA 30035

F-73000 Chambéry

USA

France

E-Mail: mdssed@msn.com

E-Mail: ebbf@ebbf.org

Web: <www.mdssed.org>

Web: <www.ebbf.org>

European Baha'i Youth Council World Community Foundation
45 rue Pergolèse 315 West 70th Street
F- 75116 Paris, France Suite 14C
E-Mail: secreteria@ebyc.org New York, NY 10023
Web: <new.ebyc.org> USA

Selected NEW
PUBLICATIONS

Amatu'l-Baha Visits India

Violette Nabsjavani. New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2000. 203 pp.
Recounts Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Baha's first tour of the Indian subcontinent, which covered more than fifty-five thousand miles over seven months. The author, who traveled with Amatu'l-Baha, draws from her daily diary records as well as from taped recordings of speeches to examine the methods Amatu'l-Baha used to teach the Baha'i Faith and studies her simplicity, sincerity, and devotion to the Faith.

Century of Light

Prepared under the supervision of the Universal House of Justice.
Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2001. 157 pp.
An examination of the twentieth century from the vantage point of the turbulence of society and the simultaneous process of the emergence of the Baha'i Faith from obscurity. Of the book, the Universal House of Justice wrote, "We commend it to the thoughtful study of the friends, in the confidence that the perspective it opens up will prove both spiritually enriching and of practical help in sharing with others the challenging implications of the Revelation brought by Baha'u'llah."

THE BAHAI WORLD

Child of the Covenant: A Study Guide to the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha

Adib Taherzadeh. Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 480 pp.
Provides a detailed and insightful study of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, a document which Shoghi Effendi described as the "charter of Baha'u'llah's New World Order." This book is a sequel to Mr. Taherzadeh's 1992 volume, *The Covenant of Baha'u'llah*.

Compilation of Compilations, Volume Three

Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Ingleside, New South Wales: Baha'i Publications Australia, 2000. 320 pp.
Compilation of 11 collections of Baha'i writings previously assembled by the Research Department on the subjects of agriculture, community functioning, cultural diversity, the importance of the arts, the national convention, promoting entry by troops, the sanctity and nature of Baha'i elections, Baha'i scholarship, services in Baha'i houses of worship, socioeconomic development, and teaching indigenous peoples.

Door of Hope: The Baha'i Faith in the Holy Land

David S Ruhe. 2d rev. ed. Oxford: George Ronald, 2001. 246 pp.

Definitive guide to the history and pilgrimage sites of the Baha'i Faith in Israel. The book offers a study of the geography, archaeology, and history of all that relates to the Baha'i Faith in the Holy Land.

Her Eternal Crown

Della L Marcus. Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 319 pp.

Recounts the relationship between the first monarch to accept the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the religion she embraced. The author draws on Queen Marie's own letters and diary entries, and the letters and articles of her friend, Hand of the Cause of God Martha Root. The book provides a unique glimpse into the life of Queen Marie and her struggle to proclaim the new religion.

I Beheld a Maiden: The Baha'i Faith and the Life of the Spirit

Terry Culhane. Los Angeles: Kalim Press, 2000. 157 pp.

Proposes a reading of the body of Baha'u'llah's writings as a conversation between a Jover (Baha'u'llah) and His Beloved (the Maiden). The book offers an examination of Baha'i mystical writings and shares insights from the author's own spiritual journey.

The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting

Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2000. 30 pp.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Selection of newly translated extracts and prayers from the Baha'i writings regarding obligatory prayer and fasting, to which Baha'u'llah refers collectively as the "sun and moon" of religion.

The Institution of the Counsellors

Prepared by the Universal House of Justice. Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 2001. 47 pp.

Outlines and explains the functions and responsibility of an institution of the Baha'i administrative order comprising eminent and devoted Baha'is appointed by the Universal House of Justice for the specific purpose of protecting and propagating the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Islam and the Baha'i Faith: An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith for Muslims

Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 293 pp.

Introduces the Baha'i Faith from the perspective of Muslim theology. The author uses the authoritative Sunni collection of Traditions and draws on Islamic prophecies to explain the significance of the Baha'i Faith. He describes the Baha'i view of the Prophet Muhammad and of Islam, the spiritual and ethical teachings of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'i spirituality, and Baha'i law, social teachings, and community life, and provides a brief history of the Baha'i Faith.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas

Baha'u'llah.

New Delhi: Rakmo Press, 2000.

Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2000.

Budapest: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2001.

The Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book, is Baha'u'llah's charter for a new world civilization. Written in Arabic circa 1873, these are the volume's first authorized Oriya, Arabic, and Hungarian editions.

Learn Well This Tablet

H Richard Gurinsky. Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 327 pp.

Offers a line-by-line study of the text of the Tablet of Ahmad, revealed by Baha'u'llah during His exile in Adrianople and identified by Shoghi Effendi as being invested with a "special potency and significance." The book seeks to increase understanding and appreciation of the historical context of the prayer's revelation, as well as its significance and importance in life today. It also contains a biographical sketch of Mirza Ahmad Yazdi, to whom the Tablet was addressed.

Life, On the Fence

Marvin "Doc" Holladay. Oxford: George Ronald, 2000. 258 pp.

An autobiographical telling of an insider's view of the world of jazz and its origins, alongside the author's discovery of the Baha'i Faith. The book details the author's life and his struggles with art and spirituality, and his struggle with racism as a white musician in a predominantly black musical world.

Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Baha'u'llah

Nader Saiedi. Bethesda, Maryland: University of Maryland Press, 2000. 404 pp.

