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THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF THE BAHAI FAITH

University of Hawaii

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THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF THE BAHAI' I FAITH

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By

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ABSTRACT

Since its beginning in 1844, the Baha'i Faith has spread to all parts of the non-Communist world. At first, the religion was confined to Persia and Iraq where Shi'ah Islam is dominant, but after Baha'u'llah (Prophet-founder of the religion) was banished to distant parts of the Ottoman Empire the movement was able to penetrate many areas of the Sunni world as well. In 1893 the religion was transmitted to North America from where, over a period of six decades, a vigorous campaign of global dissemination was undertaken. By 1953, the religion was well established on all continents; thereafter, global diffusion proceeded from a number of widely distributed centers of the religion rather than from just the two older core areas (Persia and North America).

The Baha'i Faith has always pursued an expansionist policy consisting of three main strategies: numerical increase, geographical dispersion, and compositional diversity of the membership. In the early years, growth was generally encouraged by the charismatic leaders of the religion, but from 1919 on expansion was directed by definitive and authoritative plans embodying the three main strategies for growth. These plans have become broader and more detailed in the past few decades so that today Baha'i expansion is guided by very precise objectives for increasing the numbers and kinds of believers and for insuring that they are widely dispersed.

The objective of this research has been to describe and account for the growth and spread of the Baha'i Faith. The religion has been

considered as an innovation, and its dissemination has been viewed as a consequence of its internal structure and decision-making patterns. It was found that a strong and centralized leadership has facilitated diffusion, that religious beliefs have favored dissemination efforts, and that policy and planning have successfully directed Baha'i expansion.

At the same time, the staging and direction of Baha'i expansion frequently has been influenced by attitudes, conditions, and events lying outside the direct control of the Baha'i movement. For example, in its early years the religion was geographically confined by its cultural context and religious roots while later on political conditions frequently influenced where the movement could and could not become established. In general, physical, social, and economic distance have inhibited diffusion, but aggressive dissemination policies and ambitious growth plans have greatly weakened the force of these traditional resistors to diffusion.

Between 1893 and 1953 North America was the main geographic source of Baha'i expansion. Within this area, growth was substantial but not constant. In the first few decades there were alternating periods of growth and decline and only after the 1920s did the religion begin to increase its membership at a steadily accelerating rate. The capacity of the movement to enlarge appears to have depended on unanimous acceptance of religious authority; growth proceeded regularly whenever the leadership and the administrative order were recognized by all Baha'is, but diffusion was curtailed whenever these repositories of religious authority were questioned by a part of the religion's membership.

Throughout the twentieth century, Baha'i growth in North America has been dependent on conversions; natural increase has always been a minor source of expansion. Continent-wide dissemination of the religion has relied heavily on migration of believers, usually from large urban centers containing Baha'i concentrations to other locations where believers have been few or absent. This pattern has been strongly encouraged and has resulted in a highly dispersed Baha'i community, a condition which also exists at the global level.

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PREFACE

Marzieh Gail's Baha'i Glossary contains a system of transliteration for Persian and Arabic words to which, for purposes of uniformity, I have generally adhered. When quoting from other sources, however, I have spelled words as they appeared in the original.

Publications issued by the Baha'i religion capitalize certain words that, in other contexts, might be left in lower case letters. Out of respect and gratitude for the way in which the Baha'i community has assisted me with this study, I have adhered to the Baha'i traditions regarding capitalization.

A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course, catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth. Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum. Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day. Humanity, gripped in the clutches of its devastating power, is smitten by the evidences of its resistless fury. It can neither perceive its origin, nor probe its significance, nor discern its outcome. Bewildered, agonized and helpless, it watches this great and mighty wind of God invading the remotest and fairest regions of the earth, rocking its foundations, deranging its equilibrium, sundering its nations, disrupting the homes of its peoples, wasting its cities, driving into exile its kings, pulling down its bulwarks, uprooting its institutions, dimming its light, and harrowing up the souls of its inhabitants.

. . . Shoghi Effendi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE TOPIC OF STUDY

The Baha'i Faith is a monotheistic religion that originated in Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century. In its original form it was a local phenomenon. Many contemporary observers perceived it as a reform movement--a reaction against the abuses of religious and political authority that were widespread in Persia at that time. Within a few years, however, it became apparent that the movement was claiming to be an independent religion founded by a Prophet of God.

Today the Baha'i Faith is a global movement. The membership has grown to include a few million believers scattered throughout the world; the administrative system has created a Baha'i confederation with more than 120 member states located on all the continents; the principles of the Faith have increasingly stressed the need for world unity. The religion now believes that its own ultimate purpose and destiny are to effect a spiritual unification of the planet.

How did the Baha'i Faith, born in adversity and raised in a specific cultural tradition, overcome its original limitations to achieve the status of an independent world religion? To what extent has the transformation been the consequence of Baha'i intent and Baha'i behavior? In what ways have chance occurrences and historical conditions facilitated the change? These are the kinds of questions that will be addressed in this study. In short, the objective will be to describe and explain the growth and spread of the Baha'i Faith.

The fundamental thesis underlying this investigation is that the Baha'i Faith has managed its own development. It will be documented that the Faith has throughout its history used the spiritual authority of its central figures and administrative order to achieve planned global diffusion--an effort that has been successful not only in its overall objective but also in dictating (1) the methods of diffusion to be used, (2) the timing of various stages in the diffusion process, and (3) the geographic strategies to be followed. External conditions have influenced the growth of the Faith, and they will be considered in this study. However, the primary thesis will be that the internal management of Baha'i affairs has been the most important variable affecting the religion's expansion.

An analysis of historical materials will reveal that the Baha'i Faith has constantly improved this capacity to influence its own destiny. At first, expansion of the religion was largely a spontaneous response to the charisma of the two Prophet-founders of the Faith. With the passage of time, however, growth was guided by policies and plans adopted by the religion's leadership for the purpose of achieving a spiritual conquest of the world. Consequently, Baha'i expansion has gradually shifted from being incidental and sporadic to being purposeful, steady, and accelerative.

It is usually true that growth causes changes in the intrinsic character of a new religion. This process is one of the most fascinating aspects of diffusion, but it will not be analyzed in this study. As time passes, many of the beliefs and structures that define a religion will evolve, and even at one time in history it is not unusual

for a religion to exist in a variety of forms depending on geographical region and cultural setting. Since its birth in 1844, the Baha'i Faith certainly has experienced changes in content and form, but this already has been studied by Johnson.¹ There is no need to supplement or revise his work. Furthermore, it is not clear that the Baha'i Faith has taken on a multiplicity of forms in order to adapt to different cultures, and so there will be no attempt to analyze geographic variations in the essential nature of the religion.

Baha'i growth, and the policies which guided it, have been strongly influenced by three different characteristics of the Faith, each of which will be analyzed in this study. First, a major cause of global expansion has been the fundamental Baha'i belief that: (1) in the near future the whole of mankind will become united, first in terms of political, social, and economic allegiances, and afterwards in terms of adherence to a single spiritual truth; (2) the Baha'i Faith is destined to guide the development of this new world order; and (3) the individual believer has an obligation to participate in the development process. These beliefs have their roots in the writings of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i Faith. His words have been used to justify the increasingly intense and coordinated program of planned Baha'i diffusion. In fact, the justifications are legitimate. Baha'is can readily see the link between the policy statements of the Prophet and the implementation which followed. Since Baha'i planning is viewed by most Baha'is as an

¹Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1974).

extension of certain divinely inspired principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah, the planning and coordination of Baha'i diffusion has been able to draw on an immense reservoir of faith and commitment within the rank and file membership. The consequence is a long history of eminently successful planning attempts, even under extremely adverse conditions.

Second, the essential unity of the Baha'i community has greatly assisted its numerical and geographical expansion. For all practical purposes the Baha'i Faith is a monolithic structure with no sects, splinter groups, subdivisions, or organized dissident elements. This is surprising considering that Baha'i membership represents almost all significant cultural, racial, economic, and geographic spectra. Thinly spread, widely distributed, frequently isolated, and usually heterogeneous, Baha'i communities might reasonably be expected to gravitate towards autonomy and independent expression. There are a number of reasons why this has not occurred, the most important of which is that the raison d'etre of the Baha'i Faith is to promote the unity of mankind in both the spiritual and temporal realms. Such a mandate does not belong to a house divided against itself and Baha'is have always been aware of the need to maintain internal unity if a successful battle is to be waged against the disunity of the world as a whole. Although unity is an integral feature of the Baha'i world, there have been traumatic periods in the history of the Faith when division has threatened the monolithic structure and has diverted the attention and energy of a large portion of the Baha'i communities. Generally speaking, these periods of internal stress have been times of weak expansion and diffusion. On the other hand, when internal unity has been strong, and

particularly when specific expansionary objectives have been assigned to the entire Baha'i world, diffusion has proceeded at a rapid pace.

Third, Baha'i expansion has been heavily dependent upon the existence of centralized authority that is recognized as legitimate by Baha'is. In the early stages, the authority was resident in the words and deeds of the Prophet-founders. In more recent times, it has passed to the administrative institutions that are now responsible for the management of the religion. At all times, however, leadership has been hierarchical in structure and sacred in origin. Baha'is have always had an ultimate decision-maker whose authority could not be questioned without challenging the legitimacy of the Faith itself. Since authority has always been viewed as divinely given, it has been capable of marshalling the energies of the entire Baha'i community, a circumstance that has greatly facilitated the planned global expansion of the Faith.

METHOD OF STUDY

Description

The Baha'i Faith holds the key to an explanation of its own pattern of diffusion. This study will emphasize the character of the religion as an innovation as much as it considers its spread as a process. This perspective should permit the identification of both unique and predictable aspects of the Baha'i diffusion process. At the same time, however, there are bound to be certain consequences for the structure of the research.

First, there is the matter of methodology. Concern with the nature of the innovation discourages the use of a rigidly defined methodology

designed to test certain preconceived notions. For the most part, research will progress inductively, and so methods of organizing and analyzing information will vary depending on (1) what facet of the innovation seems to be most important in explaining why diffusion occurred at a given time, in a particular locality, or within a certain sector of the population, and (2) what types of data are available for analysis. At some points the test will be historical and descriptive while at others the emphasis will be on cartography and distributional analysis. Frequently, demographic methods of analysis will come into play and occasionally the study will make use of quantitative model construction and inferential statistics.

Second, the object of study (e.g., the Baha'i Faith) will be explored in much greater detail than would be the case if the primary concern were with diffusion in general and methodology in particular. A notable consequence of this approach is that there will be a heavy reliance on Baha'i literature. As expected, Baha'i sources will supply quantitative grist for the diffusionist mill, but in addition other purposes will be served by frequent reference to the literature of the religion. Baha'i sacred writings and administrative directives will be cited as explanatory variables in the diffusion equation; Baha'i historical sources will be used to identify actual diffusion pathways as well as facilitators of, and barriers to, the diffusion process; Baha'i information regarding organizational structure and authority will be incorporated into an analysis of the nature and efficacy of the religion's population policies. In these and other ways, explanations of the diffusion process will be sought by looking inside the innovation rather than by focusing attention exclusively on outside factors.

Third, it should be noted that no attempt will be made to compare the diffusion of the Baha'i Faith with the spread of some other religion or ideology. This should not be taken as a negative judgment regarding the value of such comparative studies. In fact, the comparative approach is commendable.² It does seem reasonable, however, that anyone who pursues such a course should either have a commitment to both objects of study or should be detached from both.

Fourth, the geographic scale of the study will be large. The most significant aspect of the spread of the Faith is the extent to which it has achieved global representation in spite of the relatively small number of adherents. Consequently, the most meaningful analysis of Baha'i expansion must involve consideration of worldwide trends and patterns. Unfortunately, data availability is a problem. There is an abundance of excellent secondary information regarding the global activities of the Faith, but without access to the international archives in Haifa, Israel, it is difficult for a researcher to eliminate the data gaps that inevitably occur. In this study, the approach will be to work around existing data gaps at the global scale rather than to concentrate on a particular region for which information sources are more

²Although none of them are diffusion studies in the classical sense, all of the following compare the growth and distribution of a number of different religious movements: J. H. Fleure, "The Geographical Distribution of the Major Religions," Bulletin de la Societe de Geographie d'Egypte, 24 (November, 1951):1-18; Wilbur Zelinsky, "An Approach to the Religious Geography of the United States: Patterns of Church Membership in 1952," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 51 (June, 1961):139-193; John Dennis Gay, The Geography of Religion in England (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1971).

complete. Since I have had access to the U.S. Baha'i National Archives, my data on Baha'i activities in the United States are much more comprehensive than the information available to me regarding worldwide Baha'i activities. Consequently, this research will be global in orientation, but will include a more detailed examination of diffusion at the national scale in the United States. This division of effort can be justified. The United States always has been a critical source region for Baha'i global expansion.

Justification

Traditional Biases in Diffusion Research

There are advantages that can be realized when as much attention is paid to the nature of an innovation as to the character of its diffusion. The tendency in diffusion literature to emphasize the process of diffusion and to ignore the character of the innovation has introduced an unfortunate bias into diffusion research: simple innovations usually are selected for study.³ What is a simple innovation? Rogers and Shoemaker provided a partial answer to this question when they

³ A recent bibliography lists a large number of diffusion studies that have been done during the past two to three decades. The entries for 1976 and 1977 indicate a shift in preoccupation from material to conceptual innovations, but the emphasis still remains on unidimensional innovations such as will, for example, improve methods of teaching, governing, or administering: Everett M. Rogers, Linda Williams, and Rhonda B. West, Bibliography of the Diffusion of Innovations, ed. by Mary Vance, Council of Planning Librarians Exchange Bibliography, Nos. 1420-1422 (Monticello, Ill.: Council of Planning Librarians, December, 1977).

summarized the characteristics of an innovation that is likely to diffuse rapidly:⁴

1. relative advantage over pre-existing ideas or technologies;
2. compatibility with the values and beliefs that define the adopting population;
3. simplicity, or lack of complexity, that permits easy transmittal of information about the innovation;
4. divisibility that permits partial, or staged, adoption;
5. observability that allows potential adopters to witness the beneficial effects of adoption.

Any innovation which has these characteristics has a high adoption potential; an innovation without these presumably has much less chance of being adopted. There is, of course, a broad spectrum between the two extremes, but most research analyzes innovations that are nearer the high potential end of the spectrum. The consequence is a body of diffusion theory that successfully explains and predicts the diffusion patterns of innovations that are conceptually simple but that inadequately identifies the forces involved in the diffusion of more complex innovations. By dealing with a complex innovation (e.g., the Baha'i Faith), it may be possible for this study to overcome some of the bias in diffusion research.⁵ Overcoming this bias may be very important. Is

⁴Everett M. Rogers and F. Floyd Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach (2nd ed.; New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 137-157.

⁵Dean Louder already has made substantial progress in this direction. He has carefully analyzed the effects of Mormon beliefs, history, and administrative organization on diffusion. See Chapter II in Dean R. Louder, "A Distributional and Diffusionary Analysis of the Mormon Church,

it not possible that the tendency to avoid complex innovations has hampered the potential contributions of diffusion research by focusing attention on innovations of lesser importance to man's development? After all, even though such innovative developments as hybrid corn, rotary clubs, and cable television may be important for mankind, it is hard not to think that values, beliefs, and ideologies (all of which tend to be complex innovations) may be more important.

The bias toward simple innovations leads to an interesting effect. Diffusionist researchers rarely study innovations that have failed (e.g., have not diffused significantly). Since only successful innovations are studied, diffusionists come to view the spread of something new as a natural--almost inevitable--process that will occur unless some inhibiting factor or cluster of factors stands in the way of expansion. From this perspective, diffusion is directed primarily by such considerations as (1) the strength of the innovation as measured by the relative number of adopters and change agents currently existing, (2) the impact of distance between potential source and potential adopter on the likelihood of adoption, and (3) the size of the remaining population that is likely to adopt. This view denies the innovation the capacity to shape its own destiny. The basic pattern of diffusion that will occur lies outside the control of the intelligent forces that are behind the innovation. By

1850-1970," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1972, pp. 30-70.

Curiously, Xavier de Planhol accomplished much the same thing for Islam back in 1959: Xavier de Planhol, The World of Islam (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959). Presumably, it is his non-quantitative orientation that accounts for the fact that current work in geographical diffusion ignores his pioneering efforts.

adopting such an approach, it is possible to avoid considering unique aspects of the innovation that may have impinged on the diffusion process. The Baha'i Faith has diffused, at least to a limited extent, in accordance with such objective controls as size of diffusing population, size of target population, and distance between them. However, even more integral to an honest understanding of the diffusion of the Baha'i Faith is the character of the innovation itself. In some ways, that character is unique.

Supply Diffusion

Recently, the study of geographic diffusion has taken a new direction. Under the leadership of Lawrence Brown, a small core of diffusion researchers has begun to explore the implications of the supply aspects of diffusion. Research from this point of view recognizes that the source of an innovation often can be a more important influence on the geographic expression of the diffusion process than the latent demand for the innovation or the natural constraints to which flows of information about the innovation are subject.

The innovation is distributed through agencies which affect the availability of both information about the innovation and the innovation itself to potential adopters. Their locations determine gross aspects of the spatial pattern of diffusion, and further detail is contributed by the operating procedures of each agency. Both agency establishment and innovation establishment, aspects of marketing the innovation, involve the creation of infrastructure such as service, supply, or information provision networks. They also utilize and are influenced by that existing public and private infrastructure which facilitates the diffusion process . . .⁶

⁶ Lawrence A. Brown, "The Market and Infrastructure Context of Adoption: A Perspective on the Spatial Diffusion of Innovation," Studies in the Diffusion of Innovation, Discussion Paper No. 1, The Ohio State University Department of Geography, pp. 3-4.

From this point of view, therefore, the best way to understand a particular diffusion pattern is to (1) study the way in which the innovation is marketed and (2) analyze the transportation and communication structure of the geographic area in which the diffusion process is occurring.

Brown has elaborated the supply approach to diffusion study by evaluating the impact of diffusion of an innovation from a single original source as opposed to diffusion from more than one original source.⁷ He shows that if a single supplier of an innovation creates a network of diffusion agents, the geographic character of that network will differ from the network that will develop (1) if more than one supplier creates separate, independent networks of diffusion agents or (2) if development of a diffusion agent network is not controlled from above but is instead the result of adoption decisions on the part of potential agents. Brown uses the phrase "mononuclear propagation structure" to refer to the situation in which one original source establishes a network of diffusion agents; he uses "polynuclear propagation structure" to refer to other situations.

This supply approach to the study of diffusion can be used to improve our understanding of the growth and spread of the Baha'i Faith. It has already been asserted that this study will focus as much on the character of the Baha'i innovation as on its pattern of diffusion. An analysis of diffusion from the supply point of view is compatible with this approach since an understanding of supply necessitates familiarity with the historical development, organizational structures, and diffusion

⁷ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

objectives of the intelligent forces working for propagation of the innovation.

Dissemination of the Baha'i Faith has been effected by a network of diffusion agents who, because of the nature of the religion, have operated partly as independent agents and partly as emissaries of the Faith's administration. In other words, the Baha'i religion has had a propagation structure which combines the mononuclear and polynuclear types. However, because of the strong spiritual authority possessed by the Baha'i leadership and because of the basically monolithic structure of the religion, the development of a network of diffusion agents has proceeded mainly according to the principles of mononuclear propagation structure. This study will show that the geographic pattern of Baha'i diffusion has been strongly influenced by the supply of diffusion agents and by the responsiveness of those agents to the suggestions, appeals, and directives of the religion's leadership.

The supply diffusion concepts developed by Brown and others have been applied almost entirely to situations where a product or service has been marketed by a private firm or public agency.⁸ In such situations, the reason for generating the diffusion process is either to

⁸Jeffrey P. Osleeb, "A Location Theory for the Mononuclear Propagator," *Studies in the Diffusion of Innovation*, Discussion Paper No. 26, The Ohio State University Department of Geography; R. Keith Semple, Lawrence A. Brown, and Marilyn A. Brown, "Propagator Supported Diffusion Processes: Agency Strategies and the Innovation Establishment Interface," *Studies in the Diffusion of Innovation*, Discussion Paper No. 18, The Ohio State University Department of Geography; R. Q. Hanham, "Diffusion of an Innovation from a Supply Perspective: An Application to the Artificial Insemination of Cattle in Southern Sweden," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1973; R. D. Garst, "Innovation Diffusion among the Gusii of Kenya," *Economic Geography*, 50 (October, 1974):300-312; Lawrence A. Brown and others, "The Diffusion of Cable

realize an economic profit or to improve social welfare. In both instances, the time perspective is typically short--generally less than one or two decades. For the Baha'i Faith, however, the diffusion process is not stimulated by the same motives. Profit making is not an objective of the religion. Improvement of social welfare is an objective, but it is subordinate to the goal of spiritual regeneration. Furthermore, as a religion, the Baha'i Faith cannot be easily defined as a product or service. Finally, the religion has a long range view of its own diffusion process and does not adopt diffusion strategies just on the basis of short term goals. As a result, most supply diffusion studies contain little substantive material that is relevant to the growth and spread of the Baha'i Faith. The supply point of view, however, is very appropriate to the study of Baha'i diffusion, and so it will be used often in this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comprehensive literature reviews have been compiled which cover both the general topic of diffusion research⁹ and the more geographically oriented diffusion tradition.¹⁰ However, most modern work in the field

Television in Ohio: A Case Study of Diffusion Agency Location Patterns and Processes of the Polynuclear Type," *Economic Geography*, 50 (October, 1974):285-299.

⁹Everett M. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962); Rogers and Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations.

¹⁰Lawrence A. Brown, Diffusion Dynamics: A Review and Revision of the Quantitative Theory of the Spatial Diffusion of Innovation, *Lund Studies in Geography, Series B, Human Geography*, No. 29 (Lund, Sweden: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1968); Lawrence A. Brown and Eric G. Moore, Diffusion

treats diffusion as a process that can be understood with only superficial attention being paid to the nature of the innovation--an approach that violates a basic tenet of this study. The exceptions, of course, are the supply oriented studies of diffusion.

