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 LARGE PRINT / Standard Print.**Book Review**

Book Reviews

THE MAJORITY OF Bahá'ís in this part of the world are still first-generation converts from a Christian background. Even if they were not particularly involved in that religion they will have been immersed in its culture to an extent they may not have realised. Whether they knew it or not they will have experienced a tension present in many faiths but one which seems to have reached a particularly acute state in modern Western Christianity: how to balance the religious duty of the individual to himself or herself with the needs of the wider society. To put it another way, is faith simply a matter of individual belief and salvation or does it have vital social elements and if so what are they? The Christian difficulty is amply demonstrated by the way that sincere followers of Jesus are to be found right across the political spectrum, secure in their conviction that their social and political views are what their faith teaches them.

Such tensions are to be found to a greater or lesser extent in all faiths. Even those which place such a high value on individual enlightenment, such as Buddhism, still require their followers to live in this world, while others that set out a detailed code of conduct as part of the religion such as Judaism and Islam have given rise to many schools of thought and action, a sure sign that there is no absolute consensus.

In this as in other matters the Bahá'í faith, representing as it does the culmination of a very long process of religious development, gives answers. Individuals will still have to work out their own role, their own adherence to the teachings, for none of us is stripped of his individual responsibilities, but never before has the religious role of the individual and the religion's role in remaking and shaping society been set out in such a fundamentally harmonious manner. Creative tension still exists, but the old "either-or" conflict is resolved.

The books dealt with in this review exemplify not just the range of Bahá'í literature that is available but the way

in which our faith deals both with individuals and with the great, literally world-embracing issues. All three are small but all deal with major themes.

Global Governance and the Lesser Peace is a timely work dealing as it does with issues of international

harmony and co-operation and the way the world is gradually moving towards the time of broad international peace. It is easy to look at the problems still facing the world, but the progress that has been made is something inconceivable even a few decades ago.

Dr Katirai's book is clearly aimed at the general reader. The specialist in international relations is unlikely to benefit from it, but the rest of us can. It is short and written in an accessible style, gives a useful overview of the field, and looks in more detail at developments in specific areas. There will be some who find it incomplete in its treatment of the subject, or on the light side, but that is the trade-off for having an accessible account for the general reader. As our community discharges its responsibility to influence the processes toward world peace and our interaction with others brings our own beliefs and aims into sharper focus (and as "globalisation" becomes ever more an issue) the sort of information Dr Katirai gives us is valuable.

To Be a Mother and **To Be a Father** are two thought-provoking and informative little compilations that will give inspiration and encouragement to those who have embarked upon the vital path of parenthood. The quotations are taken from many different sources and are organised into useful chapters. They are things to sit down and mull over. The wide range of sources is very welcome, and this reviewer was particularly happy to see some of George Townshend's personal and devotional writings included. Perhaps it is the Western Christian upbringing but they seem to speak to our condition in a powerful way. Having the two books one can set them down side by side and see the similarities and differences for the two parents – together they make a family-enhancing package and would make a welcome and appropriate gift for new parents of any religion and not just Bahá'ís.

To Be a Mother
Compiled by Wendi Momen
Publisher George Ronald

To Be a Father
Compiled by Wendi Momen
Publisher George Ronald

Dr Iain S Palin