A systematic exposition of major themes to be found in the principal writings of Baha'u'llah. The author outlines three successive stages of Baha'u'llah's writings, which collectively laid the foundation for His ethics and mysticism, followed by theology and hermeneutics and then the laws of personal and social conduct, as well as the structure of a new administrative order.

Mahatma Gandhi and the Baha'is: Striving Toward a Non-Violent Civilization

MV Gandhimohan. New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2000. 212 pp.

Introduces a vision of a nonviolent civilization as described both in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and those of the Baha'i Faith. Questioning mainstream political, economic, social, and religious notions of success, the book's analysis paints an optimistic future of an ever-advancing civilization that cultivates unity in diversity.

The Priceless Pearl

Ru~iyyih Rabbani. 2nd ed. Oakham, United Kingdom: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 2000. 484 pp.

A biography of Shoghi Effendi, great-grandson of Baha'u'llah and

Guardian of the Baha' i Faith from 1921 until his death in 1957, written by his widow, Amatu ' l-Baha RuJ:iyyih Khanum.

Racial Healing: The Institutes for the Healing of Racism

Reginald Newkirk and Nathan Rutstein. Albion, Michigan: National Resource Center for the Healing of Racism, 2000. 201 pp.

Story of the grassroots movement of Institutes for the Healing of Racism throughout North America, a spiritually-based, nonconfrontational process by which to heal human hearts of racism. This book offers readers a standard text that sets forth the philosophy, psychology, and format of the Institutes and shares the personal accounts of the authors as they journey along the path to healing.

NE W P UBLICATIONS

Re-thinking, Re-visioning, Re-placing

Theo Cope. Oxford: George Ronald, 2001. 322 pp.

Presents two works, "Heart Thoughts" and "A Place for a Psychological Philosophy," which attempt to rethink some ideas of Western philosophy and metaphysics. The book examines the teachings of Swiss psychiatrist CG Jung in light of the teachings of the Baha ' i Faith and challenges Jung ' s followers to examine the spiritual dimension of existence.

Solitude & Solidarity: The Artist and the Baha'i Community

Michael Fitzgerald. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2000. 121 pp.

Explores the relationship between art and spirituality through a collection of essays on the role of the Baha'i artist. The author discusses his craft, the inner life of the artist, current events, and the spirit of the age.

A Tribute to Amatu'l-Baha Ru~iyyih Khanum

Violette Nakhjavani. Nepean, Ontario: Nine Pines Publishing, 2000.

86 pp.

A biography of Hand of the Cause of God Amatu ' l-Baha Ru~iyyih Khanum . The author, a close friend and traveling companion to Amatu'l-Baha for 40 years, offers a succinct and compelling memoir of one of the great women of the Baha ' i Faith. The story elucidates events of Amatu ' l-Baha ' s life, from her early childhood and youth in Canada and Europe, through her years of marriage to Shoghi Effendi in the Holy Land, to her final travels and last decades of service.

A Basic BAHA'I

READING List

The following list has been prepared to provide a sampling of works conveying the spiritual truths, social principles, and history of the Bahci ' 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 (Book of Certitude)

The Book of Certitude was written prior to Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission as an explanation of progressive revelation and a proof of the station of the Bab.

The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah

Written in the form of a compilation of moral aphorisms, these brief verses distill the spiritual guidance of all the divine Revelations of the past.

Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas

A compilation of Tablets revealed between 1873 and 1892 which enunciate important principles of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, reaffirm truths He previously proclaimed, elaborate on some of His laws, reveal further prophecies, and establish subsidiary ordinances to supplement the provisions of the Kitab-i-Aqdas.

Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah

A selection of Baha'u'llah's sacred writings translated and compiled by the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to convey the spirit of Baha'u'llah's life and teachings.

WRITINGS OF THE BAB

Selections from the Writings of the Bab

The first compilation of the Bab's writings to be translated into English.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911- 1912

Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha to a wide variety of audiences in Paris in 1911 -

1912, explaining the basic principles of the Baha'i Faith.

The Secret of Divine Civilization

A message addressed to the rulers and people of Persia in 1875 illuminating the causes of the fall and rise of civilization and elucidating the spiritual character of true civilization.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha

A compilation of selected letters from 'Abdu'l-Baha's extensive correspondence

on a wide variety of topics, including the purpose of life, the nature of love, and

the development of character.

Some Answered Questions

A translation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's answers to a series of questions posed to Him during interviews with Laura Clifford Barney between 1904 and 1906. The topics covered include the influence of the Prophets on the evolution of humanity, the Baha'i perspective on Christian doctrine, and the powers and conditions of the Manifestations of God.

SELECTED WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

God Passes By

A detailed history of the first one hundred years of the Baha'i Faith.

The Promised Day Is Come

A commentary on Baha'u'llah's letters to the kings and rulers of the world.

The World Order of Baha'u'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, 1980.
The first comprehensive account of the Baha'i Faith, written in 1923 and updated for subsequent editions.

The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion

William S Hatcher and J Douglas 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 Ferraby. 2d rev. ed. London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987.
A comprehensive outline of the Baha'i Faith.

Most of the books listed above have been published by various Baha'i Publishing Trusts and are available in bookshops, libraries, or from the Trusts. Please see the Directory for addresses.