For the purposes of this research, it is appropriate to confine the literature review to those geographical diffusion studies which deal with religions. Some work has been done, and the bulk of it already has been reviewed by Louder.¹¹ In fact, he surveyed nearly all significant research dealing with the geographic study of religious phenomena. The organizational structure of his review identified four different thrusts in geographic research: (1) significance of the environmental setting, (2) religious modification of the environment, (3) occupation and organization of earth space, and (4) distribution, diffusion, and interaction. It is, of course, the last of these research thrusts that is most relevant to this study--particularly that portion dealing with diffusion. The most common denominator of all the diffusion studies reviewed by Louder is a recognition that the migratory behavior of adopters is highly influential in shaping the subsequent pattern of geographical spread.¹²

Research in Geography: A Perspective, The University of Iowa Department of Geography, Discussion Paper Series, No. 9 (Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1968); Peter R. Gould, Spatial Diffusion, Commission on College Geography Resource Papers, No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1969).

¹¹Louder, "A Distributional and Diffusionary Analysis of the Mormon Church, 1850-1970."

¹²Ary Lamme's work on the spread of Christian Science is an exception in that it emphasizes the importance of written communication and established reading rooms as agents of diffusion. Thus, distribution reflects

Louder's work itself documented the way in which Mormon diffusion relied primarily on migratory relocation in its earlier stages and conversion in the more recent past. The shift in emphasis from relocation to conversion, he further pointed out, was accompanied by a parallel shift from basically rural expansion to primarily urban growth. Louder used a variety of statistical techniques to analyze the distributional characteristics of the Mormon population and formulated a simulation model to deal with the actual diffusion process. It is these approaches that supplied him with the results upon which his conclusions concerning the importance of migration and conversion were based. Particularly to Louder's credit is the fact that he documented the way in which such peculiarly Mormon elements as the concept of Zion, the early preoccupation with political independence, the hierarchically and geographically articulate administrative system, and the recently intensified missionary activities, have profoundly influenced historical patterns of diffusion. In fact, Louder devoted a lengthy chapter to a discussion of theological, organizational, and historical facts relevant to Mormon diffusion. The result was a more rational picture of Mormon expansion than that forthcoming from his model-building efforts.

John Gay¹³ also has provided the interested researcher with a comprehensive bibliography on the geography of religion. His

the availability of certain material resources rather than the activities and movements of individual believers. Ary J. Lamme, III, "The Spatial and Ecological Characteristics of the Diffusion of Christian Science in the United States: 1875-1910," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1968; Ary J. Lamme, III, "From Boston in One Hundred Years: Christian Science 1970," *Professional Geographer*, 23 (October, 1971): 329-332.

¹³Gay, The Geography of Religion in England.

bibliographic compilation, in fact, is even more complete than that of Louder, but he did not pay as much attention to diffusion studies. Gay's book analyzed the spatial distribution of numerous religious groups in England at different points in time over the past 125 years. For each of the groups considered, he clearly showed (1) where a religion became established, (2) why it established itself where it did, (3) what geographic and demographic changes have occurred since that time, (4) why those changes came about, (5) how the current picture appears, and (6) what future developments are likely to transpire. The research is intriguing because, in spite of its strong reliance on a static, distributional methodology, it successfully draws attention to the issue of change. In other words, it is a diffusion study in disguise.

Since the work of Louder and Gay, a number of geographers have addressed the question of religious diffusion,¹⁴ two of whom have conducted studies that are particularly relevant to this research. Judith Meyer¹⁵ has studied the diffusion of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod Congregations in the United States since their first appearance in 1847. She identified a strong and persistent ethnic bias (German), a relatively

¹⁴G. K. Nelson and R. A. Clews, "Geographical Mobility and Religious Behavior," Sociological Review, 21 (February, 1973):127-135; Charles E. Tatum and Lawrence M. Sommers, "The Spread of the Black Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, 1870-1970," Journal of Geography, 74 (September, 1975):343-357; Norman K. Dann, "Spatial Diffusion of a Religious Movement," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 15 (December, 1976):351-360; William K. Crowley, "Old Order Amish Settlement: Diffusion and Growth," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 68 (June, 1978):249-264.

¹⁵Judith W. Meyer, "Ethnicity, Theology, and Immigrant Church Expansion," The Geographic Review, 65 (April, 1975):180-197.

stable and compact spatial distribution, and a gradual geographic diffusion based on migration. Meyer considered both internal and external factors in trying to explain the denomination's pattern of growth, but ultimately became more intrigued by the former. "The impact of the ethnic character and the conservative theology of the LC-MS on its expansion process suggests a fruitful area of research in religious geography: the impact of particular characteristics of religious institutions on their patterns of diffusion and spatial distribution."¹⁶ In a different context, Meyer described the general lack of her approach in more detailed and specific terms:

Although geographical research includes a substantial number of diffusion studies, most have actually focused on the distribution of adoptions. Published studies of diffusion by geographers tend to have isolated variables or "effects" that explain a considerable proportion of the variance of adoptions over time and space. Typical effects have been the distance decay effect, based primarily on notions of the decline in interpersonal communication as distance increases, and the hierarchical effect, based on a variety of notions about increased communications and greater number of potential adopters. . . .

Few geographic studies have been concerned with a behavioral approach to the study of the diffusion process. Such an approach to diffusion entails analysis of the diffuser's perception of an adoption or marketing surface, his subsequent activities during the diffusions and activities. The variables or effects isolated in many studies may, in fact represent factors involved in the diffuser's decision making process rather than the results of diffusion processes if no diffusers had been active.¹⁷

Meyer's behavioral approach emphasizes the characteristics of the religion and how they have affected diffusion. This, of course, meshes

¹⁶Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁷Judith W. Meyer, Diffusion of An American Montessori Education, University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Papers, No. 160 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975), p. 81.

well with Brown's supply diffusion perspective. If there is a major difference between these two perspectives it is that the supply diffusion tradition tends to focus on conscious marketing policy and how it interacts with actual market conditions, whereas the behavioral approach takes a broader view of the innovation and tries to consider how its attitudes and beliefs affect the diffusion process, regardless of whether they are conscious or unconscious, market-oriented or not.

Manfred Hannemann has conducted an analysis of the early spread of the Reformation in Southwestern Germany.¹⁸ This study could not be called purely behavioral since it concentrated on how external conditions affected the diffusion process. However, Hannemann relied on an historical methodology that takes careful notice of the exact nature of the Reformation. This permitted him to explain the movement's growth and spread in terms of how its beliefs and values interacted with local conditions.

In his concluding statements, Hannemann made certain observations that show why a religion does not diffuse in the same way as many other innovations. At the same time, he identified particular conditions and processes that moulded the diffusion of the Reformation. Subsequent analyses will show that those conditions and processes have had parallels in the Baha'i experience.

The diffusion of a newly conceived ideology, be it religious or political, is more complicated than the diffusion of a material item such as automobiles, telephones, and even customary

¹⁸Manfred Hannemann, The Diffusion of the Reformation in Southwestern Germany, 1518-1534, University of Chicago, Department of Geography, Research Paper Series, No. 13 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975).

habits. Although both are dependent on propagators located in diffusion centers of varying importance, they differ in several respects. Unlike the individual ownership of material goods, an ideology can be the common property of a group of people. And unlike its material counterpart, the spread of an emerging religious ideology is far more difficult to observe and keep track of. Its ultimate success depends to a large degree on political authority acting as an intervening variable that transforms such movements into a dynamic process in which localities and territories are conquered or lost. In the case of the Reformation, the split within the Protestant ranks into Lutherans, Zwinglians, and a number of other groups was an additional variable that must be taken into account. This split weakened the two major Protestant parties in their contest with the Roman Catholic Church for the religious-spatial domination of the German Southwest. Finally, it must be noted that the diffusion of religious values, unlike that of material ones, is less bound to geographical distance and space.

The spread of the evangelical ideology was in fact most closely bound to personal relationships, the principal means of familiarizing the broad majority of the German people--90 percent of whom were then illiterate--with Luther's teachings. These personal relationships either could be long standing and pre-date the origin of the innovation, or they could be more recent personal ties that originated with the innovation. It stands to reason that both were equally important.¹⁹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 212.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND BELIEFS

HISTORY

The Bab and Baha'u'llah

On May 22nd, 1844, a young Persian merchant named Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad proclaimed Himself to be a Prophet of God. Designating Himself as the "Bab" (gate; forerunner), He stated that His principal mission was to herald the advent of One who was destined to be even greater than Himself--One who would bring to the world the potent world of God in such a sublime form that the spirituality of all mankind would be regenerated and the planet would become united. He promised that this greater Manifestation of God would declare Himself at the end of nineteen years.

The Bab rapidly attracted a large number of followers in Persia. The audacity of His claims inflamed Muslim sensibilities and growth of the movement encountered increasing resistance and suppression. The mounting conflict culminated in the execution of the Bab, the martyrdom of 20,000 Babis, and the virtual annihilation of what was considered to be a heretical religious movement.

One of the few surviving followers of the Bab was an early disciple who came to be known as "Baha'u'llah" (The Glory of God). During a period of imprisonment in a dungeon in Tihran, Baha'u'llah realized that He was the Promised One. Subsequent to His release He was banished to Iraq (Baghdad) where in 1863--nineteen years after the declaration of the Bab and ten years after His own exile from Persia--He announced His mission

and undertook the global transformation promised by the Bab. Thereafter, the Babi Faith became the Baha'i Faith¹ and a religious movement, confined until that time to Persia and immediately surrounding territories, began to take on international dimensions.

The whole of Baha'u'llah's life, from the time of His imprisonment in Tihiran in 1853 until His departure from this world in 1892, was spent in exile and under varying conditions of restraint and confinement. The decade of detention in Baghdad witnessed declining Babi fortunes in Persia where persecution continued unabated, but gradual reorganization and regeneration of the Faith in Baghdad under the steadily increasing leadership and authority of Baha'u'llah. Political authorities in Persia, disturbed by the specter of a rejuvenated Babi movement within the country, agitated to have its leader relocated to a place more distant from the borders of Persia. This would further diminish Baha'u'llah's contact with the religion's adherents in the homeland and the movement, lacking leadership and inspiration, might be expected to die a natural death.

In 1863 Baha'u'llah and His companions were transferred from Baghdad to Constantinople, the center of the Ottoman empire. For five years the small Baha'i community in that city² was embroiled in an internal leadership conflict as Mirza Yahya, a half-brother to

¹A Babi is a follower of the Bab; a Baha'i is a follower of Baha'u'llah. The term "Baha'i" was not adopted by Baha'u'llah's followers until 1865 when internal strife necessitated differentiation between those who accepted Baha'u'llah and those who did not. Baha'is do not deny the Bab. In fact a Baha'i is obliged to accept the Bab's claims.

²In fact, during most of this period Baha'u'llah resided in Adrianople, some distance from the capital city.

Baha'u'llah, challenged the claims of Baha'u'llah and proclaimed that he, instead, should be recognized as the Promised One. The ensuing struggle reached violent proportions, and this disturbance (coupled with the increasing attention being paid to the Faith as a result of an audacious series of letters from Baha'u'llah to the most powerful world leaders demanding that they recognize His station and exercise their authority according to the will of God) precipitated a political decision to banish Mirza Yahya to Famagusta, Cypress, and Baha'u'llah to the penal colony of 'Akka, Palestine. Since 1868 the area encompassing Acre, and its sister city of Haifa, has remained the administrative center of the Baha'i Faith. It is the principal destination for pilgrims who, in conformity with Baha'i social teachings, attempt at least once during their lifetime to visit the shrine of the Bab, the shrine of Baha'u'llah, and the assortment of places--most of which are now owned by the Faith--in which Baha'u'llah initially was incarcerated (e.g., the army barracks within the 'Akka prison) and later was confined (e.g., the House of 'Abbud, the houses of Malik, Khavvam, and Rabi'ih, and the Mazra'ih Mansion).

The Baha'i perception of the historical significance of the lives of the two founders of the Faith is summarized by Shoghi Effendi:

A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequence, had been set in motion on that memorable day when the Bab communicated the purpose of His mission to Mulla Husayn in an obscure corner of Shiraz. It acquired a tremendous momentum with the first intimations of Baha'u'llah's dawning revelation amidst the darkness of the Siyah-Chal [dungeon] of Tihiran. It was further accelerated by the Declaration of His mission on the eve of His banishment from Baghdad. It moved to a climax with the proclamation of that same mission during the tempestuous years of His exile in Adrianople. Its full significance was disclosed when the Author of that Mission issued His historic summonses, appeals and warnings to the kings of the earth and the world's ecclesiastical leaders. It was finally

consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated, by the principles which He enunciated and by the institutions which He ordained during the concluding years of His ministry in the prison-city of 'Akka.³

'Abdu'l-Baha

When Baha'u'llah died in 1892, He left to the Baha'i community a will and testament designed to insure a unified and orderly future for the Faith. The document unequivocally designated 'Abdu'l-Baha, its Author's eldest son, as the one person to whom all Baha'is must turn for leadership and guidance. The precise nature of the authority vested in 'Abdu'l-Baha will be discussed in a different context at a later point in this study. For now, suffice it to say that, although not designated as a Prophet in his own right, 'Abdu'l-Baha was, as a consequence of Baha'u'llah's will, heir to the spiritual allegiance of the Baha'i world. Beset by difficulties of many sorts during his time as leader of the Baha'i movement (1892-1921), 'Abdu'l-Baha often was able to prevail as a consequence of the spiritual authority accorded to him by his Prophet Father.

'Abdu'l-Baha guided the Faith during a period of turbulence and change, both in the fortunes of the still youthful religious movement and in the arrangement of mankind's affairs at the global level. Born on the day that the Bab declared His mission,⁴ 'Abdu'l-Baha coordinated

³Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1965), p. 237.

⁴According to the Baha'i calendar, days begin and end at sunset. Under this system, May 23rd, 1844, is recognized as both the birth date of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the declaration date of the Bab. By the Gregorian system of beginning and ending days at midnight, the anniversary of the declaration of the Bab falls on May 22nd while the birthday of 'Abdu'l-Baha occurs on May 23rd.

Baha'i matters from the time of his Father's death in 1892 until his own passing in 1921. For many years he continued to be confined by the Ottoman authorities to the 'Akka area, but the "Young Turk" revolution in 1908 prompted the release of all religious and political prisoners, thereby terminating the 56 year period of confinement that had curtailed the activities of both Baha'u'llah and His son. 'Abdu'l-Baha's freedom, however, was relatively short-lived when compared to the total span of his ministry. By 1914 the Western World had become embroiled in the Great War--a conflict that was not, unfortunately, confined to Europe. The Holy Lands became a battleground for the competing forces of Great Britain and the Turkish Empire. After 1918, 'Abdu'l-Baha was once again free to move as he pleased, but by then he was 74 years old, his strength was waning, and his earthly life was nearing its end.

In spite of the intermittent limitations hampering 'Abdu'l-Baha's freedom of action, the period 1892-1921 was one of marked geographical expansion of the Faith. No sooner had Baha'u'llah passed from the scene than 'Abdu'l-Baha began to direct the attention of Baha'is to the latent potential for expansion that existed in the West, but particularly in America. In 1893 he directed Dr. Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah, a Baha'i then residing in Egypt, to migrate to the United States for the purpose of proclaiming the Faith. Dr. Khayr'u'llah was successful in enlisting a nucleus of Baha'i believers, many of whom resided in the Chicago area. Some of these early believers, in turn, established the Faith in various regions of the country and even were successful in transmitting the religious message back across the Atlantic to various European nations, in particular, to France, Great Britain, Germany, and Austria. Thus, by the turn of the century, the Faith had a foothold in a number of Western

countries as well as an established (although tenuous) presence in the Near and Middle East. In fact, early travelers during the time of the Bab had successfully carried the Faith as far east as Pakistan, India, and even Burma, and so by 1900 the religion clearly had expanded beyond its cultural, linguistic, and religious homeland.

'Abdu'l-Baha's emphasis on growth in America was a basic theme running through the whole of his ministry. His early statements testify to the special importance attached to Baha'i consolidation there:

. . . "The continent of America . . . is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous shall abide and the free assemble. The American continent . . . giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement. Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually.

. . . This American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people. May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace."⁵

But growth of the Faith in America was not an end in itself; it was to be a preliminary development intended to establish a geographical source from which worldwide expansion on a large scale could occur.

. . . "The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America and is propagated through the continents of Europe, of Asia, of Africa, and of Australia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion . . . Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness."⁶

⁵Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 254. All these quotations are extracted from the body of Shoghi Effendi's narrative.

⁶Ibid., p. 255.

Naturally, during the extensive periods of confinement in the Holy Lands, 'Abdu'l-Baha was obliged to promote Baha'i expansion by means other than direct visitation. The most common forms of contact with overseas Baha'is included (1) postal correspondence, (2) emissary visits by selected Baha'is under instructions from 'Abdu'l-Baha, and (3) pilgrimage visits by overseas believers (especially Americans) to 'Abdu'l-Baha in Haifa.

During the brief era in which 'Abdu'l-Baha was free to travel (1908-1914) he made an extensive overseas trip for the purpose of strengthening and expanding the influence of the Faith. Leaving Haifa in September of 1910, he resided for nearly a year in Egypt before undertaking a four month trip to England and France. Returning to Egypt in December of 1911, 'Abdu'l-Baha passed three months before departing on a prolonged tour to America--a tour that was to last for eight months and was to include visits to a number of major cities in the Northeast, Midwest and California. In December of 1912, he returned to Europe and spent six months in England, France, Germany, and Austro-Hungary. A final six month stay, once again in Egypt, concluded his trip.

It may appear that 'Abdu'l-Baha's principal concern and prime responsibility was to oversee and promote Baha'i expansion. That definitely was not the case. Although growth of the Faith was an important concern, even more central to 'Abdu'l-Baha's position as leader of the Baha'i world was his role as interpreter of Baha'u'llah's word and exemplar of Baha'i life. In these capacities, 'Abdu'l-Baha had a profound impact on the structure of Baha'i thought and action, a circumstance that is explained by the fact that Baha'u'llah specified

in no uncertain terms that His son was to be recognized by all Baha'is as an unchallengeable interpreter of His holy word and a perfect example of how Baha'is should try to live their lives. 'Abdu'l-Baha was, therefore, both the spiritual and secular head of the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi

The passage of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921 once again raised the question of how leadership and authority were to be transferred and, just as his Father had done, 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed the problem in his will by transmitting some of his prerogatives to a descendent. His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, was to be recognized as Guardian of the Faith. The station of Guardian preserved the roles of temporal leader and divine interpreter, but did not perpetuate the responsibility of exemplary behavior. Furthermore, Shoghi Effendi himself very rarely indulged in interpretive statements unless they were in some way required by the practical, worldly conditions surrounding the day-to-day development of the Faith. Thus, his leadership can be associated most deeply with temporal affairs, and particularly with how Baha'is should use their lives to express the spiritual truths of their Faith. That identified pattern of optimum individual behavior outlined by Shoghi Effendi, moreover, was inextricably bound up with the current status and anticipated future ascendancy of the Faith as a whole. Notice how, in the following lengthy extract, Shoghi Effendi linked individual behavior with the fortunes of the Faith:

Let every believer, desirous to witness the swift and healthy progress of the Cause of God, realize the twofold nature of his task. Let him first turn his eyes inwardly and search his own heart and satisfy himself that in his

relations with his fellow-believers, irrespective of color and class, he is proving himself increasingly loyal to the spirit of his beloved Faith. Assured and content that he is exerting his utmost in a conscious effort to approach nearer every day the lofty station to which his gracious Master summons him, let him turn to his second task, and, with befitting confidence and vigor, assail the devastating power of those forces which in his own heart he has already succeeded in subduing. Fully alive to the unfailing efficacy of the power of Baha'u'llah, and armed with the essential weapons of wise restraint and inflexible resolve, let him wage a constant fight against the inherited tendencies, the corruptive instincts, the fluctuating fashions, the false pretenses of the society in which he lives and moves.

In their relations amongst themselves as fellow-believers, let them not be content with the mere exchange of cold and empty formalities often connected with the organizing of banquets, receptions, consultative assemblies, and lecture-halls. Let them rather, as equal co-sharers in the spiritual benefits conferred upon them by Baha'u'llah, arise and, with the aid and counsel of their local and national representatives, supplement these official functions with those opportunities which only a close and intimate social intercourse can adequately provide. In their homes, in their hours of relaxation and leisure, in the association of their children, whether in their study-classes, their playgrounds, and club-rooms, in short under all possible circumstances, however insignificant they appear, the community of the followers of Baha'u'llah should satisfy themselves that in the eyes of the world at large and in the sight of their vigilant Master they are the living witnesses of those truths which He fondly cherished and tirelessly championed to the very end of His days. If we relax in our purpose, if we falter in our faith, if we neglect the varied opportunities given to us from time to time by an all-wise and gracious Master, we are not merely failing in what is our most vital and conspicuous obligation, but are thereby insensibly retarding the flow of those quickening energies which can alone insure the vigorous and speedy development of God's struggling faith.⁷

The significance of Shoghi Effendi's stance regarding his own leadership of the Faith--a stance that the above quotation is intended to reveal--is that Baha'i energies during his period of authority came to be focused on the task of achieving increased recognition of the power and

⁷Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 130-131.

authenticity of the Baha'i revelation by means of exemplary behavior and conscious endeavor on the part of individual believers. This strategy is a continuous theme in Shoghi Effendi's writings; it concentrated the attention of most Baha'is on the problem of achieving the diffusion of the Faith, and, if descriptive statistics regarding demographic and geographic expansion can be accepted as evidence (an imposing "if"), then a strong circumstantial case can be made in support of its efficacy.

Much more concrete evidence can be marshalled to show that the Guardian's emphasis on planning as a vehicle for expansion resulted in marked gains in the number and distribution of believers, administrative bodies, and capital holdings.⁸ The use of planning as a vehicle for Baha'i growth was introduced by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1916 and 1917 when he sent to the American Baha'i community a series of messages designed to inspire the believers to spread the Faith by travelling to specific regions and telling the inhabitants about the religion. These messages, referred to in the Baha'i literature as the Tablets of the Divine Plan, were extraordinary in scope. At a time when the whole Baha'i community in North America numbered less than 2,500, the Tablets assigned it the specific responsibility of establishing the Faith on all the continents and in virtually every region of the world. The Tablets instructed the Baha'is on how they should go about spreading the word and specified individually the countries, colonies, islands, localities, and regions

⁸Statistical evidence in support of this statement will be presented at a later point in the study.

where they should concentrate their energies, but no time horizons were set, no specific goals in terms of numbers of believers were established, and no order of priorities was defined. Shoghi Effendi used the Tablets of the Divine Plan as a basis for much more specific planning efforts. Based on the conceptual plan contained in the Tablets, he articulated a series of plans for Baha'i growth, each of which contained goals, priorities, and time horizons. These plans, which, due to a variety of circumstances, were not initiated until 1937, exhibited increasing complexity, scope, and ambitiousness as one succeeded another. Each built upon the achievements of its predecessor and provided for the consolidation of whatever gains might be made. The goals of each, with very minor exceptions, were achieved. The planning concept and its associated skills of development, implementation, and evaluation became a part of Baha'i life so that now, twenty years after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Baha'i world is still planning its own expansion, still measuring its achievements against its own expectations.

Above all else, however, the work of Shoghi Effendi focused on the development of an administrative system that was to embody the administrative principles and structures already outlined by Baha'u'llah and was to provide for the unremitting propagation of the Faith. Furthermore, the Guardian's disinclination to designate a successor meant that upon his death in 1957 the Baha'i community had to be prepared for a termination of the charismatic leadership which had dominated the first 113 years of its history. Without an administrative structure that was authoritative, functional, and self-perpetuating, the Faith would have been left in an extremely vulnerable state. Internal differences of

opinion and interest would have greatly increased the probability of religious schism during the period of transition. When Shoghi Effendi became Guardian in 1921 there was no semblance of an administrative structure appropriate to the need which would arise 36 years later. During his period of Guardianship he developed the necessary structure, first by calling for the establishment of local Spiritual Assemblies at the community level, later by stimulating the creation of National Spiritual Assemblies that could coordinate the activities of the individual local Assemblies existing in their respective national areas, and finally by providing for the mechanisms whereby the international body called the Universal House of Justice could be formed. The Universal House of Justice did not become a reality until after Shoghi Effendi's death (at age 60), but by then the pattern of the administrative order was set and the smooth transferral of leadership was feasible.

In no way can the present Baha'i administrative system be considered a mere creature of Shoghi Effendi's intellect. The basic structure of the administrative order was sketched out by Baha'u'llah;⁹ some of the practical issues of form and limits of authority were resolved by 'Abdu'l-Baha in his will and testament.¹⁰ Shoghi Effendi's task was one

⁹Brief passages regarding administration of the Faith are scattered through the following two sources: A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, 1973), esp. pp. 13, 35; Baha'i World Faith, Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha (2nd ed.; Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969), esp. pp. 176, 179, 182-183, 195-197, 199-201.

¹⁰Baha'i World Faith, pp. 442-448.

of implementation, a process that required a myriad of decisions regarding the mundane workings of the various administrative institutions. The result is an administrative system which clearly reflects the orderly, systematic qualities characteristic of the Guardian's mind, but which in its basic structure and principles is the creation of Baha'u'llah. Thus Baha'is perceive it as being a divinely ordained blueprint for the future when mankind will be united under the spiritual umbrella of the Baha'i Faith:

The Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Baha'u'llah has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word, and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism.

The Baha'i Administrative Order, as it expands and consolidates itself, will come to be regarded not only as the nucleus but as the very pattern of the New World Order, destined to embrace, in the fullness of time, the whole of mankind. It is the sole framework of the Baha'i commonwealth of the future which will be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great Peace announced by its Author.¹¹

The administrative order developed by Shoghi Effendi permitted a transition from charismatic to institutionalized leadership. Furthermore, because of the divine origins of the administrative system, even the institutionalized leadership has charisma--a fact which enlarges its capacity to marshal the allegiance and intensify the commitment of the Baha'i community. This has been a significant factor in the Faith's propensity to grow. The administrative order is perceived by Baha'is

¹¹Principles of Baha'i Administration, A Compilation (3rd ed.; London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 1.

as being not merely a manager of internal affairs but also an effective tool for engendering global diffusion of the Faith. In fact, promotion of the principles of the Faith is its primary reason for existing:

As the administrative work of the Cause steadily expands, as its various branches grow in importance and number, it is absolutely necessary that we bear in mind this fundamental fact that all these administrative activities, however harmoniously and efficiently conducted, are but means to an end, and should be regarded as direct instruments for the propagation of the Baha'i Faith.¹²

The establishment of the administrative system was the Guardian's single most important accomplishment, but there was another dimension to his labors on behalf of the Faith that so affected the diffusion process that it cannot be overlooked. Shoghi Effendi's upbringing in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Baha'i tradition was combined with an educational experience, designed by his grandfather, that initially emphasized Oriental languages and Eastern wisdom, but included instruction in English and eventually culminated in a B.A. from the American University in Beirut and additional studies in economics and political science at Oxford.¹³ The net result was that when he became heir to the Guardianship he was in the unique position of being an authoritative translator of the voluminous Baha'i sacred writings. There can be little doubt that in the early years of the Faith transmittal of its principles was greatly inhibited by the language barrier. In order for the Faith to transcend its original cultural context its message had to be made available in languages other than Persian and Arabic. The magnitude of the problem is

¹²Ibid., p. 103.

¹³Ruhiyyih Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969), pp. 12-13, 25-38.

hard to evaluate, but Baha'i recognition of its importance is apparent in Baha'u'llah's social teaching that adoption of an auxiliary universal language is a required condition of world unity, and in the emphasis which Baha'i growth plans have placed on the translation of Baha'i writings into as wide a variety of languages as possible. 'Abdu'l-Baha was aware of the problem and, perceiving the de facto primacy of English as an international language, insured that his grandson would be in a position to disseminate original Baha'i writings via that channel.¹⁴

The bulk of the sacred Baha'i literature currently available in English¹⁵ was originally translated by Shoghi Effendi. In addition, he tapped non-English sources to write a comprehensive history of the Faith, and translated a major historical narrative of the period of the Bab's ascendancy. Insofar as written materials assist the diffusion process, the Guardian's work as a translator facilitated the early dissemination of the Faith in English-speaking parts of the world.

The Faith Today

Today, the Baha'i Faith is a single, unified religious movement with followers in virtually every nation, territory, and isolated region of the world (with the singular exception of the communist realm). In no country do Baha'is represent even five percent of the total population and so when viewed on a global scale their pattern of settlement is very

¹⁴Ibid., p. 12. Incidentally, the Baha'i attitude regarding translation of sacred scripture contrasts sharply with the attitude of Islam.

¹⁵A large part of the entire body of literature that emanated from the pens of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and 'Abdu'l-Baha has not yet been translated into English.

highly dispersed. Now that the Guardian is gone and leadership by individuals has come to an end, the affairs of the Faith are handled entirely by the new administrative order. Administrative institutions and principals are numerous, but some understanding of them is essential if one is to have a realistic impression of how Baha'i diffusion proceeds.

At the core of the administrative order of the Faith is a hierarchical structure consisting of three levels of territorial authority. At the global level, the affairs of the Faith are coordinated and directed by the Universal House of Justice located in Haifa, Israel--an indivisible body composed of nine elected individuals. The intermediate layer of administration consists of over 120 National Spiritual Assemblies, each of which resembles the Universal House of Justice in form but which is limited in territorial jurisdiction. At the lowest administrative level are similarly formed local Spiritual Assemblies. They exist in every town, village, or city wherein reside nine or more adult Baha'is, and each has authority just in its own small territorial subdivision. Baha'is are expected to form a local Spiritual Assembly as soon as there are nine adult believers in their area, and yet no city or town can have more than one such body. If the Baha'i population drops below nine, the pre-existing Assembly automatically dissolves. The formation and activity of each Assembly is carefully recorded and that information is forwarded to the appropriate National Spiritual Assembly which in turn transmits all significant news to the Universal House of Justice.

At all three levels, members of these administrative bodies are elected. At present, members of the Universal House of Justice are elected for five years; members of National and local Spiritual

Assemblies for one. Campaigning is strictly prohibited and nomination of individuals is not permitted. Elections are by secret ballot.

Local Spiritual Assembly members are elected directly by all adult believers in the Assembly area. For the election of National Spiritual Assemblies, believers in the various regions of the National Assembly are obliged to elect delegates to a national convention who in turn elect the National Spiritual Assembly. The number of delegates from a particular region is proportionate to the relative size of the Baha'i community there. The Universal House of Justice is elected by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies. Thus it is that the three tiers of administration obtain their legitimacy in the eyes of the Baha'i community through the synergistic combination of sacred origins and democratic structure. Even though democratic procedures determine membership of these administrative units, elected individuals are not representatives of the electors in the accepted political sense. A member of an administrative body is supposed to be independent of influence and is expected to perform his duties according to the dictates of his own conscience. Moreover, he is powerless in his own right. Although greatly respected by the Baha'i community, he possesses no authority as an individual; only decisions arrived at by the administrative body to which he belongs can be considered as binding on the believers.

In contradistinction to these elected assemblies which are concerned with governing Baha'i affairs, there stands a separate set of Baha'i institutions solely devoted to furtherance of the religion's interests. Principal of these is the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God,

a small group of men and women appointed by the Guardian¹⁶--according to a prerogative granted to him in Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament--and vested with the responsibility of protecting and promulgating the Faith. The Hands travel extensively in order to: (1) proclaim the Faith to the public at large, and (2) inspire Baha'is everywhere to become more united in their interactions with each other and to be more committed to the goal of expanding the influence of the Faith. Hands of the Cause of God are recognized as knowledgeable individuals regarding Baha'i teachings, but they are not accorded any administrative authority. Since only the Guardian had the right to appoint Hands of the Cause of God, they will eventually disappear from the Baha'i scene. In order to perpetuate the protection and promulgation function that they perform, the Universal House of Justice has appointed the Continental Board of Counsellors, a body of individuals who normally are apportioned to various regions of the world. Continental Counsellors, in turn, have been granted the prerogative of appointing assistants called auxiliary board members.

Individual Baha'is become involved in conducting the affairs of the Faith via a number of channels, the most important of which is the 19 day feast. On the first day of each Baha'i month the members of each Baha'i community around the world gather together to participate in a meeting which has three parts: (1) a spiritual portion in which Baha'i sacred writings are read, (2) a consultative portion in which community affairs are discussed and suggestions for community activities are made

¹⁶Actually, Baha'u'llah is known to have appointed four Hands of the Cause of God and 'Abdu'l-Baha referred to two additional individuals as being Hands. After the passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, however, the Guardian was the only person with the right to make such appointments. During his ministry, Shoghi Effendi appointed 42 Hands, the vast majority of whom have since passed away.

to the local Spiritual Assembly, and (3) a social portion. The feast serves a number of purposes, not the least of which are maintenance of community unity and facilitation of interaction between the local Spiritual Assembly and the individual believers.

Baha'is also participate in the affairs of the Faith by attending conferences, many of which are international in scope. The conference brings together Baha'is from a wide area, emphasizes the unity of spirit and endeavor that must characterize Baha'i life, and inspires Baha'is to diffuse the Faith. Baha'i conferences are not held at regular intervals, but do occur frequently and in all parts of the world.

At a more personal level, the individual Baha'i can, at any time, volunteer to be a pioneer or travel teacher. Pioneers are Baha'is who move to a locality where there are few or no believers and attempt to develop a Baha'i community. In most instances pioneers are self-supporting. They are not official representatives of the Faith in the sense of being experts, authorities, or professionals. Neither are they selected or individually recruited by Spiritual Assemblies.

Travel teachers are individuals who, like pioneers, volunteer their time and energy to spreading the Faith, but instead of actually settling in a new location they travel from place to place giving talks on the religion. Nowadays, travel teachers usually go where Baha'i communities already exist and, relying on the advance planning of these communities, present the Faith to interested people who have been brought to a pre-arranged meeting. Travel teachers were not always so fortunate. In the earlier part of the century they frequently went to locations where there were no Baha'is and had to recruit listeners as well as speak to them.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of pioneering and travel teaching to the growth of the Faith. As a general rule, travel teaching has been an effective means of expanding the size and number of Baha'i communities in areas where at least a few groups of Baha'is are already present. In areas where there are no Baha'is whatsoever, on the other hand, pioneering has been the most successful strategy for creating an initial nucleus of believers. As will be shown later, it was the voluntary pioneering efforts of a relatively small number of Baha'is that succeeded in diffusing the Faith to a large number of countries in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

BELIEFS

The fundamental Baha'i belief is that God is one, religion is one, and mankind is one. The concept of one God is not so unusual as to merit discussion in this context. The belief in a single religion and a unified mankind, however, is somewhat less self-evident and needs clarification.

All the world's major revealed religions are, from the Baha'i point of view, expressions of a single spiritual theme. They all teach the same spiritual truths and differ only in such non-essential aspects as dogma, ritual, and social law. The explanation of this situation is that God (or whatever name one wishes to attach to that Unknowable Essence) educates man by revealing to him the spiritual truths via the medium of Prophets--superhuman individuals whom God uses as instruments of His will. Prophets are physically human, but They invariably testify that there is one God, that mankind must submit to His will, and that in

this world the best way to do that is to become as selfless as possible. Mankind, Baha'is believe, is capable of spiritual and intellectual progress. Thus it is that as we develop our capacities we move on from one spiritual teacher to the next. The teachings of one instructor--or Prophet--are not denied by His successor; rather, they are reiterated, reinforced, and used as the basis for an even more complete understanding of man's relationship with God and his fellow man. From this perspective mankind is moving toward higher and higher levels of spiritual perfection, a process that is made possible by the progressive revelations of succeeding Prophets. Each Prophet finds what man, from his limited vantage point, perceives to be a separate religion, but these apparently independent religions are really nothing more than successive chapters in a single religious story. The fact that each Prophet explicitly testifies to the authenticity of His predecessor and reassures mankind that in the future another Prophet will succeed Him is viewed by Baha'is as evidence in support of this interpretation of religious history. Since all Prophets speak for the same God and exhibit behavioral qualities exemplary of that God, They are, in the spiritual sense, the same person. Thus, when Christ prophesizes His own return, He is indicating that His spiritual light will return, albeit in a different physical body.

The differences which man perceives in the religious movements founded by such Prophets as, for example, Buddha, Moses, and Mohammed are a consequence of the varying forms of the essential spiritual message. Why does the form vary? Two different processes must be considered. First, there is a legitimate variation in superficial form arising out of the fact that each Prophet, coming as He does at a unique point in the

history of man's development, lays down a series of social laws and observances designed to deal with the particular defects in man's social fabric existing at that time. As a result, the social laws and behavioral constraints placed on man during one prophetic dispensation may be significantly different from those ordained in another.

A much more profound cause of religion's differentiation, however, is the propensity of man to corrupt the original spiritual revelation by overlaying it with a bewildering array of dogmas and rituals that have nothing whatsoever to do with the Prophet's original teachings. These accretions reinforce the temporal authority of the religious leaders, and consequently become perversely important in the life of the religion. Religious adherence comes to be measured more in terms of the outward observance of the prescribed ceremonies than the inner observance of the spiritual truths. The spiritual messages of all the Prophets are vulnerable to this tendency towards corruption and defilement as time diminishes the freshness and vitality of the original teachings.

The pattern is clear. Each Prophet renews and expands the basic spiritual message, thereby releasing a potent energy in the world that transforms the hearts of men, attracts a multitude of believers, and precipitates the attainment of a higher level of human civilization. But with time the spiritual truths become obscured and the force of religion weakens, the foundations of civilization crumble, and mankind descends to a level where the material achievements of civilization may still be extant but the spiritual light--the source of guidance--has become extinguished. It is at this point that a new Prophet can be expected to arise and renew the cycle.

Baha'is believe that Baha'u'llah is the most recent of God's Prophets. They view His advent as being the source of a spiritual regeneration that will encompass the whole of humanity and will overcome the prejudices and self-interests that stand in the way of global unification. Toward this end, Baha'u'llah does not advocate the elimination of variety and the subjugation of individuality to a homogeneous world culture; rather, He emphasizes the necessity of retaining rich and stimulating diversity in a context of global loyalties and worldwide commitments.

Baha'is derive their beliefs about the history and role of religion from the writings of Baha'u'llah. He has testified to the potency and authenticity of previous prophetic dispensations, proclaimed Himself the mouthpiece for God in this day, and affirmed the eventual appearance of subsequent divine teachers. He has given assurance that His dispensation will sweep away the divisive forces in the world and initiate a period in human history characterized by global peace and human brotherhood on a worldwide scale. The Baha'i vision of the future presumes an actualization of this assurance, but does not assume that the process will be automatic and painless. Instead, it is expected that the future world order will be realized through the dedicated and sacrificial effort of individual Baha'is wholeheartedly committed to making it happen.

One can identify in each Prophet's message a particular emphasis, or focus, that seems to permeate the ensuing religious tradition. Buddha stressed detachment, Moses justice, Christ love, and Mohammed submission to the will of God. In a similar fashion, Baha'u'llah appears to have emphasized unity. He viewed the world as being in turmoil and attributed the cause to lack of unity:

Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples. It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities. Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be. Whenever the True Counsellor uttered a word in admonishment, lo, they all denounced Him as a mover of mischief and rejected His claim. How bewildering, how confusing is such behavior! No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union. The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. . . .¹⁷

This required unity of mankind, moreover, can only be effected by recognition of the oneness of religion, the ultimate source of man's beliefs, values, inspiration, and civilization. Thus the Baha'i Faith seeks world unity by encouraging universal acceptance of all God's Prophets.

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this Truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of his Messengers.¹⁸

Baha'is perceive Baha'u'llah as being the Prophet for this day--no more exalted than any other Prophet but the one who is capable of diagnosing the current ills of mankind and prescribing spiritual solutions.

¹⁷Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 218.

¹⁸Baha'i World Faith, pp. 27-28.

. . . That which God hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful, and inspired Physician. By My life! This is the truth, and all else naught but error. . . .¹⁹

The emphasis on unity underlies many of the basic tenets of the Baha'i Faith, the principal ones of which are listed below. Most of these basic tenets were mentioned or alluded to by Baha'u'llah, but it was 'Abdu'l-Baha who emphasized their importance and elaborated on their meaning.²⁰

1. The oneness of mankind.
2. Independent investigation of truth.
3. The common foundation of all religions.
4. The essential harmony of science and religion.
5. Equality of men and women.
6. Elimination of prejudice of all kinds.
7. Universal compulsory education.
8. A spiritual solution of economic problems.
9. A universal auxiliary language.
10. Universal peace upheld by a world government.

The beliefs and principles to which Baha'is adhere are more numerous and detailed than this brief discussion could possibly indicate. They are, furthermore, capable of being expressed in a wide variety of contexts and from a multitude of perspectives. In particular, it would

¹⁹ Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 62-63.

²⁰ See especially 'Abdu'l-Baha, Foundations of World Unity (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), pp. 28-33.

have been possible to focus only on those beliefs that can be reasonably expected to have some bearing on the question of Baha'i diffusion. But it was felt that a summary of the Baha'i position which touches upon the key beliefs while emphasizing the primary theme (i.e., unity) would be more indicative of the level of adoptability that the Faith possesses in the eyes of the world as a whole. If, for example, a single belief, such as the equality of men and women, had been extracted from the Baha'i entity and emphasized as a theoretically important factor in the diffusion process, conclusions might have been reached regarding the likely geographical distribution of its cultural acceptability when in fact analysis of some other idea, such as the compatibility of science and religion, could have generated conflicting hypotheses. When a person becomes a Baha'i, or for that matter joins any religious movement, a large number of beliefs will be adopted, many of which are natural expressions of the person's previous view of the world, but some of which probably do not mesh as well with his pre-existing values and beliefs. Consequently, it is the general theme of the religion rather than its multitude of constituent elements which is most likely to determine whether it will be accepted or rejected. The most lucid exposition of the Baha'i theme has issued from the pen of Shoghi Effendi, and so his words will stand as a summary statement:

The Revelation proclaimed by Baha'u'llah, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide

in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." His Cause, they have already demonstrated, stands identified with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they assert, is not only necessary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short of the celestial potency with which a divinely ordained Message can claim to be endowed can succeed in establishing it.

The Baha'i Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, an ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.²¹

²¹Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1955), pp. xi-xii.

CHAPTER III

A GEOHISTORY OF EARLY BAHAI DIFFUSION: 1844-1921¹

THE WORLD IN 1844

In 1844 vast areas of the world still remained unknown to Western civilization. In North America large sections of the intermontaine west were being explored by Fremont while in South America substantial portions of the Amazon basin remained unpenetrated. Except for its coastal fringes, Africa south of the Sahara was completely unknown to the Europeans. It would be another ten years before Livingstone would make the first crossing of the continent and marvel at the sight of the mighty Zambezi's Victoria Falls, another twenty years before the younger Stanley would cross further north and trace the course of the Congo. Even the discoveries of Lake Victoria and the headwaters of the Nile were nearly two decades away. Uganda, a modern day stronghold of the Baha'i Faith, received its first European visitor in 1862, 18 years after the declaration of the Bab. Australia was a virtually unknown territory. Except for its southern rim and southeastern corner, the whole continent lay

¹The material presented in this chapter cannot be regarded as a general history of Baha'i growth. The limitations both of my background and of available source materials in English preclude the feasibility of such a comprehensive undertaking. Instead, I try to identify historical materials relevant to diffusion so that they can be analyzed from a geographer's point of view. My objective is to reveal those forces and conditions that were most instrumental in propelling and guiding the diffusion process during the first 77 years of the religion. In that sense, the narrative is extremely limited: it is nothing more than a geographical analysis of diffusion using historical sources.

unexplored by Western man and would not even be traversed until the 1860s.