GLOSSARY

'Abdu'l-Bahá: (1844-1921) Son of Baha'u'llah, designated His successor and authorized interpreter of His writings. Named 'Abbas after His grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Baha was known to the general public as 'Abbas Effendi. Baha'u'llah gave Him such titles as "the Most Great Branch," "the Mystery of God," and "the Master." After Baha'u'llah's passing, He chose the name 'Abdu'l-Baha, meaning "Servant of Baha'u'llah."

Administrative Order: The system of administration as conceived by Baha'u'llah, formally established by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and realized during the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi. It consists, on the one hand, of a series of elected councils, universal, national, and local, in which are invested legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the Baha'i community, and, on the other hand, of eminent and devoted Baha'is appointed for the specific purposes of propagation and protection of the Faith under the guidance of the Head of that Faith, the Universal House of Justice.

Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum: (1910-2000) Mary Sutherland Maxwell, an eminent North American Baha'i who became the wife of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, in 1937, after which she became known as Ruhiiyyih Khanum Rabbani. (Amatu'l-Baha is a title meaning "Handmaiden of Baha'u'llah.") She served as the Guardian's secretary during his lifetime and was appointed a Hand of the Cause of God in 1952. After Shoghi Effendi's passing in 1957 she traveled extensively to teach the Baha'i Faith, consolidate Baha'i communities, and serve as a representative of the Universal House of Justice at major events.

Arc: An arc cut into Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, along which the international administrative buildings of the Baha'i Faith have been 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.

GLOSSARY

Baha'i World Centre: The spiritual and administrative center of the Baha'i Faith, comprising the holy places in the Haifa-Acre area and the Arc of administrative buildings on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.

Baha'u'llah: Title assumed by Mirza J:lusayn- '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 40 years of imprisonment, banishment, and house arrest. Baha'u'llah's writings are considered by Baha'is to be direct revelation from God.

Bahji: Arabic for "delight." Located near Acre, it is a place of pilgrimage for Baha'is which comprises the Shrine of Baha'u'llah, the mansion which was His last residence, and the surrounding gardens that serve to beautify the site.

Calendar, Baha'i: Year consisting of nineteen months of nineteen days each, with the addition of certain "intercalary days" (four in ordinary and five in leap years) between the eighteenth and nineteenth months in order to adjust the calendar to the solar year. The Baha'i new year is astronomically fixed, commencing at the vernal equinox (21 March). The Baha'i era (BE) begins with the year of the Bab's declaration (1844 CE).

Consultation: A form of discussion between individuals and within groups which requires the subjugation of egotism so that all ideas can be shared and evaluated with frankness, courtesy, and openness of mind, and decisions arrived at can be wholeheartedly supported. Its guiding principles were elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Continental Boards of Counsellors: An institution created in 1968 by the Universal House of Justice to extend into the future the work of the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, particularly its appointed functions of protection and propagation. With the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, there was no way for additional Hands of the Cause to be appointed. The duties of the Counsellors include directing the Auxiliary Boards in their respective areas, advising and collaborating with National Spiritual Assemblies, and keeping the Universal House of Justice informed concerning the conditions of the Faith in their areas. Counsellors are appointed for terms of five years.

Convention: A gathering called at a regional, national, or international level for consultation on matters affecting the welfare of the Baha'i community and for the purpose, respectively, of electing delegates to a National Convention, electing members of a National Spiritual Assembly, or electing members of the Universal House of Justice.

Hands of the Cause of God: Individuals appointed by Baha'u'llah, and later by Shoghi Effendi, who were charged with the specific duties of protecting and propagating the Faith. (Four individuals were recognized posthumously as Hands of the Cause by 'Abdu'l-Baha.) With the passing of Shoghi Effendi there was no further possibility for appointing Hands of the Cause; hence, in order to extend into the future the important functions of propagation and protection, the Universal House of Justice in 1968 created Continental Boards of Counsellors and in 1973 established the International Teaching Centre, which coordinates their work.

Holy Days: Eleven days commemorating significant Baha'i anniversaries, on nine of which work is suspended.

I:luququ'llah: Arabic for "the Right of God." As instituted in the Kitabi-Aqdas, payment to "the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn" (at present, the Universal House of Justice) of 19 percent of what remains to one's personal income after one's essential expenses have been covered. Funds generated by the payment of I:luququ'llah are used for the promotion of the Faith and for the welfare of society.

International Teaching Centre: An institution established in 1973 by the Universal House of Justice to bring to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause of God in the Holy Land and to provide for its extension into the future. The duties of the International Teaching Centre include coordinating, stimulating, and directing the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and acting as liaison between them and the Universal House of Justice. The membership of the Teaching Centre comprises 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 Bah:i'u'll:ih: Title initially given by Shoghi Effendi to those

GLOSSARY

Baha'is who arose to open specified new territories to the Faith during the first year of the Ten Year Crusade (1953- 1963) and subsequently applied to those who first reached the remaining unopened territories on the list at a later date.

Lesser Peace: A political peace to be established by the nations of the world in order to bring about an end to war. Its establishment will prepare the way for the Most Great Peace, a condition of permanent peace and world unity to be founded on the spiritual principles and institutions of the World Order of Baha'u'llah and signaling humanity's coming of age.

Local Spiritual Assembly: The local administrative body in the Baha' i Faith, ordained in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The nine members are directly 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 the wife of Baha'u 'llah, His son who died in prison in Acre, and the wife of ' Abdu'l-Baha.

Mount Carmel: The mountain spoken of by Isaiah as the " mountain of the Lord." Site of the Baha'i World Centre including several Baha'i holy places, the most important of which are the Shrine of the Bab and the Monument Gardens.

National Spiritual Assembly: The national administrative body in the Baha ' i Faith, ordained in the Baha ' i sacred writings, with authority over all activities and affairs of the Baha'i Faith throughout its area. Among its duties are to stimulate, unify, and coordinate the manifold activities of Local Spiritual Assemblies and of individual Baha'is within its jurisdiction. The members of National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world constitute the electoral college for the Universal House of Justice. At Ric;lvan 2000, there were 182 National or Regional Spiritual Assemblies. See also Regional Spiritual Assembly .

Nineteen Day Feast: The principal gathering in each local Baha'i community, every Baha'i month, for the threefold purpose of worship, consultation, and fellowship.

Pioneer: Any Baha'i who arises and leaves his or her home to journey to another country for the purpose of teaching the Baha'i Faith. "Homefront pioneer" describes those who move to areas within their own country that have yet to be exposed to the Baha' i Faith or where

the Baha'i community needs strengthening.

Regional Baha'i Council: An element of Baha'i administration between the local and national levels, established at the discretion of the Universal House of Justice in countries where the condition and size of the Baha'i community warrant. A means of decentralizing the work of the National Spiritual Assembly, a Regional Council may be formed either by election or by appointment, depending on local requirements and the condition of the Baha'i community. It provides for a level of autonomous decision making on both teaching and administrative matters. In some countries, State Baha'i Councils perform these tasks within specific civic jurisdictions.

Regional Spiritual Assembly: An institution identical in function to the National Spiritual Assembly but including a number of countries or regions in its jurisdiction, often established as a precursor to the formation of a National Spiritual Assembly in each of the countries it encompasses.

Ri~van: Arabic for "Paradise." 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 Ri9van 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.

State Baha'i Council: See Regional Baha'i Council.

Tablet: Divinely revealed scripture. In Baha'i scripture, the term is used

GLOSSARY

to denote writings revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Ten Year Crusade: (1953- 1963) Ten Year Plan initiated by Shoghi Effendi for teaching the Baha'i Faith, which culminated with the election of the Universal House of Justice during the centenary of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah. The objectives of the Crusade were the development of the institutions at the World Centre, the consolidation of the communities of the participating National Spiritual Assemblies, and the opening of the main unopened territories. See

also Knight of Baha 'u 'llah.

Universal House of Justice: Head of the Baha'i Faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, and the supreme administrative body ordained by Baha'u ' llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, His book of laws. The Universal House of Justice is elected every five years by the members of all National Spiritual Assemblies, who gather at an International Convention. The House of Justice was elected for the first time in 1963.

It occupied its permanent seat on Mount Carmel in 1983.

Some entries adapted from A Basic Baha'i Dictionary, Wendi Momen, ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1989).

I N D E X

- A
Antenne Lumiere 59
'Abdu'l-Baha 9- 12, 109, 268, 275 , Arbab Correa, Hal eh l 00
299, 301 , 303 , 304 Arc 32, 300, 303 See also Baha'i
passing of 304 World Centre
Will and Testament of 304 Archbishop of Canterbury 124
writings and utterances of 25- 30, Area Growth Programs 83
50, 66, 74, 83 , 147, 153- 54, Argentina 80, 28 l, 283
158, 159, 182, 184- 86, 189- 90, arts 55, 62- 66
213- 14, 215- 16, 223 , 229- 30, Arturo, Lawrence 89, 91
249,296 Associations for Baha'i Studies 281 -
Adams, Mohamed 51 83
Adelman, Howard 177 Association for World Education 141
advancement of women 33, 50- 53, Association medicale baha'ie 286
117, 120, 122- 24, 219- 27, 249- Atkinson, Robert 145
52 Aum Shinri Kyo 204
Advancement of Women: A Baha'i Australia 59, 62, 63 , 64, 127, 133 ,
Perspective 52 137, 140, 281 , 283
Afnan, Elham 175 Australian Agency for International
Agenda 21 71 , 229, 230, 231 , 232 Development (AusAID) 58
Ahderom, Techeste 88, 92- 93, 243 Australian High Commission 221
Aiff, Martin 267 Australia, National Gallery of 63
Ajami, Fouad 206 Austria 120, 127, 269
'Ala'i , Diane 89 Auxiliary Boards 41-47, 111, 198,
Ala ' i, Najmieh 268 300
Albright, Madeleine 135 conference of 38 , 41-47
Ali Khan, Ustad Amjad 97
Ali , Muhammad Ashraf 77 B
All India Radio 68 Bab, the 8, 11, 72, 112, 175 , 182,
All Party Parliamentary Friends of 188, 300, 304
the Baha ' is 134 Shrine of II, 108, 109, 111- 13 ,
Alliance of Religions and Conserva- 127, 177, 181- 82, 187- 88, 268,
tion (ARC) 185, 231, 239 303 , 304
Always Be Tolerant Organization Terraces of the Shrine of 32, 110-
(ABETO) 70 14, 175- 90

Baha' i Justice Society 287 Boyd, Russell 65
 Baha'i Medical Association of Boyles, Ann 201
 Canada 287 Braithwaite, Helena 65
 Baha' i Office of the Environment for Brazil 60, 61 , 74, 125, 140,269,
 Taiwan 287 274,281,283
 Baha' i Publishing Trusts 283- 86 Peace Monument in 74, 125
 Baha ' i World Centre I0, 11, 32, 41 - Bremer, Paul 205 , 207, 210
 47, 109- 14, 268, 271 , 274, Brown, Joanne Marie Salas 53