By 1844 the first successful railroad was 14 years old and the first transatlantic steamship crossing had occurred six years previously, but it would be another seven years before a rail line would connect the Atlantic with the Great Lakes, another 25 years before trains could traverse the North American continent, and over 50 years until the Trans-Siberian Railway would span Asia. During the three decades immediately following the birth of the Baha'i Faith methods of long distance transportation would be revolutionized, and yet only by the end of that time would it be possible for Jules Verne to postulate the highly speculative possibility that the world could be circled by a dedicated traveler in a mere eighty days.

Methods of communication were as primitive. Of course the development of the telephone and radio were events of the relatively distant future, but even the electronic telegraph, the first of the major communicational innovations, was so new that commercial lines were not yet available. In fact, public use of the telegraph was instituted the day after the Bab declared himself to Mulla Husayn when on May 24th Samuel Morse inaugurated service between Baltimore and Washington by transmitting the famous message: "What hath God wrought?"

Let this stand as a reminder that the technological conditions for the diffusion of an innovation have undergone rapid and far-reaching change since 1844. The evolution of cultural and ideological systems, although more difficult to define, was at least as dramatic. Consider, for example, that in 1844 mass education was a very new concept, universal suffrage was not a concept at all, and the revolutionary ideas of

Karl Marx and Charles Darwin were as yet unpublished. Suffice it to say that in all important respects our world is a different world from that which confronted mankind in the middle of the last century.

The virtual transformation of the world which has transpired during the Baha'i religion's relatively brief period of historical development strongly discourages the use of mechanistic diffusion models. Without exception, these models make assumptions about the immutability of the technological and social environment in which the innovation is spreading. Often these assumptions can be relaxed, but in order to do so the investigator must append to his basic mathematical construct a sequence of cumbersome computations that make the model more complex without expanding its theoretical base. In other words, the explanation of why diffusion occurs the way it does remains unchanged and the increased complexity is merely an attempt to improve the predictive power of the model--an improvement which is a chimera since it is founded on mere statistical accommodation of unintelligible forces that operated in a "predictable" fashion in the past but may or may not continue to operate so in the future. With some degree of reluctance, therefore, I abandon the hope of deriving measurably correct generalizations about the nature of the forces behind the broad sweep of Baha'i diffusion and turn my attentions, rather, to the intermingled peculiarities of time and place that I believe will explain why the Faith spread.

DIFFUSION IN THE TIME OF THE BAB: 1844-1853

In May of 1844, the Babi Faith first appeared in the Persian city of Shiraz. For forty days the Bab's only believer was Mulla Husayn,² a

²Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 7.

man who, as a consequence of the teachings of his preceding religious mentor,³ had been eagerly anticipating the birth of a new religious dispensation and had spontaneously travelled from Karbila in Iraq to Shiraz, a distance of over 600 miles. Mulla Husayn did not have an intended destination for his travels; he was simply searching for the new Prophet of God whose appearance he anticipated. The forty day interlude following Mulla Husayn's declaration of belief may be attributed to the Bab's insistence that His spiritual mission not yet be proclaimed publicly. Before open disclosure of His dispensation was to take place, the Bab demanded that ". . . Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation. Unwarned and uninvited, each of these souls must seek independently to find Me. . . ." ⁴ Mulla Husayn was the first to do so.

Eventually the requisite eighteen disciples accepted the Bab as the founder of a new religious dispensation. All but one did so face-to-face in Shiraz; the exception was a young woman named Tahirih, then residing in Karbila, who entrusted her brother-in-law with a letter declaring her allegiance. Her brother-in-law did seek out the Bab and become one of His followers. The Bab, upon receipt of Tahirih's letter, declared her

³ Mulla Husayn was a follower of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i, a heterodox Muslim who established a school of religious thought based on the notion that the corrupted Islamic religion could only experience spiritual regeneration through the influence of a new Manifestation of God, the appearance of whom was imminent. Many of the Bab's earliest disciples were formerly Shaykhis.

⁴ The words of the Bab, presumably transmitted orally via Mulla Husayn, as quoted by Nabil-i-A'zam in The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), p. 63.

a disciple, one of the group of eighteen that He referred to as the Letters of the Living.

Quddus, another of the Letters of the Living, was the last of the original band of disciples to declare himself. Originally a Shaykhi like Tahirih and Mulla Husayn, Quddus left his home in Barfurush in search of the new Manifestation; at the age of 22 he attained the presence of the Bab in Shiraz. Quddus eventually emerged as the recognized leader of the Babis, in a sense the lieutenant of the Bab. This position of leadership had originally rested with Mulla Husayn, but early in the summer of 1848 he indicated that instead the Babis should turn to Quddus.

All existing historical narratives available in English emphasize the preeminent roles of these three individuals during the tempestuous years of the Bab's ministry. They, apparently, were the three disciples who most vociferously pursued the Bab's policy of nationwide dissemination. The other Letters of the Living probably were, in many instances, effective agents for the Bab, but evidence of their activities is extremely fragmentary.

In the beginning, therefore, the Babis were nineteen in number: the Prophet-Founder with seventeen disciples in Shiraz and one believer in Karbila, Iraq.

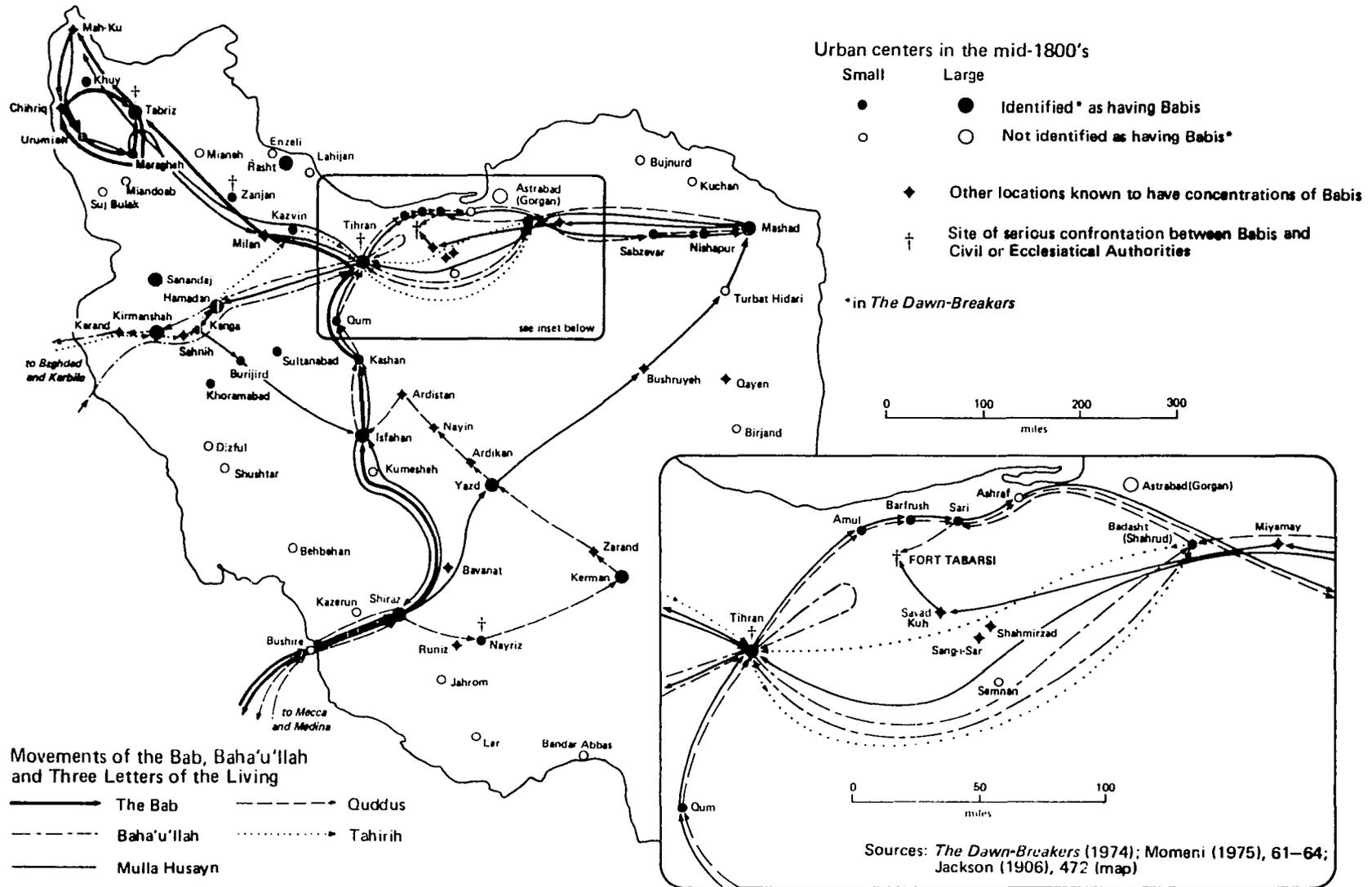
The absence of primary source materials in English, and the paucity even of secondary sources, precludes any attempt to recreate a detailed picture of the movements and activities of all the early believers and the religious fervor that they generated. Under the circumstances, the most suitable approach for studying Babi diffusion is that of mapping the general population distribution in Persia at the time and then superimposing information regarding the movements of the Bab and His most

prominent disciples, the areas where Babis came into conflict with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and the localities where Babis are known to have concentrated. The resulting map should demonstrate (1) whether the Bab's intended program of nationwide proclamation did actually materialize, and (2) whether the activities of His disciples did generate a nationally distributed Babi population. The information for such a map must be culled from historical sources that are intended to give the reader a feel for the development of the Faith and are not necessarily concerned with recreating an accurate image of the unfolding geographical distribution of the Babis and their activities. Consequently, the final cartographic result must be incomplete and fragmentary, but this is only a serious problem if the analysis of the map fails to permit a generally positive conclusion regarding the success of the Bab's dissemination plans.

Figure 1 makes it clear that the Babi cause did indeed envelop the whole national area and was not confined to a particular region of the country. Those areas for which Babi activity cannot be documented tend to correspond closely to the regions of low population density and few urban centers.⁵ Furthermore, the movement patterns of the more prominent

⁵The compilation of information regarding population distribution relied on sources that depict the present pattern. The austere geography of large portions of Iran precludes the possibility of substantial settlement and makes it highly unlikely that the basic structure of the distribution pattern was materially different 130 years ago. The appropriateness of this assumption has been confirmed by analyzing the regional narratives on historical geography contained in G. LeStrange, The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate (3rd ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966).

FIGURE 1 The Babi Religion in Persia: 1844–1853



disciples confirm that the Bab's injunction to travel and teach the new religion was taken seriously.

The Bab had freedom of movement only during the first two years of His ministry, and for nine months of that time He was occupied with a pilgrimage to Mecca where He visited the birthplace of Mohammed. From the time the Bab left Shiraz in the summer of 1846, except for a very brief interlude in Isfahan, until His ultimate execution in the marketplace in Tabriz, He was a prisoner of state held in confinement and ordered from place to place by the Shah of Persia, his Grand Vizier Haji Mirza Aqasi, and their immediate successors. In spite of this confinement, various historical sources confirm that the Bab's custodians were invariably unwilling or somehow unable to sever contact between Him and the pilgrims and messages that continually sought His presence. In effect, although the Bab's movements were controlled by the state and His incarceration in the fortresses of Mah-Ku and Chihriq were deliberate attempts to isolate the head of the heretical movement from its most troublesome body, the Bab always managed to maintain communication with His followers.

One inexplicable aspect of the Bab's immediate impact on the inhabitants of those cities and villages through which He passed and in which He in some instances tarried is that, although in virtually every locality His presence wrought enormous controversy and precipitated large-scale conversion, in Tabriz His execution did not generate a similar response. In Shiraz, in Isfahan, in Milan, in Mah-Ku, in Khuy, in Chihriq this controversial Prophet stimulated local diffusion.⁶ In

⁶H. M. Balyuzi, The Bab (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973), pp. 89-90, 110, 126, 128-129, 136; The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 170-171, 202, 303.

some places, such as Shiraz and Isfahan, He appears to have attracted converts by means of His verbal eloquence, but in other localities, such as Mah-Ku, Khuy, and Chihriq (where the Bab was held in much closer confinement), He seems to have diffused the Faith simply through the power of His personality. In one village--Milan--large-scale conversion was effected through His performance of a healing miracle:

. . . In the morning, as we were setting out from Milan, an old woman brought a scald-headed child, whose head was so covered with scabs that it was white down to the neck, and entreated His Holiness (the Bab) to heal him. The guards would have forbidden her, but His Holiness prevented them, and called the child to him. Then he drew a handkerchief over its head and repeated certain words, which he had no sooner done than the child was healed. And in that place about two hundred persons believed and underwent a true and sincere conversion. . . .⁷

This persistent pattern of receptivity to the Bab was played out in Tabriz as well,⁸ but the surprising thing is that when He was brought back to that city for the last time, the dramatic sequence of events associated with His execution did not materially sway the local populace. When the Bab was executed by a firing squad, the multitude of onlookers witnessed an extraordinary occurrence. The Bab and one of His believers who was granted the privilege of being martyred with Him

⁷Edward G. Browne (trans. and ed.), The Tarkih-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza Ali Muhammad the Bab by Mirza Huseyn of Hamadan (Cambridge: The University Press, 1893), pp. 220-221. In this instance, the author is relating what was told to Haji Mirza Jani (an early Babi who compiled an historical account of the Faith and upon whose work Mirza Huseyn apparently relied for substantial amounts of source material) by Muhammed Big, the man who had been put in charge of the military contingent consigned the task of conducting the Bab from Isfahan to Tabriz. During the execution of this assigned duty Muhammed Big became a Babi.

⁸The Dawn-Breakers, p. 239.

were suspended by ropes from a spike in the wall and fired upon by an Armenian regiment of 750 Christian men under the command of a colonel named Sam Khan. When the smoke had cleared the Babi companion was standing unhurt with his ropes severed while the Bab had vanished from sight. He was eventually discovered nearby completing a conversation with His amanuensis--a conversation that had been interrupted by a local official earlier in the day. Once again the Bab and His companion were strung up and fired upon, and this time the execution was successful. Sam Khan was not responsible, however, for after the first attempt he was so shaken by what happened that he ordered his men out of the barracks square and refused to have anything more to do with the execution. Sam Khan was duly impressed by the miraculous nature of the Bab's survival in the first instance, but the inhabitants of Tabriz apparently did not view the event in the same way. Nabil makes mention of what happened immediately following the execution and comments on the relative indifference of the Tabrizis:

The very moment the shots were fired, a gale of exceptional severity arose and swept over the whole city. A whirlwind of dust of incredible density obscured the light of the sun and blinded the eyes of the people. The entire city remained enveloped in that darkness from noon till night. Even so strange a phenomenon, following immediately in the wake of that still more astounding failure of Sam Kahn's regiment to injure the Bab, was unable to move the hearts of the people of Tabriz, and to induce them to pause and reflect upon the significance of such momentous events. . . .⁹

Who can explain the fact that an apparent miracle in Milan was sufficient to stimulate mass conversion whereas a seemingly miraculous event of even greater dramatic proportions failed to have a similar result in Tabriz?

⁹The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 515-516.

Perhaps the fact that in the former instance the Bab seemed to be in control of the event whereas in the latter case He was, in the eyes of the onlookers, nothing more than a passive participant may have had something to do with the divergent reactions.

According to Shoghi Effendi, the Bab spoke to the populace immediately before His execution, addressing them in these words:

. . . "O wayward generation! . . . Had you believed in Me every one of you would have followed the example of this youth [the one who wished to be martyred with the Bab] who stood in rank above most of you, and would have willingly sacrificed himself in My path. The day will come when you will have recognized Me; that day I shall have ceased to be with you."¹⁰

It would seem that the Bab's admonishment fell on deaf ears, but this surely had as much to do with the existence of the language barrier as with the spiritual receptivity of the gathered crowd. According to Browne, who was writing some 45 years after the event:

The Azarbaijan dialect of Turkish is the language generally spoken in Tabriz, and only persons who have either received some education or travelled in other parts of Persia understand Persian. Indeed, Turkish prevails as far east as Kazvin, is widely spoken in Teheran, and is understood by many as far south as Kum.¹¹

If this is true, then the final three years of the Bab's life--over half His ministry--was spent not just in an isolated corner of Persia, not only in continual confinement, but also in a region whose inhabitants could not understand a word He might say. Perhaps, therefore, the surprise is not so much that the people of Tabriz failed to respond to the Bab

¹⁰Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 53.

¹¹Edward G. Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), II, p. 44.

but rather that such notable responses should have been forthcoming from other parts of the region: Mah-Ku, Khuy, Chihriq, and even Milan.

Badasht and Tabriz

In June and July, 1848, two events occurred which were to have a powerful impact on the fortunes of the Faith. In Badasht, a small village near the border of the province of Mazindaran, a Babi conference was organized by Baha'u'llah and attended by over eighty believers including Tahirih and Quddus. Shoghi Effendi states that:

. . . The primary purpose of that gathering was to implement the revelation of the Bayan by a sudden, a complete and dramatic break with the past--with its order, its ecclesiasticism, its traditions, and ceremonials. The subsidiary purpose of the conference was to consider the means of emancipating the Bab from His cruel confinement in Chihriq. The first was eminently successful; the second was destined from the outset to fail.¹²

This declaration of independence from Muslim orthodoxy was perceived by Persia's religious and temporal leaders as a direct challenge to their authority. Koranic law--the foundation of Persian society¹³--was abrogated at the Council of Badasht and in its stead was proposed a societal

¹²Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 31.

¹³The power of Islam in the nineteenth century is vividly portrayed by Lord Curzon:

"Marvellously adapted alike to the climate, character and occupations of those countries upon which it has laid its adamant grip, Islam holds its votary in complete thrall from the cradle to the grave. To him it is not only religion, it is government, philosophy and science as well. The Muhammadan conception is not so much that of a state church as, if the phrase may be permitted, of a church state. The undergirders with which society itself is warped round are not of civil, but of ecclesiastical, fabrication; and, wrapped in this superb, if paralyzing, creed, the Musselman lives in contented surrender of all volition, deems it his highest duty to worship God and to compel, or, where impossible, to despise those

structure based on the utterances and writings of the Bab. By itself, this brazen act of defiance would be sufficient to incur suppression, but the fact that thousands of Persians all across the country were being attracted to the Babi cause underscored the urgent need for counter-measures. The result was that, whereas before the Council of Badasht harassment and persecution of the Babis was sporadic and local, afterwards it was continuous and nationwide.¹⁴ In both the theological and historical senses, therefore, the conference was a momentous event.

In Tabriz, hundreds of miles away, a second occurrence greatly reinforced the Babi alienation precipitated by the Council of Badasht. The Bab, summoned from His place of incarceration, was obliged to undergo an examination by a board consisting of the seventeen-year-old crown prince and a number of leading divines in that area. The ostensible purpose of the interview was to determine the character of the Bab's claims, but E. G. Browne expresses the view that the entire proceeding was conducted with the singular intention of discrediting the Bab and fabricating a pretext for his eradication.¹⁵ Be that as it may, during the course of the examination, the Bab made it clear that He was claiming to be the Mahdi--the return of the Twelfth Imam promised by Shi'ah tradition. Such a declaration, proclaimed in clear and unmistakable language, could not but disconcert the conservative powers in an Islamic

who do not worship Him in the spirit, and then dies in sure and certain hope of Paradise."

George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question (2 vols., 2nd ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), I, p. 509.

¹⁴Balyuzi, The Bab, p. 169.

¹⁵Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, p. 290.

state since, if the Bab was who He claimed, then He did indeed have the right to annul the laws and observances of Islam. The Bab's proclamation combined with the radical position taken by His believers at the Council of Badasht thoroughly convinced the religious and secular leaders that the movement represented a serious threat to their authority. The Babis, in turn, came to stand more clearly outside Islamic law, recognizing the Bab's pronouncements as totally binding and ignoring any Muslim laws and traditions that were not compatible with the Bab's teachings. Thus it was that the lines were drawn.

The Mazindaran Upheaval

From the summer of 1848, confrontations between the Babis and the Persian nation took on a war-like complexion. Between 1848 and 1850, four particularly dramatic conflicts developed, each of which heightened the visibility of the Babi cause: upheavals in Mazindaran, Nayriz, and Zanjan, and the public execution of seven Babis in Tehran. Figure 1 identifies the location of each of these four events and makes it apparent that all parts of Persia were embroiled in the Babi controversy.

In Mazindaran, a few hundred Babis were forced to seek refuge from both military forces and local inhabitants. At the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi, not far from Barfurush, the Babis constructed a fortress to protect themselves from their adversaries. For over seven months they held out against successive regiments arrayed against them by Nasiri'd-Din Shah, the reigning monarch. The first imperial army of 12,000 men was actually put to flight by a sortie of some of the Babis under the command of Quddus and Mulla Husayn;¹⁶ subsequent military efforts to dislodge them

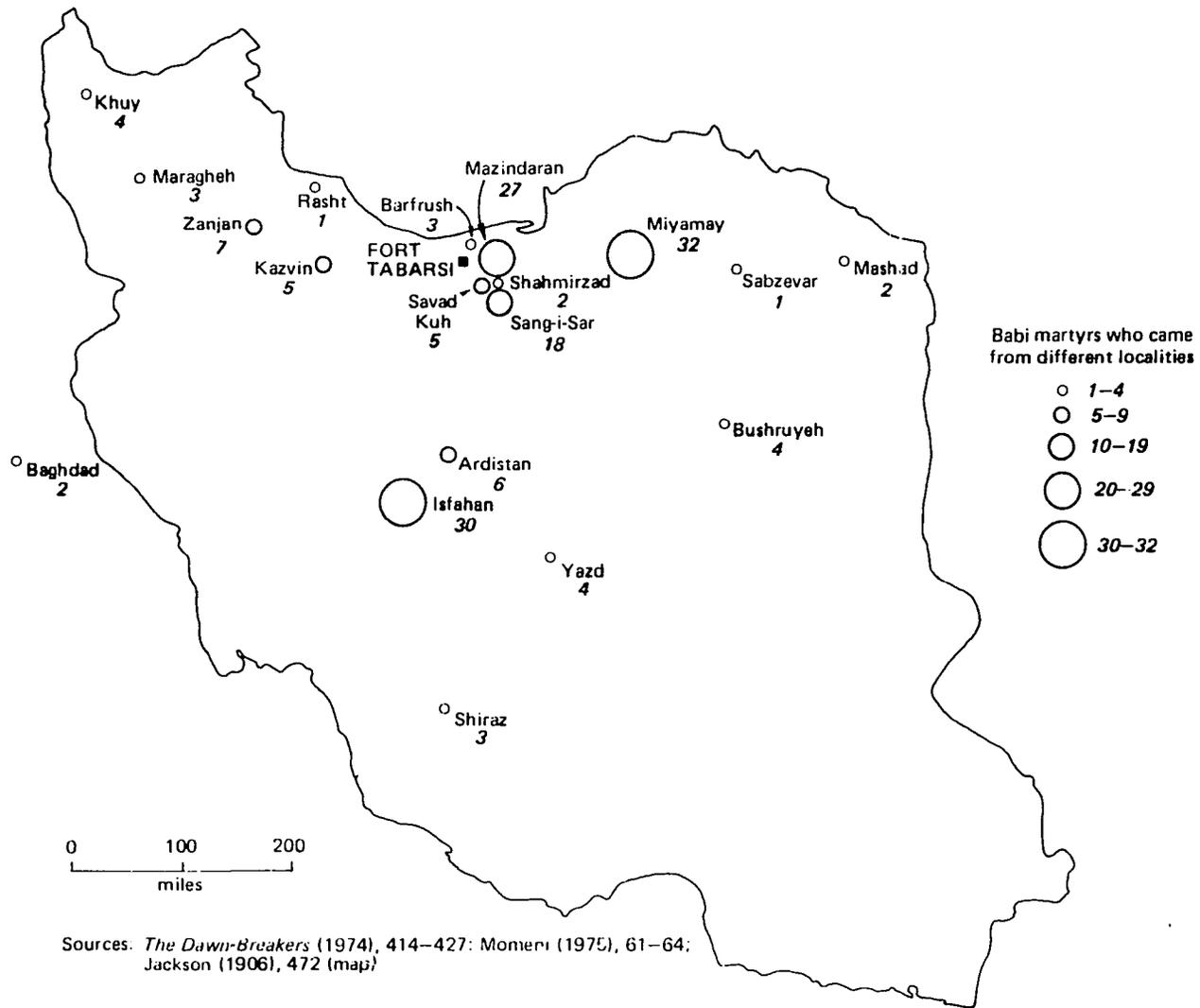
¹⁶The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 360-362.

were similarly unsuccessful. Ultimately, the original 313 Babis were lured out of their homebuilt fortification with the promise that they would not be harmed if they emerged from their fort and dispersed in peace. Once outside the protective walls, the Babis were slaughtered and the fort razed. A handful of them escaped death, but those that died included half the Letters of the Living. Mulla Husayn and Quddus were among them.¹⁷

Nabil-i-Azam managed to compile a partial list of those Babis who perished in the Tabarsi disaster. He identified 173 believers by name, and for the vast majority of these he mentioned their places of origin. Figure 2 identifies the source areas of all those Babis for whom Nabil recorded this information. Four observations can be made about the spatial pattern that emerges. First, it is apparent that the martyrs of Fort Tabarsi were drawn in large numbers from the immediately surrounding area (within a 100 mile radius). Second, it is clear that in spite of the important role that "local" residents played in the Tabarsi drama, substantial numbers of participants came from very distant areas. Third,

¹⁷The temptation of comparing this seige with the battle of the Alamo is too great to resist. Of course the defense of the Alamo was undertaken for nationalistic and military reasons, and was not a conflict founded in religious differences. In terms of drama and heroism, however, numerous parallels exist. The siege of the Alamo, which occurred early in 1836, pitted 4,000 Mexican troops against a collection of 174 Texas nationalists. The Texans killed about 1,500 of Santa Ana's troops and held out for 11 days before being overwhelmed. At Tabarsi, thirteen years later, 313 Babis withstood the onslaught of thousands of Persian troops (estimates range from 3,000 to well over 10,000), killed some 1,500 soldiers, and persisted for seven months before capitulating. All the defenders of the Alamo were killed; a handful of the Tabarsi defenders survived.

FIGURE 2 Places of Origin of Babis Who Perished at Fort Tabarsi



there seem to have been relatively few recruits drawn from the southern parts of the country. Fourth, the Fort Tabarsi recruits were drawn almost entirely from localities that had been visited by the principal leaders of the religion (see Figure 1).

In order to obtain even a partial understanding of this distributional pattern we must look at the events leading up to the siege of Fort Tabarsi. Quddus had intended to travel to Mashad following the Council of Badasht and in anticipation of that journey had directed Mulla Husayn to precede him. After the Council, however, Quddus was seized and held in detention in the town of Sari. Eventually, Mulla Husayn received a message from the Bab directing him to leave Mashad and travel to the aid of Quddus. According to Nabil, Mulla Husayn departed with 202 followers, stopped in each village along the way to Sari, spoke to the inhabitants about the Bab, and selected from among the resulting converts a few who were invited to join the itinerant group. Apparently, Mulla Husayn struck a particularly responsive chord in the village of Miyamay since 33 inhabitants declared their faith in the Bab and became part of the travelling band.¹⁸ As the contingent approached Savad-Kuh on the borders of Mazindaran, Mulla Husayn addressed them and issued a warning that they were predestined to be martyred in the cause of the Bab and that any who entertained second thoughts about their commitment should accompany him no further. Mirza Huseyn of Hamadan states in his history of the Faith that at this time Mulla Husayn had 230 companions, 30 of

¹⁸The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 325-326, 418-419. On p. 326 Nabil indicates that 30 villagers from Miyamay joined the cause, but on pp. 418-419 he tabulates 33.

whom decided not to continue on.¹⁹ If this is true, then, except in the village of Miyamay, Mulla Husayn must have lost as many converts as he gained along the road from Mashad.

From Savad-Kuh, the Babis pressed northward until they reached Barfurush. Skirmishes with the local population resulted in the death of half a dozen Babis, but the Barfurushi assailants were routed. Representatives of the villagers approached Mulla Husayn asking him for peace and suggesting that it might be better if the Babis continued their journey. Mulla Husayn acceded to these requests and on the following day the Babis departed with an armed escort from Barfurush. Some distance southwest of the town, near the site of the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi the armed escort turned on their charge, and once again the Babis were obliged to disperse their adversaries. That was not the end of the conflict, however, for the next day at the site of the shrine the Babis were once again attacked, this time by the inhabitants of the nearby village of Qadi-Kala who were bent upon avenging the humiliating defeat suffered by the armed escort from Barfurush. It was at this point, perceiving his group to be unduly exposed to the hostile attacks of surrounding villagers, that Mulla Husayn made the decision to fortify the Shrine. Once the fortifications had been completed Mulla Husayn dispatched a small group of men to the nearby town of Sari to obtain the release of Quddus; they were successful.

Various accounts indicate that when Quddus reached Fort Tabarsi there were 313 believers present. This is substantially more than the 230 who set out from Savad-Kuh a short time earlier. One historical record,

¹⁹ Browne (trans. and ed.), The Tarikh-i-Jadid, pp. 47-48.

commonly referred to as the Traveller's Narrative,²⁰ states that Quddus arrived at the garrison ". . . with a number of other persons . . ." ²¹ while Nabil intimates that he reached Tabarsi unaccompanied, having already urged any who wished to be with him to move on and join up with Mulla Husayn.²² Either way, it might have been associates of Quddus who accounted for the mysterious appearance at the fort of some 90 new defenders. On the other hand, perhaps Nabil's list of 173 Tabarsi martyrs is more complete than he realized.

Judging by the events leading up to the Tabarsi conflict it would seem likely that most of the Babi defenders would not have been from the surrounding environs of Barfurush and would have been much more strongly representative of eastern Persia, especially Khurasan, than of the more densely populated regions to the west. After all, most of the recruits for the Tabarsi fort came all the way from Mashad with Mulla Husayn. Presumably they would not have been in that distant corner of the empire unless they had roots in the region. Nevertheless, Nabil's compilation of martyrs clearly suggests the opposite: many were from not very far away and of the ones who did come from some distance a majority were from the west and center (especially Isfahan), not the east. How can this be

²⁰Vernon Johnson states that 'Abdu'l-Baha authored this work, a fact that E. G. Browne only discovered after he had translated and published it. Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith," p. 90. See also Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 28.

²¹Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, p. 37.

²²The Dawn-Breakers, p. 351.

explained? Perhaps the large numbers of recruits from nearby were recent converts to the Faith who, upon hearing Mulla Husayn's emotional appeals and observing the courageousness that the Babis exhibited under duress, flocked to the support of the beleaguered group. That might explain the discrepancy between the number of Babis who left Savad-Kuh and the number who occupied Fort Tabarsi.²³ It may also be that the large number of Babis from Mazindaran was the work of Quddus for apparently even Muslim historians admit that he converted three hundred in a week about the time that Mulla Husayn and his band were approaching the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsi.²⁴ Anyway, the events surrounding the precipitation of the Tabarsi siege were replete with opportunities for the Babis to display their valor and as E. G. Browne has observed ". . . nothing so greatly conduced to the fame and diffusion of the Babi religion as the unflinching courage with which its adherents confronted death. . . ."25

As to why so many of the Tabarsi martyrs originally came from farther west and south, the only rational explanation would seem to be that the Babis were extremely mobile. The willingness of 200 believers to ignore the exigencies of their personal lives and accompany on foot

²³Meager support for this conjecture is afforded by a somewhat questionable source contained in E. G. Browne (comp.), Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion (Cambridge: The University Press, 1961), pp. 241-242.

²⁴Emily McBride Perigord, Translation of French Foot-Notes of the Dawn-Breakers (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 42.

²⁵Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 332.

Mulla Husayn from Mashad to Sari (over 300 miles) is evidence of this, as is the obviously migratory behavior of the Letters of the Living (see Figure 1). We know that large numbers of the early believers travelled great distances to see the Bab at Mah-Ku²⁶ and Chihriq,²⁷ and there are numerous instances in which the Bab urged followers to undertake journeys. Perhaps the most pertinent evidence bearing on this question of how Fort Tabarsi came to rely on manpower from distant regions to the west and south, however, is contained in Nabil's account of how he became a Babi. Incidental mention is made of the fact that the Bab enjoined all His followers to ". . . 'proceed to Mazindaran and lend their assistance to Quddus, who is now hemmed in by the forces of an unrelenting foe.' . . ." ²⁸ Presumably, a number of believers in the western and central regions would have responded to this call, thereby explaining not just the geographical breadth of the Fort Tabarsi hinterland, but perhaps also the mysterious increase in the number of adherents who were at the fort.

Figure 2 identifies a surprisingly large number of Tabarsi martyrs as having originated in Isfahan. There is no ready explanation of why this city should have been so heavy a contributor to the ranks of the

²⁶Perigord, French Foot-Notes, p. 30.

²⁷". . . So many Babis came to Chihriq that it was impossible to house them and rooms had to be found for them in Iski-Shahr, which was not far away. . . ." Balyuzi, The Bab, p. 135.

²⁸The Dawn-Breakers, p. 438.

Tabarsi defenders, but it should be noted that Mulla Husayn was very successful in obtaining converts when he passed through in 1844 on his way north,²⁹ and it was only in Isfahan that the Bab enjoyed relative freedom of action following His return from pilgrimage.

The lack of Fort Tabarsi participants from the extreme south of Persia--especially the Persian Gulf littoral--fits well with this observation that appeared in a gazetteer of the Persian Gulf in 1908:

The new Babi religion in Persia . . . does not appear to have obtained as yet much hold on the coast of the Persian Gulf, notwithstanding that the Bab visited Bushehr at an early stage in his public career. It was reported that at Bushehr there were in 1905 only about 50 Babis, chiefly employed in the Customs Department or in the Artillery; a very few others were found at the ports of Bandar 'Abbas and Lingeh, and possibly at Shehr-i-Viran in the Livari district . . . It is probable, however, that Babis are to be found in places where their existence has not been ascertained.³⁰

This is the one region of Persia for which historical sources do not document considerable penetration by the Babi movement. It is interesting to note that this littoral zone is predominantly Arabic speaking and is the main beachhead of the Sunnis in Persia.³¹ The Faith may have had less appeal to Muslims who did not share the Shi'ah reverence for the Incarnate and would not, therefore, respond to the Bab's claim to be the Mahdi. However, it should also be kept in mind that this region was thinly populated. Babi underrepresentation may not have been as substantial as available historical sources indicate.

²⁹Perigord, French Foot-Notes, p. 16.

³⁰Lorimer's Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf as cited by Balyuzi, The Bab, p. 224.

³¹Herbert H. Vreeland (ed.), Iran, Survey Research Series, vol. 3 (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1957), pp. 44-45, 50.

Before abandoning this analysis of the conflict at Fort Tabarsi it would be worthwhile to consider a further source of information regarding the Babis involved in the struggle. Edward Browne possessed a copy of a manuscript that detailed the events of the incident, as narrated by one of the few surviving insurgents. He published a summary of its contents and in doing so elected to present the part of the work which tabulated the geographic origins of the participants.³² Table 1 lists the localities from which the Babis were drawn, indicates the number of men from each locality, and compares that information with the equivalent data supplied by Nabil.

A comparison of the two tabulations is somewhat awkward since Nabil's list is an incomplete enumeration of those who perished at Fort Tabarsi whereas the list proffered by Browne claims to be a complete enumeration of all those who entered the province of Mazindaran with Mulla Husayn. In spite of the fact that the two tabulations refer to somewhat different populations and to slightly different points in time, it would be reasonable to expect them to be roughly comparable.

There is in fact a fair amount of correlation between the two lists, and as would be anticipated the tabulated quantities in Nabil's list are consistently lower than in Browne's (with two major exceptions: Miyamay and Sang-i-Sar). No attempt will be made to explain the substantial discrepancies between the lists; they simply must be taken at face value. As to which tabulation is more likely to be accurate, it is impossible to say. Nabil's inventory has the ring of authority since it lists people by name; Browne's, however, was compiled by a participant at the time of the event.

³²Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 238.

TABLE 1
 THE FORT TABARSI BABIS: A COMPARISON OF THEIR PLACES
 OF ORIGIN AS TABULATED IN THE DAWN-BREAKERS AND IN
MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE BABI RELIGION

<u>Places of Origin Mentioned in</u> <u>Materials for the Study of the</u> <u>Babi Religion</u>			<u>Additional Places of Origin Mentioned</u> <u>in The Dawn-Breakers</u>		
Place	No. of Babis listed in:		Place	No. of Babis listed in:	
	<u>Babi</u> <u>Religion</u>	<u>Dawn-Breakers</u>		<u>Babi</u> <u>Religion</u>	<u>Dawn-Breakers</u>
Isfahan	40	30	Mazindaran ^a	-	27
Bushrueh	24 (or 40)	4	Savad Kuh	-	5
Mashad	22	2	Maragheh	-	3
Miyamay	14	32	Baghdad (IRAQ)	-	2
Herat (AFGH)	14	-	Sabzevar	-	1
Qum	12	-	Lahard	-	1
Zanjan	12	7	Rasht	-	1
Kasvin	10	5	Nuy	-	1
Sang-i-Sar	10	19			
Turshiz	10	-			
Shah Mirzad	9	2			
Tihiran	9	-			
Shiraz	8	3			
Ardistan	7	6			
Hamadan	6	-			
Kashan ^a	6	-			
Tabriz	5	-			
Karbila (IRAQ)	5	-			
Turbat	5	-			
Barfurush	4 (or 40- 60)	3			
Kakhak	4	-			
Qayen	4	-			
INDIA	4	-			
Kirman	3	-			
Kirmanshah	3	-			
Khuy	3	4			
Yazd	3	4			
Badasht	3	-			
Rum	3	-			
Amul	2	-			
Kand (RUSSIA)	2	-			
Shaykh Tabarsi	2	-			

Sources: Browne, Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion,
 p. 328; The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 414-427.

^aSome of the 27 Babis listed in The Dawn-Breakers as having
 originated from the province of Mazindaran may be the same Babis as
Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion listed as having come from
 Kashan, Badasht, Amul, and Shaykh Tabarsi.

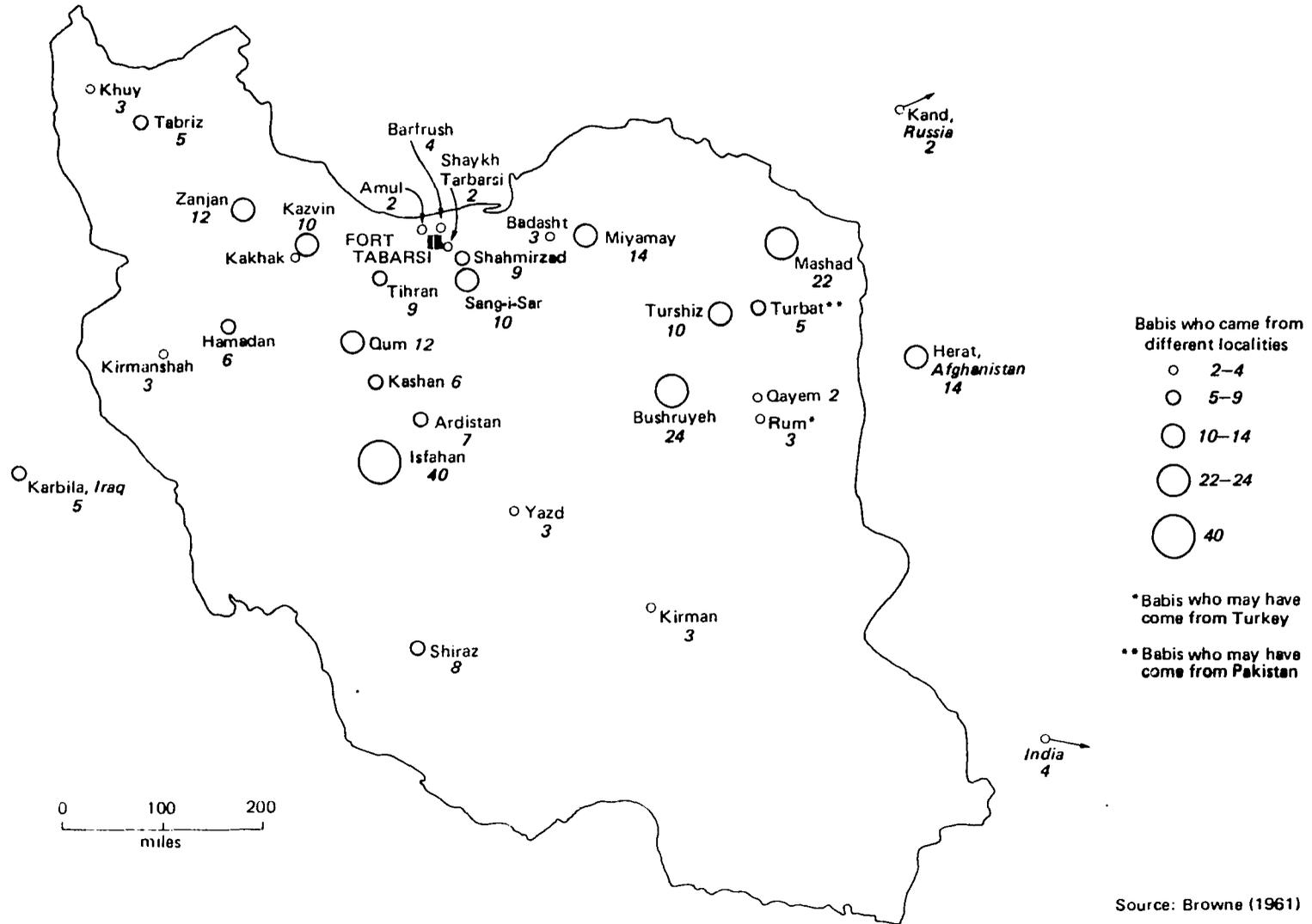
The compilation by Browne suggests a rather different geographic pattern from that which was recreated from Nabil's list. As Figure 3 shows, Browne's tabulation recognizes a stronger representation from Khurasan. Furthermore, his list indicates that there were noticeably fewer recruits from the immediate environs of Fort Tabarsi.

The most startling aspect of Figure 3, however, is that it suggests a much more diffuse distribution of Babis than is generally recognized. The accepted view within the Baha'i Faith is that up until 1853 the only areas that the movement had touched were Persia and Iraq,³³ and yet if the information in Figure 3 is accepted then there must have been believers in a number of other distant foreign lands. Herat, in modern Afghanistan, apparently contributed 14 Babis to Mulla Husayn's contingent, while India, the Fergana valley in Turkestan, and perhaps Turkey and Pakistan, also had representatives. Even Iraq, which is contained in Nabil's list of contributing areas, shows up more boldly in Browne's.

The presence of the Faith in Herat might be explained by Mashad's critical location on the great Khurasan road. Constructed under the Abbasid dynasty, this transportation link was the most important of the major routes radiating outward from Baghdad. It stretched across northern Persia, through Turkestan, into the Fergana Valley, and on to the borders of China. At Nishapur, just west of Mashad, a branch road passed southeast to Herat and finally to Zaranj in the ancient land of Sijistan. Both these routes were designed to link the eastern frontiers of the Muslim empire with the imperial capital and to afford overland

³³The Baha'i Faith, 1844-1963, comp. by the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Lands (Israel: Peli-P.E.C. Printing Works, Ltd.), p. 9.

FIGURE 3 Places of Origin of Babis Who Approached Fort Tabarsi with Mulla Husayn



access between the eastern regions and the pilgrimage destination of Mecca.³⁴ Both roads were in place well before the year 1000, and the road to Zaranj became an access route to India only a few centuries later.³⁵ Thus, Mashad lay near the junction of two major transasiatic roads along which people and goods had been travelling for centuries. It is not hard to envision Babi zealots passing along these routes in the earliest years of the Faith. Since Mulla Husayn recruited men from Mashad to accompany him on his long trek westwards (via the great Khurasan road) to Mazindaran, it is understandable that some of his band might have originated further east, probably coming together at Mashad where the two major routes linked.