I NDEX

Bulgaria 128 Constantinescu, Fori 61
 Burkina Faso 82 Continental Counsellors 37- 38, 41 -
 47, 111 , 195, 197- 99,300,301
 c conference of 38, 46-47
 Calendar, Baha'i 30 I Conventions, Baha ' i 302
 Cambodia 57, 172 Copithome, Maurice 138, 140, 255
 Cameroon 60, 274, 281, 284 Cote d'Ivoire 67, 270, 284
 Canada 54-55 , 59, 79, 107, 127, culture
 137, 140, 197, 268, 276, 282 conservatism and dynamism in
 Canadian High Commission 221 145- 73
 Canadian International Development evolution of 154- 60
 Agency (CIDA) 98, 221 globalization of 149, 152
 Canary Islands 76 historical development of 149
 Caribbean islands 80 ritual in 150
 Centre for the Study of the Texts role of religion in 166-67, 170
 109, 110, 189 Czech Republic 127
 Century of Light 35, 133, 148, 169,
 212,214,216,289 D
 Chad 59 Danesh, Hossain I 04, I 05, I 07
 Chair for Baha ' i Studies I 03, 105 Darwin, Charles 160
 Chihriq 112 Dawn-Breakers, The 11
 Children 's Theater Company 64 Dawson, Patrick 66
 Chile 79, 80, 120, 127, 281 de Araujo, Victor 269- 70
 China 127, 204 de Vila, Tito Hoz 72
 Clinton, William 135 Denmark 107
 Clinton, Hillary 64 Dhabi~i-Muqaddam , Sirus 138
 CNN 72 Dominica 68
 Codification of the law of Dominican Republic 79
 Huququ 'lfah, A 35 Dorzhieva, Oxanna 57
 Collins, William 76 Drake, CJM 202
 Colloquium on Science, Religion, Dugal-Gujral, Bani 91, 97
 and Development 95- 100
 Colombia 7, 81, 98, I 00, 172, 192, E
 281 Earth Charter 125
 Commitment to Global Peace Earth Summit see United Nations,
 See Millennium World Peace Conference for Environment
 Summit of Religious and and Development

Spiritual Leaders, Declaration Ecuador 79,80, 196-97,282
 of education 55, 59- 62, 80, 81
 community development 74-78 Education for Peace project 172
 Congo, Democratic Republic of 42, Education for Justice Project 60
 84-85, 192 Egypt 121,257,270,273
 Congo Republic 85 situation of the Baha' i community
 Constantinescu, Emil 61 in 121, 138, 257-60

 Eiyo, Judith 70 187- 88
 El Salvador 79- 80 as a model for development 188-
 Encyclopedia Britannica 8 90
 environment 185- 87, 224 as images of paradise 176- 78
 Equal Wings program 50- 52 Garden of Eden 176- 78
 Erikson, Erik 165- 66 Gethsemane 178
 concept of identity 165 hanging gardens of Babylon
 Eritrea 272 177
 Esfahani, Habib 270 as represented in the Baha'i
 Eshetu, Fisseha 61 - 62 writings 182, 187- 88, 189- 90
 ethic, global 168 as utopia 178- 81
 Ethiopia 7, 51, 61 , 120, 127, 272 beauty of 184-85
 European Baha'i Business Forum influence on city planning 179- 81
 72, 125, 287 Gates, Rose 270
 European Baha' i Youth Council 72, Georgia, Republic of 127
 125,287 German Templar Colony 188
 European Public Information Germany 71 , 127, 134, 267, 269,
 Bulletin 128 271 , 282, 284
 European Public Information Ghana 52, 275,282
 Management Seminar 128 glossary of Baha' i terms 299- 304
 European Union 128, 134 God Passes By 11
 Expo 2000 71 Golden Age See Baha' i Faith, Ages
 of
 F
 Greenspan, Louis 177
 Fernandez-Scarberry, Arthur 54
 Grimsson, Olafur Ragnar 73
 fifth epoch See Baha'i Faith, ages of
 Guadeloupe 268
 Fiji 63 , 80, 284
 Guam 52
 Finland 271
 Guam, University of 53
 Five Year Plan 37, 46, 195
 Guardian of the Baha' i Faith
 Flores, Jayne 53
 See Shoghi Effendi
 Formative Age See Baha'i Faith,
 Guardianship 12

ages of
Gudmundsson, Vilhjalmur 73
Foundation for the Application and
Guyana 79
Teaching of the Sciences
(FUNDAEC) 100, 172

H
Four Year Plan 31- 34, 38, 195, 198
Habitat II 87, 230
Fozdar, John 75
Haghighi , Kiumars 106
France 126, 271
Hague Appeal for Peace 245
furutan , ' Ali-Akbar See Hands of
Haifa Tourist Board 114, 127
the Cause of God
Haines, Alice 65

G
gardens
and ecology 185- 87
and mystical experience 181 - 83,
Hamadani , SM Waris 76
Hands of the Cause of God 12, 44,
300, 301 , 302
Amatu ' l-Baha Ruljiyyih Khanum