As for India, Babis in that country could have arisen out of the labors of two obscure figures in early Babi history. One of the Letters of the Living was an Indian named Shaykh Sa'id-i-Hindi. He returned to his native land to proclaim his newly found religion, but nobody knows his fate.³⁶ A second Indian, a dervish who came to be called Qahru'llah, saw the Bab in a vision and claimed that the image before his eyes summoned him to Adhirbayjan. He travelled to Chihriq and accepted the Bab's religion. Directed to return to India and promote the Faith,

³⁴LeStrange, The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate, pp. 9-10.

³⁵Muir's Historical Atlas: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern, ed. by R. F. Treharne and Harold Fullard (10th ed.; New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1964), p. 25.

³⁶Balyuzi, The Bab, p. 27. His name does crop up in connection with an Indian Babi. Apparently, Shaykh Sa'id-i-Hindi converted a prominent blind man named Siyyid Basir in the city of Multan in what is today Pakistan. The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 588-589.

Qahru'llah walked home and was never heard from again.³⁷ Either of these men might have been responsible for a fledgling Indian community.

A similarly inconclusive chain of events may have been responsible for establishing the Babi Faith on Turkish soil. One of the Letters of the Living, a man named Mulla 'Aliy-i-Bastami was dispatched to Iraq by the Bab. When he arrived in Najaf he proclaimed his Faith to all who would listen, but his efforts resulted in his being branded a heretic, for which he was escorted to Baghdad and deported to Constantinople. En route, he passed through Mosul where he stimulated interest in the new revelation, but while historical records do not reveal what happened after that,³⁸ he could have been the founder of the Babi religion in Turkey.

Confrontations in Nayriz, Zanjan, and Tihran

The incident at Fort Tabarsi was not the only confrontation between the Babis and the conservative Muslim authorities of the Persian church-state. In May of 1850 an inveterate Babi commonly referred to as Vahid³⁹ travelled to Nayriz where he converted large numbers, many of whom were prominent and influential people.⁴⁰ The governor of Nayriz, vexed by the

³⁷The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 305-306.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 90-92.

³⁹This champion of the Babi cause became an adherent when in 1845 the Shah dispatched him to Shiraz to interview the Bab and ascertain the nature of His claims. Vahid's interviews with the Bab resulted in his conversion. The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 171-176.

⁴⁰Perigord, French Foot-Notes, p. 53. Nabil claims that when Vahid spoke at the masjid, 1,500 immediately accepted his religion. The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 478-479.

evident influence of this heretic, recruited an army of a thousand men and set out to take him prisoner. Vahid fled from Nayriz and sought refuge outside town in the fort of Khajih. Accompanied by about 70 fellow believers, Vahid offered resistance to the governor's siege. Reinforcements were brought in from Shiraz to help dislodge the heretics, but after a few weeks, during which time the government forces sustained considerable losses, Vahid was invited to the royalist camp to discuss methods of calming the situation. As with the Tabarsi disaster, the Babis were promised safe passage if they dispersed, but were slaughtered by the royalist forces after they left the fort. The strangulation and decapitation of Vahid was the beginning of a reign of terror in Nayriz; Babis were hunted down, tortured and killed, and their property confiscated.⁴¹

Far to the northwest, in the town of Zanjan, a struggle of much greater proportions was beginning to materialize. So similar is the tale of Zanjan to those of Nayriz and Mazindaran that the details of the conflict will be omitted.⁴² It will simply be noted that after trouble arose between Babis and Muslims, some 300 to 400 Babi men with their families barricaded themselves in a citadel and held out for seven months against an estimated 30,000 royal troops and 19 pieces of artillery.⁴³

⁴¹The following contain accounts of the Nayriz disturbance: Browne (trans. and ed.), The Tarikh-i-Jadid, pp. 117-128; Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, Note H, pp. 253-261; The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 478-499.

⁴²For details see The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 527-481.

⁴³Browne (trans. and ed.), The Tarikh-i-Jadid, Appendix II, p. 372. These manpower estimates are drawn from a section of Mirza Jani's history

These three episodes--Zanjan, Nayriz, and Tabarsi--were not the only instances of armed conflict between the Babis and the authorities during the early years of the Faith, but they were the largest and most dramatic. They became symbols of the resolve and the power that faith can spawn, not just to the Babi adherents, but to their adversaries as well. In each case, historical narratives intimate that the heroic behavior of the Babis often exercised a positive influence over the minds of those who were apprised of their resistance. The result was rapid local diffusion. With the culmination of each struggle and the subsequent slaughter of the overwhelmed religionists, however, the danger of open proclamation of faith would drive the new believers underground. Farther afield, as details of the conflict gradually became known, additional diffusion would occur, but not with such rapidity.

The tumultuous events associated with Tabarsi, Nayriz, and Zanjan were indicative of the deteriorating relationship between the Babis and the established government. Large in scope and extended in duration, these armed conflicts purchased public sympathy and admiration for the Babis and their cause. But the price was high. Many Babis, including most of the strong leaders of the religion, had perished. This decimation of the leadership (which of course reached its climax with the shooting of the Bab) was accelerated in March of 1850 by the execution of seven prominent Babis in Tihiran. Thirty-eight people were arrested (some known

that Browne claims was suppressed by later Baha'i historians (see *Ibid.*, p. 327). The numbers in question do not appear to be unreasonable given the observations of uninvolved foreign envoys who were in Persia at the time. Balyuzi, *The Bab*, Appendix 5, pp. 209-213.

to be Babis and some only suspected of being sympathizers) and charged with plotting the assassination of Mirza Taki Kahn, the Grand Vizier. Eventually, the government decided that those who would recant their Faith would be released while those who would not would be beheaded. Of the fourteen known Babis, seven refused to compromise their beliefs and were put to the sword. Their willingness to lay down their lives for the Faith astonished the public gathering and captured the attention of the entire capital city.⁴⁴ This is what Browne had to say about these seven men and the impact of their steadfastness on the spread of the Faith:

. . . They were men representing all the more important classes in Persia--divines, dervishes, merchants, shop-keepers, and government officials; they were men who had enjoyed the respect and consideration of all; they died fearlessly, willingly, almost eagerly, declining to purchase life by that mere lip-denial, which, under the name of Ketman or Takiya, is recognized by the Shi'ites as a perfectly justifiable subterfuge in case of peril; they were not driven to despair of mercy as were those who died at Sheykh Tabarsi and Zanzan; and they sealed their faith with their blood in the public square of the Persian capital wherein is the abode of the foreign ambassadors accredited to the court of the Shah. And herein the Babi historian is right: even those who speak severely of the Babi movement generally, characterizing it as a communism destructive of all order and all morality, express commiseration for those guiltless victims. To the day of their martyrdom we may well apply Gobineau's eloquent reflection on a similar tragedy enacted two years later: "This eventful day brought to the Bab more secret followers than many sermons could have done. I have just said that the impression created by the prodigious endurance of the martyrs was deep and lasting. I have often heard repeated the story of that day by eye witnesses. From their accounts, one might easily have believed that they were all Babis, so great was the admiration they felt for memories which were not to the honor of Islam, and so high was the esteem they entertained

⁴⁴Infrequently read accounts of this event are contained in: Browne (trans. and ed.), The Tarikh-i-Jadid, pp. 250-270; Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, note B, pp. 211-218.

for the resourcefulness, the hopes and the chances of success of the new doctrine."⁴⁵

The Bloodbath of 1852

In August of 1852 an attempt on the life of the Shah by a Babi youth induced the Persian government to adopt a policy of extermination toward the Babis. Initially confined to Tihiran, the reign of terror quickly spread to Mazindaran and thereafter engulfed the whole country.⁴⁶ It was during this time that Tahirih, having already been held as a prisoner since her return to Tihiran following the council of Badasht, was put to death. It was at this time, too, that Baha'u'llah was imprisoned in a dungeon in Tihiran for four months and then, on the presumption that His ill health would terminate His life and thereby accomplish the same result as an execution without incurring the protestations of the Russian minister,⁴⁷ was exiled from Persia. This was also the period that witnessed the slaughter of thousands of Babis throughout the land.⁴⁸

At this point, only nine years after its inception, the Babi religion appears to have been close to extinction. According to Shoghi Effendi, writing nearly one hundred years later:

⁴⁵Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, pp. 216-217. Browne's quotation from Gobineau was published in the original French, and so I have taken the liberty of substituting an English translation supplied by Perigord, French Foot-Notes, p. 52.

⁴⁶Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁷Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah (London: George Ronald, 1972), p. 21; Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 6.

⁴⁸Estimates range from 10,000 to 30,000. The Dawn-Breakers, p. 605, note 1.

Never had the fortunes of the Faith proclaimed by the Bab sunk to a lower ebb than when Baha'u'llah was banished from His native land to Iraq. The Cause for which the Bab had given His life; for which Baha'u'llah had toiled and suffered, seemed to be on the very verge of extinction. Its force appeared to have been spent, its resistance irretrievably broken.⁴⁹

One might suspect that Shoghi Effendi was exaggerating the enfeebled condition of the religion in order to dramatize its subsequent revival, but such a suspicion would be unfounded. Consider the following extract from a letter written in 1862 by the Grand Mutjahid of Tauris regarding the heretical nature of the Babis and the need for their removal from Baghdad:

After the carrying out of these energetic measures on the part of the Persian government for the extirpation and extermination of the misguided and detestable sect of the Babis with the details of which your excellency is fully acquainted, . . . their roots were torn up. It was proper, nay necessary, that not one of them should be suffered to survive. . . .⁵⁰

The author of this letter is clearly expressing the view that the Faith was purged from Persia. He goes on to note that Baha'u'llah was unfortunately allowed to escape to Iraq from whence He was able to reestablish the religion in its homeland, but the writer believed the movement to have been defeated until from His place of exile Baha'u'llah began to restore it.

Following this low point in the fortunes of the Faith, recovery was rapid. Gobineau, writing in the mid-1860s, expressed the following view regarding the strength of the Babis in Persia:

⁴⁹The Dawn-Breakers, p. 651.

⁵⁰Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 283.

. . . Public opinion holds that the Babis are to be found in every social class and among the members of every religion with the exception of the Nusayri's and the Christians, but it is especially the educated classes, the men of learning who are suspected of sympathy with Babism. It is believed, and with good reason, that many Mullas and, among them, outstanding mutjahids, magistrates of high rank, and court officials very close to the king, are Babis. According to a recent estimate, there would be in Tihran, a city of about eighty thousands souls, five thousand Babis. But this estimate is not very reliable and I am inclined to think that, if the Babis were to triumph in Persia, their numbers in the capital would be much higher, for at that moment, one would have to add to the number of the zealous ones, whatever that number may now be, a large proportion of those who are recently in favor of the officially condemned doctrine and to whom victory would impart the courage to declare their faith openly.⁵¹

His perception of a rejuvenated Babi Faith was corroborated by Lord Curzon who, twenty-five years later, wrote that ". . . if Babism continues to grow at its present rate of progression, a time may conceivably come when it will oust Mohammedanism from the field in Persia. . . ."52

DIFFUSION IN THE TIME OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH: 1853-1892

The Banishments of Baha'u'llah

Previous to 1853 the Babi cause was largely confined to Persia and adjacent parts of Iraq. We have seen some evidence that Babis were present in other regions--especially India, Afghanistan, Turkestan, and Turkey--but the sizes and permanence of Babi groups in those regions apparently were not sufficient to leave an impression on the early history of the religion. It could even be said that Babi influence in these

⁵¹Perigord, French Foot-Notes, p. 79.

⁵²Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, p. 503.

outlying regions ceased to exist when heavy persecution in Persia cut off the communication that presumably sustained such isolated frontier communities.

However much the Babi Faith may have spread in its earliest years, the persecutions of 1853 precipitated a contraction of the religion's influence; at the time of Baha'u'llah's banishment to Baghdad well-established communities existed only in Persia and Iraq. The former community, however, had been driven into hiding whereas the latter, although relatively free of official persecution, was much smaller in size and was demoralized by the adversity which had overwhelmed the religion in the land of its founder.

Baha'u'llah resided in Baghdad for ten years. During that time He assumed an increasing amount of authority within the religion so that when, on the eve of His departure for Constantinople in the spring of 1863, He proclaimed Himself to be the Manifestation of God promised by the Bab, He was accepted by most of the Bab's followers. This personal ascendance of Baha'u'llah, first as the de facto leader of the disorganized Babis and later as a recognized Prophet of God commanding the allegiance of all Baha'is, made it possible for the Faith to escape the regional confines of its place of birth. Required by government decrees to live outside Persia, Baha'u'llah's position of authority assured international growth for the Faith. Whatever His place of residence, a steady flow of believers would pass in both directions between there and the cradle of the religion in Persia and Iraq. Each new place of exile, therefore, became a hotbed of Baha'i activity and a source area for subsequent international diffusion probably directed by Baha'u'llah Himself.

Furthermore, it was under His leadership that new believers began to be recruited from other sources than the Shi'ah sect of Islam.⁵³

Figure 4 describes the movements of Baha'u'llah during His 39 year ministry. Only the places where He resided for any length of time are indicated on the map; towns and localities through which He passed are not shown.

His ten years of exile in Iraq were not all spent in Baghdad. In 1854 internal dissension reached such a height that Baha'u'llah retired from the company of His fellow Babis and spent two years alone in the mountains of Kurdistan. During this period the Babi community was bereft of effective leadership. Many claimed to be the Promised One foretold by the Bab,⁵⁴ and yet no person or group was sufficiently well recognized to codify the principles of Babi behavior and morality.⁵⁵ Baha'u'llah's return to Baghdad marked the beginning of a long and steady systematization of the religion as well as, incidentally, the evolution of the Faith from a Babi to Baha'i form. Although Baha'u'llah's absence from view inhibited the overall growth potential of the Faith for two years, it did result in the establishment of a new nucleus of believers in Kurdistan; He attracted a group of followers, many of whom were Kurds and Arabs.⁵⁶

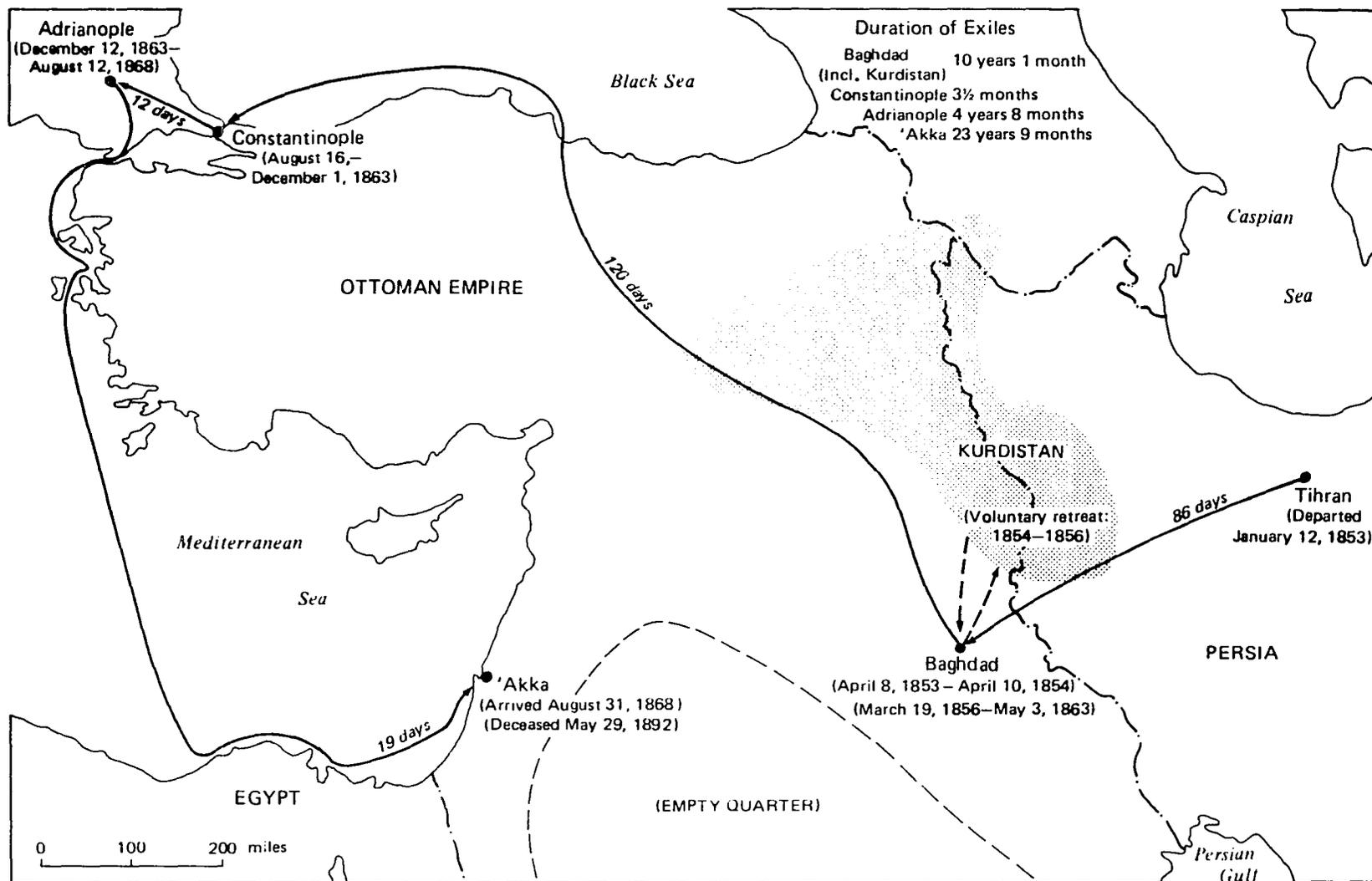
⁵³Balyuzi, Baha'u'llah, p. 26.

⁵⁴Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 125.

⁵⁵Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁶Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 122-124.

FIGURE 4 Exiles of Baha'u'llah: 1853-1892



Source: *The Baha'i Faith, 1844-1963: Information Statistical and Comparative*: 39-40

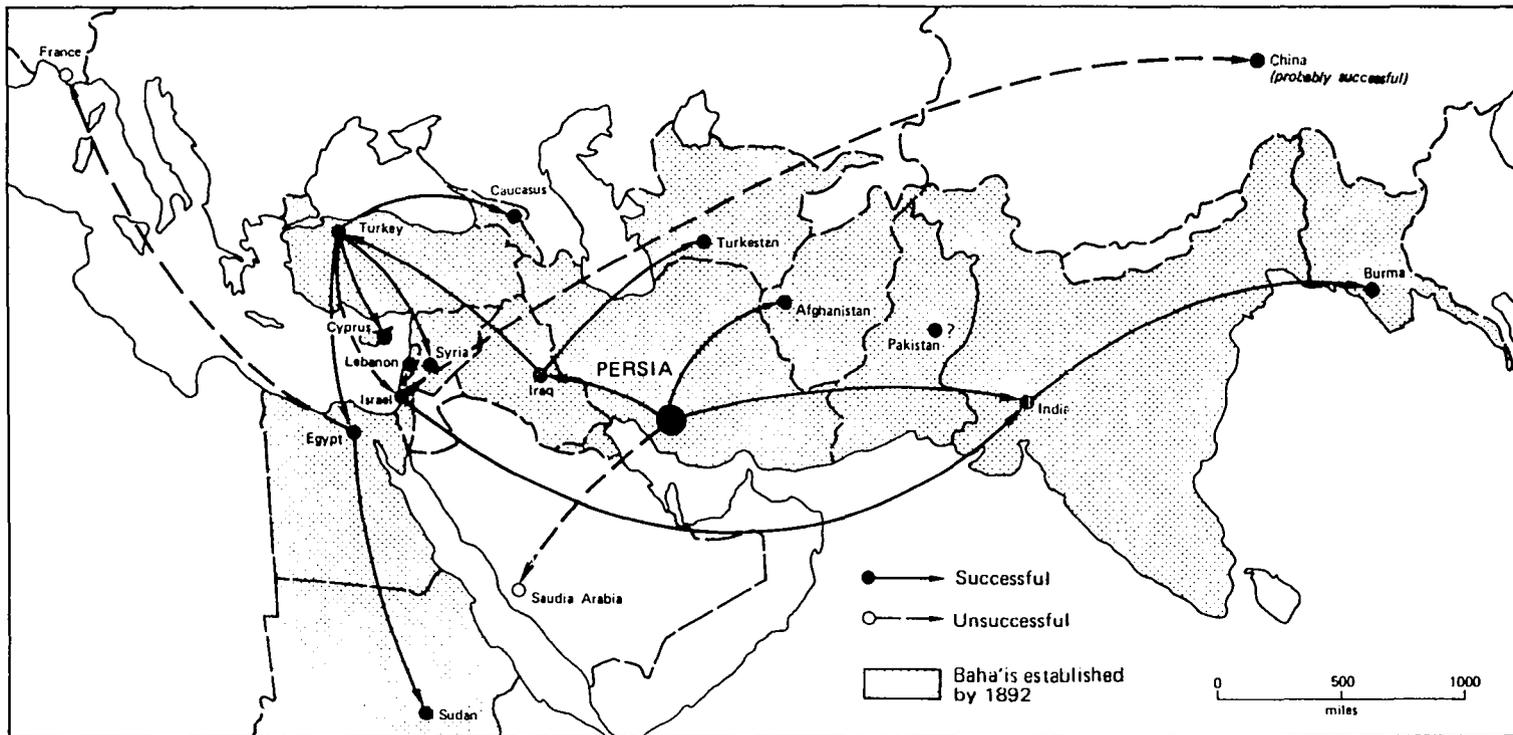
Apparently, the portion of Baha'u'llah's ministry spent in Iraq was a time of relative freedom of movement. The exiles which followed were much more confining. Four months in Constantinople and five years in Adrianople were times of personal confinement, but with access to the Baha'is who journeyed to see Him. The extended confinement in 'Akka was characterized by incarceration and complete isolation for the first two years, ten years of close confinement during which prohibitions against contact were gradually relaxed, and finally twelve years of loose confinement outside the city of 'Akka where the flow of pilgrims could proceed uninterrupted.

For most of the years of His ministry, therefore, Baha'u'llah was able to maintain contact with the community of believers. But even so, His relative isolation made communication difficult. The distance from Tihiran to Adrianople is over 1,200 miles; that from Tihiran to 'Akka exceeds 800. In the latter half of the nineteenth century even the shorter of these two journeys required months of travel. In a sense, by banishing Baha'u'llah to the farther reaches of its geographical extent, the Ottoman empire made inveterate travellers out of the Baha'i population left behind in the homeland of the Faith.

Diffusion Under Baha'u'llah

Figure 5 identifies the regions that are known to have been opened to the Faith during the ministry of Baha'u'llah. The most notable characteristic of Baha'i diffusion during this period is the extent to which Persia was preempted as a direct source for the opening of new territories. The vast majority of all Baha'is resided in Persia and yet

FIGURE 5 International Diffusion of the Baha'i Faith During the Ministries of the Bab and Baha'u'llah: 1844–1892



Sources: 'Abdu'l-Baha (1971):1-5, 16-21, 134-134; Shoghi Effendi (1965):176, 302; *The Dawn-Breakers* (1974):81-84, 305-306; Browne (1970):328; *The Baha'i Centenary: 1844-1944* (1944): 187

it was Baha'u'llah's places of banishment which became the generating foci for long distance diffusion. This simple plot of diffusion flows shows the degree to which Baha'u'llah directed the diffusion process. I have not been able to uncover historical documentation that Baha'u'llah actually instructed believers to proceed to the areas shown on the map as having been opened,⁵⁷ but why else would a believer who had previously followed Baha'u'llah from Persia (or Iraq) to His place of exile suddenly set off for some country lying totally outside the Baha'i ecumene?

It should be noted that Persia's role in the diffusion process was significant. Even though most countries were not opened directly from Persia, many of the first in-migrants had Persian names. Most of the diffusion which occurred from Baha'u'llah's places of exile was the work not of local converts but of Persian Baha'is who had travelled to see their Prophet. In other words, Persia supplied the manpower, but Baha'u'llah supplied direction.

International diffusion did not occur in a contagious fashion, the mass of potential diffusion agents in Persia did not simply overspill its boundaries and establish the Faith in surrounding areas. Instead, a process vaguely similar to hierarchical diffusion occurred in that large cities seem to have been the destinations of the believers travelling to

⁵⁷It can be documented that He directed specific believers to go to certain areas to proclaim the Faith but one cannot be certain that the countries opened during His ministry were first penetrated in this way. For examples of Him giving travel teaching directions to His followers see: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, trans. and annotated by Marzieh Gail (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 46, 135; Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah: Bagh'ad, 1853-63 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1975), pp. 37-38, 95.

new areas: 'Ishqabad, Bukhara, and Tashkent in Turkestan; Bombay in India; Cairo in Egypt; Marseilles in France; Shanghai in China. This is to be expected since a foreigner who would arrive via one of the major transportation routes which invariably connect up the large cities, would probably find that he could most easily fit into the metropolitan environment, containing as it does economic, cultural, and linguistic variety that is usually absent in the countryside.

Another characteristic of Baha'i diffusion that emerges from Figure 5 is its general confinement to the Islamic realm. With two exceptions, Baha'i expansion proceeded entirely within the geographical sphere of influence of the Islamic world, and in the two exceptional cases of France and China the foray of early believers failed to establish truly lasting Baha'i communities: in France there was no after-effect whatever; in China a small nucleus of Persian Baha'is who became established in Shanghai and persisted well into the twentieth century apparently died out. The cultural and economic elements that compose the Islamic world encompass a broad diversity, but relative to the differences between it and such major religio-cultural hearths as Christian Europe, Buddhist and Confucianist China, and Hindu India, there is a substantial amount of homogeneity. As part of this Islamic world, Persia has much in common with the other nations that follow the path of Mohammed. It would seem that the Baha'i Faith had to burst its cultural bonds in a staged fashion. First the religion was confined to the geographical limits of Shi'ah dominance. Then it permeated, but could not transcend, the rest of the Islamic world. Finally, after the death of Baha'u'llah, the Faith took root in truly foreign environments.

The various countries and regions opened to the Faith during the ministry of Baha'u'llah did not show a uniform pattern of response to the new religion. Some countries came to have larger and more established Baha'i communities than others. Pakistan, Burma, and especially India became strong centers of the Faith, increasing their numbers of believers with each passing decade. Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel (Palestine), Egypt, and the Sudan managed to maintain and gradually nurture the Baha'i communities, but growth has never been as substantial as on the Indian subcontinent. Of this group, Egypt and Israel have been somewhat more successful than the others, Turkey somewhat less. Of the two regions opened to the Faith in southern Russia, the Turkestan community exhibited extremely rapid growth while the Baha'i foothold in the Caucasus, although overshadowed by its counterpart farther east, was similarly effective in sustaining expansion. Baha'i representation in both of these areas virtually disappeared, however, when government suppression became severe in the 1930s.

It is this factor of governmental policy which more than anything else seems to have determined the degree to which the Faith has succeeded in becoming permanently entrenched in a new area. Throughout the Middle and Near East the close association of church and state has militated against the Baha'i Faith. Unwillingness to recognize the Faith as an independent religion has resulted in frequent bans on all Baha'i activity and sporadic outbursts of persecution. It is one thing to adopt an innovation that merely requires a substantial departure from the traditional way of thinking and behaving; it is quite another to align

oneself with a movement that stands on the fringe of society and arouses the suspicion and ire of government and populace alike.

Of all the territories opened to the Faith during the ministry of Baha'u'llah, the most fascinating is Turkestan.⁵⁸ This area, close to Persia and in fact only recently transferred from Persian to Russian control, was late in receiving its first Baha'i immigrants. Not until the 1880s did the first believers enter the region, and when they arrived they established themselves most effectively in 'Ishqabad, a small village only a short distance from the Persian border. The village lay along the projected route of the Transcaspian railway, however, and so the Russian government had targeted it for development as a city. The Baha'is arrived at an opportune time, managing to purchase property, establish businesses, and generally prosper as their new home underwent a rapid transformation from village to metropolis. As early as 1890 the Baha'is numbered about 1,000, many of whom were well-to-do and influential. For about four decades the community of believers prospered and the religion achieved a level of development that has never been equalled. 'Ishqabad was one of the first communities in the world to have an organized local Spiritual Assembly. A Baha'i temple built there just

⁵⁸The following discussion, which focuses primarily on 'Ishqabad, derives its information from an unpublished paper by Anthony A. Lee entitled "City of Love: The Rise of the Baha'i Faith in 'Ishqabad, from the Beginnings to the Russian Revolution." At the time that I received the paper (January 1978) it was not in its final form and so the author was concerned that none of its contents be quoted directly. Lee relied heavily on personal interviews with Baha'is who are familiar with the history of the region.

after the turn of the century preceded the Baha'i temple in North America and claims the distinction of being the first ever constructed. The Baha'is had their own meeting hall, their own schools, their own medical clinic, their own pilgrim house, even their own cemetery. They owned their own printing presses, published their own magazine, built libraries, organized youth clubs, established cultural and athletic societies, and eliminated poverty within the group. By 1918 the Baha'is numbered about 4,000, which is four times the size of the largest Baha'i community in the United States today. Of course Iran can claim larger communities, but in that country the believers have never been allowed the freedom of activity that permitted the sort of cultural and religious richness achieved in 'Ishqabad. Even after the Russian revolution the 'Ishqabad community enjoyed growth of numbers and diversity; Communist suppression of religions did not begin until late in the 1920s.

And what was the fate of this symbol of Baha'i opulence? The Communist persecutions of the 1930s curtailed its activities, undermined its integrity, and eventually eradicated its visible presence. Even the temple, which was confiscated by the authorities and later damaged by an earthquake, has since disappeared.

The downfall of the Baha'i community in 'Ishqabad, although certainly precipitated by obvious external forces, must be attributed at least in part to certain inherent defects. In their prime, the Baha'is were the wealthiest class in the city and the most powerful religious force in the area. At the same time, the community was composed almost exclusively of Persian expatriates. What a fatal combination! Their diversity of institutional forms and cultural activities was not matched

by an equivalent variety of socio-economic and ethnic characteristics. This lack of demographic variety rendered the community helpless when faced with a government dedicated to the uprooting of capitalism and a local population that had little concern for the tribulations of a group of wealthy foreigners. 'Ishqabad stands as an example of the fragility of any Baha'i community that fails to draw its support from all elements of the local society. It testifies to the fact that numbers alone do not insure ultimate success.

Manpower and Leadership: A Study of Their Sources

In the last section it was suggested that diffusion during Baha'u'llah's ministry was effected through a combination of His leadership and Persian manpower. This short discussion will attempt to reinforce that conclusion by presenting evidence which documents the preponderant flow of pilgrims from Persia to Baha'u'llah's then current place of exile, and reveals the relative infrequency with which those pilgrims returned to their original homes.

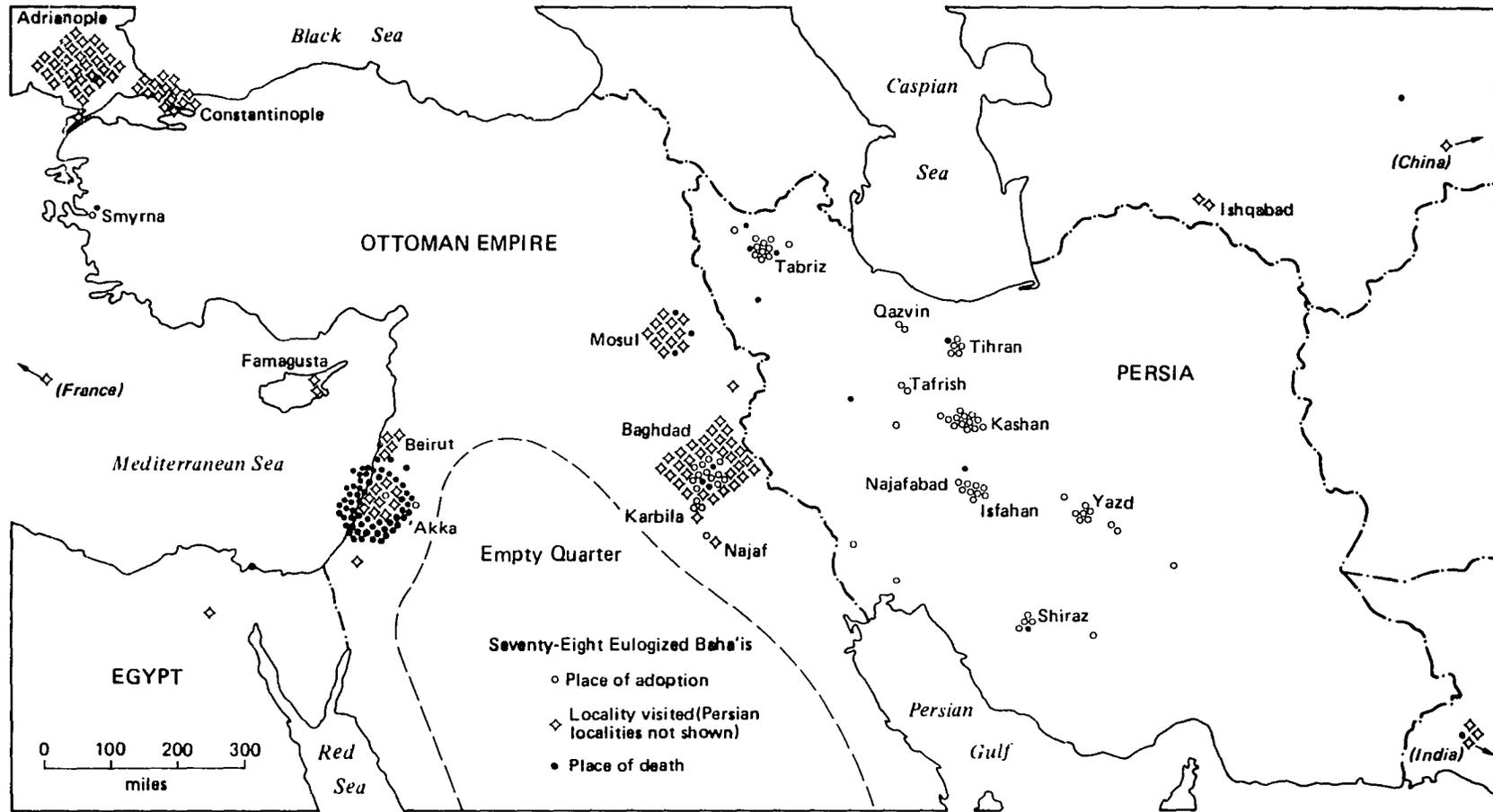
In his later years 'Abdu'l-Baha compiled brief biographical sketches of disciples who lived during the time of Baha'u'llah and exhibited such characteristics as to merit a place in Baha'i history. These biographical notes were subsequently collated, translated, and published under the title Memorials of the Faithful. The stories contained in this volume naturally dwell on the spiritual characteristics of the individuals, and this forms the substance and theme of the book. In an incidental manner, however, the principal movements of each person are defined, and that information can be used to create a map of the migratory behavior of these early Baha'is.

Of the 78 biographies contained in Memorials of the Faithful, 69 specifically outline the major migrations of the person being described; the other nine only partly summarize the person's movements. Figure 6 attempts to compile some of this information. The patterns which appear in the map indicate that a number of generalizations can be made about this group of believers. First, they were extremely migratory. None became Baha'is, passed their lives, and died in a single locality. Second, almost all became Baha'is in Persia or Iraq; only a few declared their belief while residing in Baha'u'llah's other places of exile. Third, those who originated in Persia were drawn from many parts of the country. Fourth, most died outside their native land, occasionally in a totally foreign environment, but usually in or near one of Baha'u'llah's places of exile, especially 'Akka. Fifth, many simply left their homes to visit Baha'u'llah but some travelled extensively before or after their pilgrimage.

Most of these generalizations speak for themselves, but it is appropriate to draw attention to the implications of one: the importance of Persia and Iraq--and the insignificance of Constantinople, Adrianople, and 'Akka--as source areas. It is this pattern which reinforces the proposition that Persia supplied the manpower for Baha'i diffusion.

The question arises as to whether these data reliably depict the general movement patterns of Baha'is during that time. The sample is clearly biased in that it identifies confirmed, dedicated Baha'is and ignores those, probably far more numerous, who were not as strongly attached to the Faith. As for diffusion, however, it may be the ardent

FIGURE 6 Places of Declaration, Visitation, and Death of Those Loyal Baha'is Eulogized by 'Abdu'l-Baha



Source: 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Memorials of the Faithful*

believers who most successfully disseminate the word. It could be argued that the selection of believers is biased in that it overlooks those confirmed Baha'is who never journeyed to see Baha'u'llah and thus remained anonymous to 'Abdu'l-Baha. This is a possibility, but the various histories of the Faith often intimate that any true follower who lived at the same time as the Prophet had a deep desire to attain His presence. That being so, this potential bias would also tend to identify the more effective diffusion agents. One can conclude, therefore, that biases in the sample may not only be innocuous but may actually operate to identify more effectively the migratory behavior of those Baha'is most likely to actively participate in the dissemination process.

Although we are attempting here to generalize about early believers and their places of origin and destination, it is appropriate to extract from Memorials of the Faithful one particular biography that illustrates the communication problem inherent in Baha'u'llah's distant exile, and highlights its tenuous solution. From the advent of Baha'u'llah's ministry in 1853 until His passing in 1892, regular communication with the major cities of Persia was maintained through the efforts of one individual--Shaykh Salman. Each year he would travel on foot to Baha'u'llah's place of exile and then retrace his steps carrying messages from the Prophet to His followers. He continued this annual courier service even after Baha'u'llah's death.⁵⁹

⁵⁹'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 13-16. Adib Taherzadeh also sketches the life of Shaykh Salman, reaffirming his importance as a communication link. Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, pp. 109-114.

The Global Proclamation

Until His death, Baha'u'llah's religion was confined to the Islamic world. There was a low level of external interest stimulated by the direct contact of certain Western observers, especially the French foreign minister Joseph Arthur Gobineau and the English historian Edward Granville Browne. Furthermore, the extreme persecution experienced by the Babis in their native land was so shocking that some Western newspapers carried stories about the movement and its misfortunes. The actual presence of Baha'is on a permanent basis, however, did not occur outside the Islamic world until after 1892.

Baha'u'llah perceived the cultural insulation that encased His religion as neither natural nor insurmountable. His view was always a global one. In fact, the unity of all peoples is the fundamental objective of His religion:

. . . "In every dispensation . . . the light of Divine Guidance has been focussed upon one central theme . . . In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God, and the distinguishing feature of His Law, is the consciousness of the oneness of mankind."⁶⁰

If this is the avowed purpose of the Baha'i Faith, then one might legitimately ask why Baha'u'llah did not Himself attempt to carry His Faith beyond the bounds of the Islamic tradition. The answer is that He did. The form which His effort took is of singular interest to the investigator of diffusion.

⁶⁰Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day is Come (2nd Indian ed.; New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 123-124.

Not long after His open declaration of Prophethood in 1863, Baha'u'llah wrote a series of letters to prominent monarchs and leading ecclesiastics of the world, proclaiming His station as a Prophet of God, exhorting them to accept the new Faith, admonishing them for ignoring (and in some instances persecuting) His Cause, and advising them as to what kinds of behavior befit a person who wields great power and authority. Although some of the letters were directed to kings, rulers, and religious leaders collectively, most were written to individuals. The leaders who were addressed in person include the following: (1) Napoleon III of France, (2) Czar Alexander II of Russia, (3) Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom, (4) Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany, (5) Emperor Francis Joseph of Hungary, (6) Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Aziz of the Ottoman Empire, (7) Nasiri'd-Din Shah of Persia, (8) the rulers of America, and (9) Pope Pius IX.

These powerful individuals resided in seats of authority that were confined to Europe, the Near and Middle East, and North America, but the territories over which they exercised sovereignty included large parts of the world.⁶¹ The United Kingdom, for example, was the hub of a political empire that included, along with many lesser territories, India, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. France was the controlling force in Indo-China, Madagascar, and throughout much of North and West Africa. The Ottoman Empire, extensive in its own right, was very influential in many other Muslim zones, especially in North Africa. Pope Pius IX, as head of the Catholic church, was responsible for the spiritual development of an enormous ecumene that included all of South and Central

⁶¹For an idea of the political arrangements of the world at that time, see Muir's Historical Atlas, p. 76.

America as well as south and western Europe (containing Italy, Spain, and Portugal, the latter two of which could still claim to be colonialists on a global scale). Generally speaking, the only significant areas of the world not subordinate to the worldly authority of the recipients of Baha'u'llah's letters were East Asia and Central Africa.

These powerful figures who received messages from Baha'u'llah were in a unique position to diffuse the Baha'i Faith. Had they chosen to do so, they could have exercised enormous influence over the minds of their subjects. Rogers and Shoemaker have summarized the research findings regarding the roles of opinion leaders and authoritative decision makers in diffusion research.⁶² They state categorically that opinion leaders exist,⁶³ and they are so positive about the capability of authoritative decision makers to enforce innovation adoption that they simply take for granted that, once the authoritative decision maker has adopted the innovation, diffusion throughout the social network over which he holds sway is assured.⁶⁴ Technically defined, kings and clergymen are neither opinion leaders nor authoritative decision makers since in spite of their worldly power and prestige, they do not automatically have the ability to influence how people think. Nevertheless, it is clear that the temporal and spiritual leaders in the nineteenth century world,

⁶²Rogers and Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations, pp. 198-225, 298-316, Appendix A, pp. 376-380, 384-385.

⁶³Ibid., p. 199.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 301.

representing as they usually did the actual presence of divine will on earth, were capable of molding public attitudes. They were, therefore, in a position to generate rapid global diffusion of the Baha'i Faith. That would only have occurred had those worldly sovereigns accepted Baha'u'llah's summons, which, of course, they did not. Nevertheless, Baha'u'llah well understood that these men were the key to rapid global dissemination.⁶⁵

One should not get the impression that Baha'u'llah entertained high hopes of effecting global dissemination by appealing to world leaders and that the disregard shown to Him and His letters was a shock to Him and a source of embitterment. Actually, Baha'u'llah knew that this sort of diffusion strategy probably would abort in the earliest stage. He expressed this awareness in the following way:

"From time immemorial . . . they who have been outwardly invested with authority have debarred men from setting their faces towards God. They have disliked that men should gather together around the Most Great Ocean, inasmuch as they have regarded, and still regard, such a gathering as the cause of, and the motive for, the disruption of their sovereignty. . . ."66

Far from expecting a positive response to His letters, Baha'u'llah actually anticipated rejection of, and even resistance to, His Cause. Since this is the case, one might wonder why Baha'u'llah wrote the letters appealing to the kings and ecclesiastics. It must be remembered

⁶⁵Shoghi Effendi has cited Baha'u'llah as saying that if the Muslim and Christian religious leaders had accepted Him it would have precipitated mass conversions from these two religions. Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, p. 111.

⁶⁶Baha'u'llah quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day Is Come, p. 17.

that Baha'u'llah was not responsible for adoption of the innovation. His responsibility was to make the world aware of the arrival of the new religion; adoption was the responsibility of those who heard Him. From Baha'u'llah's perspective, therefore, lack of rapid and widespread diffusion outside the Islamic realm was not a reflection of failure on His part but was rather an indication of the failure on the part of those who heard Him speak--the leaders of the world.⁶⁷ It was the heedlessness of those nineteenth century rulers that inhibited more widespread Baha'i diffusion, and it was their failure to turn to Him that compelled Him to forecast that ". . . 'From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics'. . ."⁶⁸

The social scientist looks upon Baha'u'llah's messages to the world leaders as an abortive attempt at innovation diffusion, and so to him the most interesting questions revolve around the issues of why the innovation should have been rejected, what characteristics it must change in order to find acceptance, and how diffusion agents (in this case, particularly Baha'u'llah) might alter their approaches and techniques so as to achieve greater success. To the Baha'i, however, the rejection of the innovation is symptomatic of the waywardness of mankind and is not, therefore, a sign that the product needs modification or that the marketing strategy needs improvement.