I N D E X

274,299
Furutan, 'A li-Akbar 45 , 46, 111
Muhajir, RaJ:imatu ' llah 220
Mulschlegel, Adelbert 269
Olinga, Enoch 274
Robarts, John 272
Varqa, 'Ali-MuJ:iammad 44, 111
Happy Hippo Show, Th e 33, 78 See
also Royaumont Process
Harald V, King (of Norway) 68
Hawaiian Islands 78, 80, 282
Health for Humanity 287
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the
103- 05
Helen Maxwell Gallery 63
Historic Age See Baha'i Faith, ages
of
Honduras 61
Hong Kong 284
Hong Kong Baha'i Professional
Forum 287
Hope for the Heart literacy project
172
Houses of Worship, Baha' i 15
Prosperity 95, 96, 98, I O I, 129
Institution of the Counsellors, The
35
International Advisory Council of
Religious and Spiritual Leaders
239-40
International Association for Reli-
gious Freedom 141
International Baha'i Archives 11,
109, 189, 268
International Baha'i Library Web site
11 7
International Bill of Human Rights
133
International Conference on Modern
Religions I 03- 07
International Day for the Elimination
of Racial Discrimination 173 ,
261
International Day of Prayer for
World Peace 67- 68
International Day of the World's
Indigenous People 54
International Environment Forum

in India 73- 74, 96, 97 287
 in Panama 68 International Monetary Fund 124,
 Howard, Ebenezer 180 169,246
 human rights 11 7, 120- 22, 125 International Teaching Centre 35,
 Human Rights Education Newsletter 37- 38,41,44,3 02
 122 building 40, 110-1 I, 189
 Hungary 127 inauguration of 37, 41 -47, 111
 tiuququ'llah 269, 302 International Women's Day 51, 52,
 Huxley, Aldous 179 224
 International Year of the Family 60
 interreligious dialogue 34, 66-70,
 Iceland 73
 103- 07
 importance of Obligatory Prayer and
 Iran 33, 12 I, I 82, 188, 253, 268,
 Fasting, The 35
 269,271,274
 India 56,68, 70, 73- 74,96,97,98,
 situation of the Baha'i community
 127, 172, 197, 204, 219- 27 ,
 in I7, 33, 121 , 131-4I , 253- 56
 282, 284
 Iraq 271
 indigenous peoples 53- 55, 6 I, 84
 Ireland 66, 67, 127, 13 7, 140
 Indonesia 60 Israel I07 , 126, 127, 207, 268
 Institute for Studies in Global Israel Postal Authority 114
 Italy 77, 120, 121, 127, 128, 272, Laszlo, Ervin 167
 284 Latvia 127
 Lebanon 271, 284
 J Letters of the Living 182
 Japan 204,282, 284 Levy, Sandra 65
 Javid, Shahin 73 Library of Congress 76
 Jihad vs. Mc World 152 Lincoln, Albert 90, 235
 Johnson , Kirk 53 Local Spiritual Assembly See
 Johnston, Janice 66 Spiritual Assembly, Local
 Jordan 64 Ludher, Lee Lee Loh 52, 81
 Jung, CG 155, 163- 65 Luff, Peter 134
 archetypes 155 Luxembourg 271
 Lyons, Susan 55
 K
 Kallingal, George 53 M
 Kamien, Anita 106 Macedonia 78
 Kapoor, Vijai 96 Magidor, Menachem I 04-05
 Kashifi-Najafabadi, Hidayat 138 Mah-Ku 112, 175, 188
 Kazakhstan 61 Malawi 61

Kenya 52, 71, 120,274,282, 284 Malaysia 50, 52, 75 , 282, 284
Khadem , Mojgan 64-65 Maneck,Susan 105
Khatami , Mohammad 134 Manifestations of God 8- 10, 13
Khulusi , Manuchihr 131 - 32, 138 Mariana Islands 80
King David String Ensemble, the Marshall Islands 80
106 Marshall, Katherine 97, 97- 98
Kiribati 44, 80 Martel , Pat 55
Kitab-i-Aqdas 14, 33 , 76, 76- 78, Matembe, Miria 70
302, 303, 304 Mauritius 67
Kitab-i-iqan 269 Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation
Knight of Baha'u ' llah 270, 275, 67
276, 302 McGilligan , James 226
Korea 284 McGilligan , Janak Palta 223 , 226
Kosovo 128 Mesbah, 'Abdu'llah 270- 71
Kouchner, Bernard 128 Millennium Assembly, Young
Krier, Leon 180 People's 245
Kung, Hans 134, 168 Millennium Dome 72
Millennium Forum ofNGOs See
L United Nations, Millennium
Lafe, Tiki 75 Forum ofNGOs
Lambden, Stephen 105 Millennium World Peace Summit of
Landegg Academy 104- 05, 172, Religious and Spiritual Leaders
271, 287 36- 37, 67, 87, 89- 91 , 125, 129,
Laos 81 212,232, 235
Laqueur, Walter 201 , 204 Millennium Summit of World

I N D E X

Leaders. See United Nations, 285
Millennium Summit of World Commission on Human Values 69
Leaders Norwegian Agency for Development
Mirza 'Ali-Mut:iammad Cooperation (NORAD) 74, 221
See the Bab Nur University 72
Mirza IJusayn-' Ali
See Baha'u'llah
Odemyr, Hans 271 - 72
Mongolia 84
Olmert, Ehud 104- 05
Monument Gardens 112, 303
One Country 117, 120, 128- 29
moral education 33, 35, 60, 61 , 194
Web site 117, 128
More, Thomas 179
Opik, Lembit 134
Utopia 179
Morgan, Denver 65- 66 p
Morocco 271 Pacific Daily News 53
Morris, William 179, 185 Pakistan 77, 79, 285

Mottahedeh Development Services Palmer, Martin 185
 221 , 287 Panama 68, 82, 127
 Mount Carmel 175 , 186, 30 I, 303 Pandeya, AN 66
 Baha'i projects on 109- 14 Paraguay 79, 80
 Murdoch, Simon 63 Parliament of the World's Religions
 168, 172, 231, 239
 N Payam-e-Doost 33
 Namdar, Fei zollah 271 peace 17
 Namibia 52, 127, 267 Lesser Peace 36, 303
 Na~iri'd-Din Shah 300 Perth Internationa l Arts Festival 64
 Na~irizadih , ' Ata'u'llah Hamid 138 Philippines 61, 282, 285
 National Spiritual Assembly See pioneer 303
 Spiritual Assembly, National Poe, Helen 76, 77
 Nasser, Gama! Abdel 257-- 58 Poland 285
 Nepal 98, 127 Portugal 285
 Netherlands 97, 284 Prince Philip, HRH the Duke of
 Netzer, Ammon 107 Edinburgh 239
 New Era Development Institute 172 Pring, Martin 65
 New Era Foundation 221 Promise of World Peace, The 17, 68,
 New Zealand 59, 63, 127, 268, 282 210, 237
 New Zealand Official Development Prosperity of Humankind, The 18,
 Assistance (NZODA) 58- 59 237, 239
 Nicobar Islands, see Andaman and Puerto Rico 283
 Nicobar Islands Puri, DN 66
 Niger 52, 285
 R
 Nigeria 127,283, 285
 race unity 53- 55, 261 - 64
 Nineteen Day Feast 303
 Radio Brakoss 59
 Noor, Queen (of Jordan) 64
 Ra ' fati, Vahid 105
 Norway 68- 70, 73 , 127, 134, 140,
 RAGA Radio 84

THE BAHAI WORLD

Regional Baha'i Council 37, 304 Sicily 77
 Regional Spiritual Assembly See Sierra Leone 7, 51
 Spiritual Assembly, Regional Simon Wiesenthal Center 140
 Ric;lvan 304 Singapore 127, 283
 Riqvan- the New Dawn Oratorio 65 Singh, Choudhary Randhir 68
 Robarts, Audrey 272 Slovenia 127
 Robiati, Augusto 272- 73 social and economic development
 Robinson, Mary 133, 261 33 , 56- 59, 117, 194, 219- 27
 Romania 61 , 128, 285 spiritual perspective in 95- 101 ,
 Roosta, Manijeh 72 229- 33
 Royaumont Process 61 , 78 , 128 statistics 279

RTCN 84
 Ruhi Institute 82, 192, 196, 197
 Russian Federation 7, 56, 83, 107,
 127, 271, 283, 285
 Rwanda 84
 Spain 76, 283, 285
 s
 Sabri, Hassan Abdel-Fattah 273
 Spiritual Assembly, Local 13, 195,
 Sahba, Fariborz 181
 Salas Brown, Joanne Marie 53
 Spiritual Assembly, National 12, 33,
 Samoa 58
 75, 121, 122, 303
 Samoan Nutrition Center 58
 Spiritual Assembly, Regional 13, 304
 Samoan Television Corporation 58
 Sri Lanka 69, 98
 Sant ' Elia, Antonio 180
 St. Lucia 268
 scholarship 77- 78
 State Baha' i Council 304
 religious I 03- 07
 Stolberg, Jens 73
 Schroeder, Gerhard 134
 Strandlie Thoresen, Britt 69
 sci ence and religion 99- 100
 study circles. See training institutes
 Seoul International Conference of
 Swaminathan, MS 100
 NGOs 245
 Sweden 107, 272, 285
 Senegal 270
 Swedish International Development
 Serenades 64- 65
 Authority (SIDA) 221
 Sesame Street 64
 Swindon Twelve to Eighteen
 Shah, Ramnik 73
 Program (STEP) 57
 Sharon, Moshe I 04, 105
 Switzerland 71 - 72, 104, 107, 120,
 Shieh, Thomas 53
 121, 125, 135, 172, 269, 270,
 Shoghi Effendi 10-11, 12, 109, 116,
 271, 282
 147, 156, 213, 268, 275, 299,

300, 301 , 302, 304 T
 writings of 16, 115 , 152, 158, J60, Tablet 304
 170, 183, 187- 88, 189, 216- 17, Tablets of the Divine Plan 10
 297 Ta'i, Benham 97
 Shpakovskaya, Agata 75 Taiwan 285

I N D E X

Taj Mahal 73	Conference on Environment and
Tanyi, David 274	Development (Earth Summit)
Tanzania 52, 129, 273	74, 87, 125, 229, 231, 245
Ten Year Crusade (1953- 1963) 302,	Conference of Non-Governmental
305 See also Knight of	Organizations (CONGO) 245
Baha'u'llah	Conference on the State of the
terrorism 201 - 17	World's Children 64
and Islamic fundamentalism 206-	Convention on the Elim ination of
07	Discrimination Against Women
causes of 203- 04, 208	(CEDAW) 124, 126
history and development of 204-	Decade for Human Rights
08	Education 120, 12 1- 22
response to 209- 12	fiftieth anniversary of 18
role of religion in combating 213-	Geneva 2000 Summit for Social
14, 215- 17	Development 72
Thailand 68, 107, 120	Human Rights Committee 126,
Theatrical Youth of Macedonia 78	257, 259- 260
Toki , Leba 63- 64	International Labour
Organization	(ILO) 135
Togo 275	International Year for the
Tonga 78	Culture
training institutes 81- 82, 192- 99	of Peace 122
Tranquility Zones 58, 73, 198	International Year of Peace 15
Trinidad and Tobago 283	Millennium Forum ofNGOs 34,
Turning Point.for All Nations 18	36- 37, 87, 88- 89, 92, 125,
129,	
Tuvalu 80	212, 243--47
Declaration of 88, 92, 244,	
u	245--46
Uganda 51 , 52, 70, 273 , 286	Millennium Summit of World
Ukraine 82, 126- 27	Leaders 36--37, 87, 91 - 93
, 125 ,	
Unidad de Los Pueblos school 55	129,212
United Kingdom 57- 58, 66, 73 ,	Declaration of 91
107, 125 , 126, 127, 134, 172,	presentation of the Millennium
180, 198, 269, 273, 282, 286	Forum to 243--47
United Nations 15- 16, 54, 60, 67,	United Nations Children's Fund
70- 71 , 87- 93, 119- 25, 137--40,	(UNICEF) 58, 64, 79, 98, 120,
243 , 245--46, 250, 257, 269	123- 24, I 26, 128, 221, 240

Commission on Human Rights 134, 138, 139--40, 253
 Commission on the Status of Women 123, 126, 249
 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 126
 Committee on the Rights of the Child 126, 139
 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 98, 100, 167, 214, 240
 United Nations Environment Program 226
 World Conference against Racism 54, 121, 133, 255
 World Conference on Human Rights 87
 World Conference on Religion and Peace 123
 World Conference on Women 87
 World Health Assembly 126
 World Health Organization (WHO) 98, 120, 126
 World Summit for Social Development 18, 87, 124
 World Summit on Sustainable Development 229
 United States 53, 54, 59, 64-65, 76, 107, 120, 127, 129, 135, 207, 269, 275, 286
 Commission on Religious Freedom 135
 Federal Bureau of Investigation 202
 National Commission on Terrorism 205, 209
 unity 245
 Baha'i vision of 169-70
 in diversity 158-60
 Unity College 62
 Universal House of Justice 8, 12, 31, 41, 46, 47, 79, 83, 111, 195-96, 220, 301, 302, 305
 United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) 98, 120, 124, 125
 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 98, 240
 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 120, 126, 214
 v
 Yahedi, Farida 96
 Vajdi, Tahirih K 220, 226
 Vanuatu 195
 Varqa, 'Ali-Muhammad See Hands of the Cause of God
 Varqa Foundation 79
 Venezuela 61, 283
 Virtues Project 59-60
 Vishina Niketan Peace Center 69
 w
 Wales, National Chamber Orchestra of 65
 "Wanita 2000" 50, 52
 War on Want 22 I
 Waradi, Akuila 63
 Warren, Lally 52
 Weinberg, Matthew 96, 100-01
 White, Robin 63
 Wh o ls Writing the Future? 18, 33
 Wilkinson, Paul 202, 203
 Winckler, Bahiyih Randall 274-75
 Women and the Peace Process 52
 World Bank 97, 98, 124, 169, 240, 246
 World Development Report 2001 2001 124
 World Citizenship 122
 World Civil Society Conference
 World Community Foundation 221, 287
 World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) 97, 124, 231, 237, 239
 World Food Day 58

election of 303, 304 World Summit of Young
 Entremessages of 31 - 38, 44, 48, 93 , neurs 61
 167, 194, 195,210- 13 World Trade Organization 246
 Research Department of 271 World Wide Web 115- 18, 127
 Seat of 109, 189 Wright, Robert 148--49, 155, 159,
 Uruguay 68, 80 170- 71

JN DEX

Nonzero: Th e Logic of Human Youth Can Move the World project
 Destiny 148 79
 Wundt, Wilhelm 161- 65 Youth Leadership Project for the
 stages of mankind 162 Common Good 80
 Yugoslavi a 127
 y
 Young Lions social project 56--57 z
 Young, Aden 65 Zakovitch, Yair I 05
 youth 52, 54, 56- 58, 77, 78- 81, Zaire see Congo, Democratic
 196, 198 Republic of
 Baha ' i Youth Movement 79-80 Zambia 52, 283
 conferences 79, 79- 81 "zero-sum" and "non-zero-sum"
 International Youth Congresses games 148--49
 79- 80 Zimbabwe 52, 61
 workshops 78 Zinky, Kay 275

In just over one hundred years, the Baha'i Faith has grown from an obscure movement in the Middle East to the second-most widespread of the independent world religions. Embracing people from more than 2, 100 ethnic, racial, and tribal groups, it is quite likely the most diverse organized body of people on the planet today. Its unity challenges prevailing theory about human nature and the prospects for our common future.

The Faith's central message is that of unity. Its Founder, Baha'u' Ilah, teaches that there is only one God, that there is only one human race, and that all the world's religions have been stages in the revelation of God's purpose for humankind. Today, humanity has collectively come of age: "The earth is but one country," Baha'u'llah asserts, "and mankind its citizens." The emergence of the Baha' i community offers persuasive evidence that the human race, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work as a single people in its planetary homeland.

The Baha'i World is the principal public record of the community's growth and development. The volumes reproduce major documents and provide statistical data and other infonnation on the Baha'i Faith's wide-ranging program of activities, which are illustrated by many photographs and charts. In-depth articles focus on major areas of Baha'i concern.

For the serious researcher and the general student alike, the

dramatic growth of the Baha'i Faith raises new and interesting questions about the role of religion in social development. The Baha'i World is designed primarily to help answer these questions.

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