⁶⁷Besides, He claimed that with time the Faith would ultimately prevail anyway. Ibid., p. 121.

⁶⁸Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, Ibid., p. 19.

Nevertheless, Baha'is recognize the evolutionary character of their religion⁶⁹ and are fully committed to working within society.⁷⁰ The exigencies of the secular world require adaptation and response, and so with the passage of time the Faith did in fact pursue a different strategy for global dissemination. Baha'u'llah's messages to the world leaders did not result in widespread diffusion, and so the Baha'i community was obliged to search for a different method of spreading the Faith.

DIFFUSION IN THE TIME OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA: 1892-1921

The Diffusion Strategy of 'Abdu'l-Baha

The cultural confinement of the Baha'i Faith dissolved rapidly following the passing of Baha'u'llah. The pattern of diffusion which began to develop outside the Islamic world was distinctive in that it relied enormously on transmittal of the Faith first to North America and from there to Europe and a scattering of other countries around the world. This pattern did not materialize by chance. Almost as soon as he took control of the Faith, 'Abdu'l-Baha, through his words and actions, emphasized the role that North America was destined to play in the future of Baha'i growth. The brief outline of Baha'i history contained in Chapter II has already described the way in which 'Abdu'l-Baha

⁶⁹For an objective corroboration, see Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith," pp. 31-32.

⁷⁰". . . That one is indeed a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. . . ." Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 250.

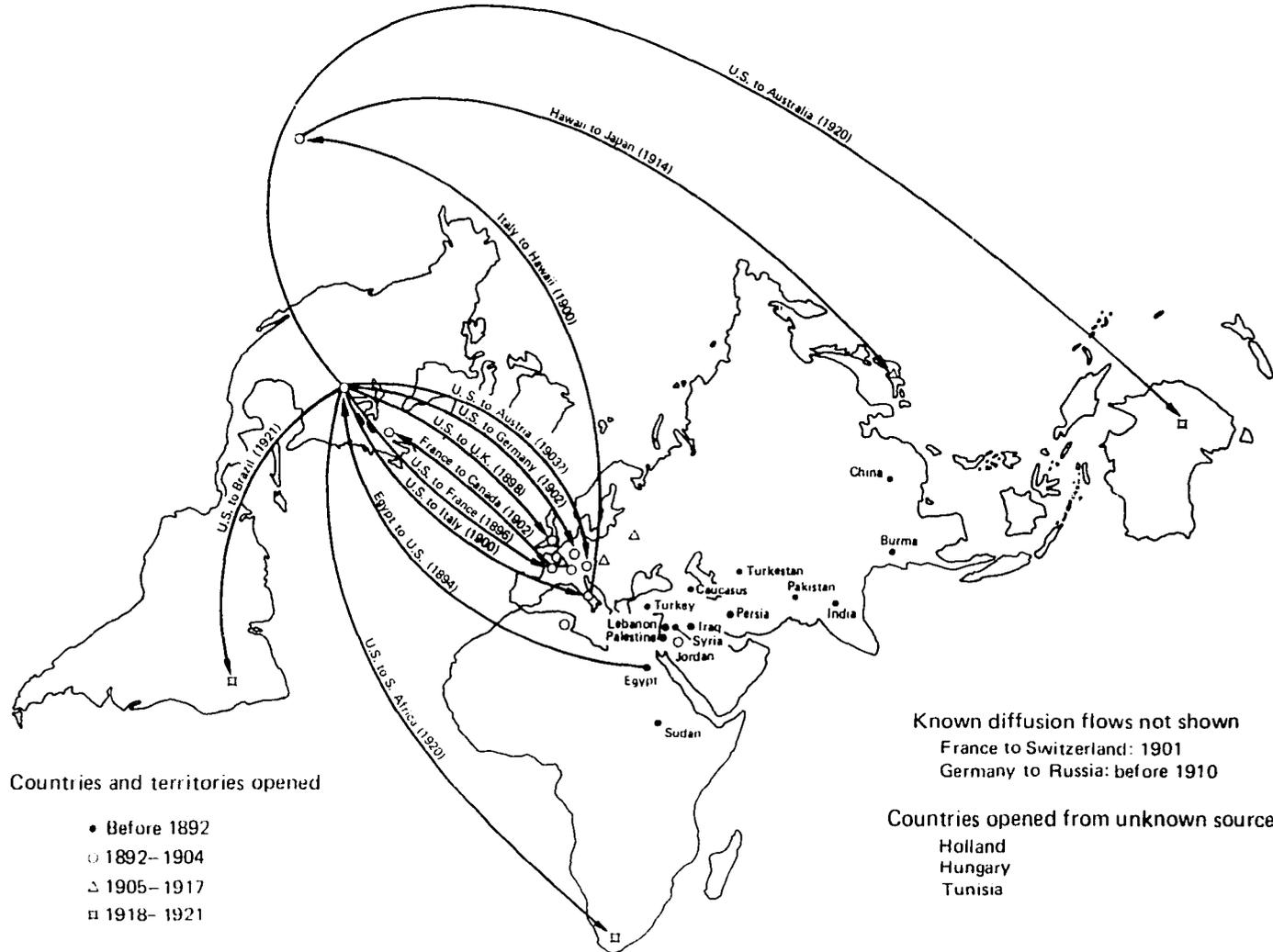
viewed North America as a springboard for global diffusion. In Chapter VI there will be occasion to discuss a series of messages which he sent to the North American believers in 1919 urging them to disseminate the Faith worldwide. In order to avoid being repetitive, the points made in those presentations will not be covered here. However, even superficial reference to those sections will confirm that from the beginning America was targeted by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and that later diffusion through that distribution point was intentional rather than accidental.

Diffusion Under 'Abdu'l-Baha

Figure 7 shows the countries that were opened by the Baha'i Faith during the period 1892-1921. The map actually breaks the time period into three stages: 1892-1904, 1905-1917, and 1918-1921. The rationale underlying the selection of these time frames is partly empirical and partly theoretical. During the earliest period, 1892-1904, international expansion of the Faith occurred rapidly in the West, resulting in the opening of the United States, a number of Western European countries, and Canada. After 1904, however, the quantity of international diffusion dropped off sharply, and because of that sudden change 1904-1905 is taken as the break point between time periods. The ensuing discussion will identify the reason for the marked drop in the rate of diffusion.

The other time break occurs between 1917 and 1918. 'Abdu'l-Baha was continually calling for overseas expansion of the Faith, but 1918 marks the appearance of the first few of his messages to American Baha'is specifically assigning them the responsibility for worldwide dissemination (the remainder of those messages reached America in 1919).

FIGURE 7 Diffusion During the Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha: 1892–1921



Sources: *The Baha' Faith, 1844–1963*, 9; *The Baha' Centenary : 1844-1944*; Shoghi Effendi (1969); *The Baha' World: 1954–1963*; Alexander (1974)

Those messages were instrumental in stimulating international Baha'i growth; eventually they came to be regarded as the blueprint for construction of the international Baha'i community. Diffusion which occurred after the first of those messages appeared was a result of their directives. For that reason, expansion during the last three years of 'Abdu'l-Baha's life is separately indicated on the map.

It is somehow fitting that diffusion of the Faith to the United States--perhaps the most important development in the more recent history of Baha'i expansion--should have occurred from a country that had a small, albeit flourishing, Baha'i population. Egypt was on the periphery of the Baha'i world: it was neither a significant source of Baha'i manpower nor the seat of Baha'i authority. Its only claim to Baha'i fame was that Baha'u'llah had stopped over at Alexandria and Port Said during His journey from Adrianople to 'Akka, not an event of sufficient import to elevate the status of Egypt as a potential center for later geographic expansion.

Egypt happened to be the source for diffusion to America because of Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah, a Syrian doctor who was converted to the Baha'i Faith in Cairo. 'Abdu'l-Baha apparently asked Dr. Khayr'u'llah to move to the United States to proclaim the religion. Khayr'u'llah did as he was requested and managed to convert hundreds in the United States. This nucleus was to be the origin of most of the diffusion that was to occur during the lifetime of 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Baha'i presence in America was, therefore, the result of planned effort. The international growth which occurred between 1894, when Khayr'u'llah moved to Chicago, and 1904 was, as can be seen from Figure 7, largely the result of American activity. In particular, a number of

European countries came to have resident Baha'is, and this development invariably involved either direct or indirect transmittal of the Faith from the United States. In most cases the transmittal was direct.

The explanation of this curious "backtracking" of the Faith lies in the movements and activities of the prominent early American Baha'is, a few of whom were wealthy. One in particular, Mrs. Phoebe Hearst, the wife of Senator George F. Hearst, determined to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha at 'Akka and invited a small number of Baha'i friends to accompany her on a pilgrimage to Palestine in 1898. She and her contingent stopped over in Paris en route and during their stay one of the Baha'is converted an American woman living in Paris. This woman, May Ellis Bolles, joined the party of pilgrims and was one of those early Western believers to meet 'Abdu'l-Baha. Before the band of fifteen visitors departed from 'Akka, May Bolles was asked by 'Abdu'l-Baha to remain in Paris long enough to establish a Baha'i community there. She did as she was asked, securing a permanent Baha'i presence in that city. From her location in Paris she brought the first Englishman into the Faith and converted Edith McKay⁷¹ who soon after moved to Switzerland and introduced the religion to that country.⁷²

Meanwhile, Baha'i presence in Great Britain was affected through the conversion of Miriam Thornburgh-Cropper, a niece of Phoebe Hearst. Mrs.

⁷¹The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1971), pp. 878-881.

⁷²Details of the Hearst pilgrimage and the diffusion that it engendered can be found in a number of sources, three of which are: H. M. Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha (London: George Ronald, 1971), pp. 67-74; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 257-260; O. Z. Whitehead, Some Early Baha'is of the West (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976), pp. 13-19, 55.

Cropper, who was living in London, learned about the religion in a letter from her aunt. She became a Baha'i and joined her aunt's itinerant group in Paris. When she returned from 'Akka she established the Faith in the London area.

We can see that the earliest presence of the Faith in Europe (excluding that sliver of territory held by the Ottoman Empire to which Baha'u'llah was banished for five years) was the result of a spontaneous decision on the part of a wealthy American Baha'i to journey to 'Abdu'l-Baha's place of confinement in 'Akka. The fact that Europe straddled the most frequently used transportation routes from America to Palestine was significant as well, for Phoebe Hearst had started a trend. In the years to come, more and more Baha'is were able to make trips to 'Akka, leaving behind in Europe a scattering of newly declared believers.

One of the many anomalous events in the diffusionary history of the Faith involves the manner in which it came to be established in Hawaii. Agnes Baldwin Alexander, representing the union of two very prominent Honolulu families, travelled to Europe in 1900. While in Rome she heard about the Faith from another American traveller (Mrs. Charlotte Dixon) and by the time she arrived back in Honolulu she was a confirmed Baha'i. She dedicated the rest of her life to the Faith, establishing the religion on Oahu and Maui. In 1913 'Abdu'l-Baha requested that she pioneer in Japan. A year and a half later, Agnes Alexander arrived there and helped to form the first Baha'i community (she received 'Abdu'l-Baha's request while visiting New York and travelled to Japan by way of Europe and the Indian Ocean).⁷³

⁷³Agnes Baldwin Alexander, Personal Recollections of a Baha'i Life in the Hawaiian Islands (revised ed.; Honolulu: The Hawaii Times

After spending three years in Paris, May Bolles was granted permission by 'Abdu'l-Baha to marry her Canadian fiancé, William Sutherland Maxwell, and depart for Canada. From her new home in Montreal May Bolles Maxwell was instrumental in creating the first Canadian community. That was in 1903.⁷⁴ Canada, therefore, received its first Baha'i impulse from a United States citizen, but not from the United States. The situation was similar to that of Miriam Thornburgh-Cropper in the United Kingdom.

Also in 1903, 'Abdu'l-Baha asked Alma Knoblock to leave her home in Washington, D.C. and pioneer in Germany.⁷⁵ Miss Knoblock was responsible for developing Baha'i communities in a number of German cities; a short time later she introduced the religion to Austria.

The much later diffusion of the religion to South Africa, Australia, and Brazil was the work of American Baha'is who responded to the messages that 'Abdu'l-Baha addressed to the North American believers during the period 1916-1919. Leonora Holsapple moved from California to Bahia, Brazil; Fanny Knoblock, sister of Alma, migrated to South Africa;⁷⁶ the Dunns, an elderly couple from California, departed for Sydney, Australia.

Ltd., for *The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Hawaiian Islands*, 1974), pp. 7, 9-13, 24-25.

⁷⁴Baha'i News, No. 541, April, 1976, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁵The Baha'i Centenary, 1844-1944, compiled by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1944), p. 186. Alma Knoblock may have been preceded by another American Baha'i, a dentist by the name of Edwin Fisher. The Baha'i World: 1963-1968, XIV (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1974), p. 377.

⁷⁶The Baha'i World: 1936-1938, VII (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1939), p. 798.

Only a part of the diffusion portrayed in Figure 7 has been discussed, but a lack of available information prohibits a more thorough treatment. A substantial number of all the diffusion flows have been identified, however, and the circumstances surrounding the occurrence of most have been described. There appears to be sufficient information to make a number of generalizations about the spread of the religion during the period 1892-1921.

First, it is clear that most of the geographical expansion occurred outside the Islamic world, most particularly in North America and Europe. Cultural containment of the religion had at least been overcome. The numerical strength of these Western communities was, with the exception of the United States, totally unimpressive. By 1921 the number of believers in one of these newly opened countries was as likely to be in the tens as in the hundreds; the United States was exceptional in having nearly two thousand followers. Therefore, using a head count as the only indicator, one would be forced to conclude that the religion was still a Persian phenomenon. In fact, however, the tiny traces of Baha'i presence in a large number of foreign environments, most of which permitted freedom of activity, and many of which afforded a level of material well-being that was almost entirely lacking in the religion's demographic core, insured that future growth of the Faith would be truly international in character.

The second generalization that can be made is that international Baha'i expansion was coordinated and directed by 'Abdu'l-Baha who throughout his ministry requested specific Baha'is to move to certain areas in order to spread the Faith. The work of Khayr'u'llah, Bolles Maxwell,

Alexander, Knoblock, and others was carried out at the behest of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The direction and pattern of international diffusion was, therefore largely a reflection of what 'Abdu'l-Baha thought it should be. The reality of international diffusion closely matched his preconceived mental image, and this was so because the more effective diffusion agents were willing to obey his dictates. In later years, the personal approach was supplemented by a general policy statement to the American believers calling for global dissemination from their continent. Leonora Holsapple, Fanny Knoblock, and the Dunns responded to that policy. They too, therefore, through their obedience, helped to cause the diffusion flows that 'Abdu'l-Baha had envisioned.

A third generalization, arising out of the second, is that North America did in fact play the critical role in global expansion that 'Abdu'l-Baha had anticipated. Figure 7 confirms that it was from North America that the bulk of the diffusion occurred. So powerful was this trend that dissemination of the Faith in Europe consisted mostly of one-way transatlantic flows rather than short distance transmittals from one country to its neighbor. Even in those instances when intra-European dissemination occurred--such as from Germany to Austria and from France to Switzerland--it was likely to involve either an American change agent (Alma Knoblock in Austria) or someone who had received word of the religion from an American (Edith McKay in Switzerland). Even Agnes Alexander, who became a Baha'i while vacationing in Italy at a time when that country had no resident Baha'is, was brought into the Faith by an American.

A fourth generalization is that international diffusion was largely the work of a few dedicated Baha'is, not the product of community-wide

effort. Consider, for example, that May Bolles Maxwell was instrumental in establishing the Faith not only in France but in Switzerland and Canada (in fact, when she died in 1940 she was helping to develop Baha'i communities in Argentina). And she was not the only one to open up more than one country for the Faith: Alma Knoblock opened Austria as well as Germany; Agnes Alexander was the founding figure in both Hawaii and Japan; the Dunns penetrated New Zealand after having first opened Australia. These are some of the more notable examples of the way in which dispersal of the Faith often depended on the efforts of a few. Whether it was pioneering to new areas or travel teaching around the world, one finds the same names cropping up again and again in accounts of the Baha'i Faith during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

And what of the characteristics of this hard core of early Baha'i teachers in the West? Of those that pioneered, a surprisingly large proportion were women. Any conjecture as to why this should have been so would not be likely to yield hypotheses that could be verified. It should be noted, however, that this sex bias probably does not reflect any inherent characteristic of the religion that is in some way advantageous to females. If that were the case then one would expect a similar female dominance to be the rule in all cultural settings. Persia contradicts such a theory since all historical sources identify predominantly men as the moving force behind the religion in that country.⁷⁷

⁷⁷Of the 78 prominent Baha'is eulogized by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Memorials of the Faithful only three are women. In a totally different cultural context, only about 30 percent of all Korean Baha'is are women. The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1975), p. 260.

It is more likely, therefore, that the interaction of the religion with a particular cultural milieu creates a unique situation which in some way favors deeper involvement by one of the sexes. In the case of modern Western society it may be that the traditional lack of any role aside from homekeeper has given women the time and incentive to become involved with movements and organizations that do not necessarily proffer any economic return. Men, on the other hand, have been cast as the providers, and that role has tended to preoccupy their minds and consume non-familial time. This sort of role differentiation may explain why female Baha'is have always been more numerous than males in the United States; indeed, it may explain the preponderance of females that characterizes most religious movements.

Another common characteristic of those early Baha'i pioneers was that they were often single. There were certainly many married Baha'is who worked in those early years to spread the Faith, but considering the high proportion of the total adult population that is married, it is surprising that more of those active Baha'is were not in a similar state. Perhaps the higher mobility of single people accounts for their importance in the early spread of the Baha'i Faith.

The Travels of 'Abdu'l-Baha

That relatively brief period of political freedom which 'Abdu'l-Baha enjoyed between 1908 and 1914 made it possible for him to journey overseas to further the cause of his religion. Between 1911 and 1913 he made two extended trips, the first to England and France and the second to both North America and Europe. He was in his late sixties at the time. This brief interlude was the only occasion during the 77 years of guidance

supplied by the three central figures of the Faith that any one of them was free to travel on behalf of their religion.

'Abdu'l-Baha spent a total of about 16 months in Western countries; eight months in the United States, five months in France, two months in England, and about two weeks each in Germany and Austro-Hungry. In Europe, most of the time was passed in Paris and London, although while in the United Kingdom he made brief sorties to Edinburgh, Oxford, and Bristol, and during his travels on the Continent he had occasion to remain for a few days in Stuttgart, Budapest, and Vienna. His sojourn in the United States was somewhat more itinerant. He visited a larger number of cities, distributing his time more evenly among them. Even so, the bulk of his stay was spent in the New York metropolitan region and, to a lesser extent, the San Francisco-Oakland area.

'Abdu'l-Baha was motivated to make these trips by his desire to encourage the growth of the Faith in the West. During his travels, this objective was pursued in two ways. First, he inspired his followers by being with them. His physical presence and the words of encouragement which he imparted were sufficient to deepen their commitment. There will be occasion at a later point in this study to discuss the rebellion of Dr. Khayr'u'llah against 'Abdu'l-Baha's authority, but for now it should be pointed out that after having founded the American Baha'i community, Khayr'u'llah changed his mind about the issue of leadership in the Faith and actively worked to undermine the new American believers' allegiance to 'Abdu'l-Baha. That disruption had occurred just after the turn of the century but in the following few years the challenge was blunted and most American believers remained loyal to Baha'u'llah's will and

testament. Nevertheless, 'Abdu'l-Baha's direct interaction with Western believers--especially in America--served to strengthen their recognition of him as leader of the religion. His visits to the West, therefore, helped to protect the infant Faith from internal disruption.

The second way in which 'Abdu'l-Baha promoted the interests of his religion was by making numerous public appearances and talking to a wide variety of audiences. He invariably spoke on Baha'i themes and from all reports stimulated widespread interest. By doing this, he was not simply promoting the Faith in a direct fashion; he was setting an example for all Baha'is to follow.

It is difficult to grasp the scope and intensity of 'Abdu'l-Baha's activities during his travels. Perhaps the best that can be done is to cite Shoghi Effendi's example of how active he was in the New York area where he stayed for about two and a half months. In that city alone,

. . . He delivered public addresses in, and made formal visits to, no less than fifty-five different places. Peace societies, Christian and Jewish congregations, colleges and universities, welfare and charitable organizations, members of ethical cults, New Thought centers, metaphysical groups, Women's clubs, scientific associations, gatherings of Esperantists, Theosophists, Mormons, and agnostics, institutions for the advancement of the colored people, representatives of the Syrian, the Armenian, the Greek, the Chinese, and Japanese communities--all were brought into contact with His dynamic presence, and were privileged to hear from His lips His Father's message. . . .⁷⁸

The particulars of 'Abdu'l-Baha's trips are readily available, both for North America and Europe. Where he went and how long he stayed in each location are interesting, but would be more significant if they could be compared with the distribution of Western Baha'is at that time.

⁷⁸Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 289.

Data regarding sizes and locations of Baha'i concentrations are much harder to find than information dealing with 'Abdu'l-Baha's movements. Even so, it is possible to reconstruct a reasonably accurate picture of the geographical arrangement of North American Baha'is in 1912.

Figure 8 is an attempt to combine these two types of information. In spite of inaccuracies which must be present in the data, the overall pattern is clear: 'Abdu'l-Baha spent most of his time in those places where there were already well-established Baha'i communities. One might arrive at this same conclusion by consulting accounts of 'Abdu'l-Baha's trip to America⁷⁹ since they reveal the inevitable presence of Baha'is wherever he went. That information, however, does not preclude the possibility that there were large Baha'i communities in areas that 'Abdu'l-Baha did not visit. Figure 8 shows that on the whole such was not the case. He visited nearly all locations where there were significant numbers of Baha'is and he almost invariably bypassed locations where there were no believers.

There are two notable exceptions to this generalization. In the first place, there was a substantial Baha'i contingent in the Pacific Northwest (Seattle, Portland, and Spokane) that was never visited by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Apparently, he felt he did not have sufficient time. Besides, he had hurried to the west coast in the hope of meeting Thornton Chase, the first person in America to become a Baha'i (1894). Mr. Chase was seriously ill in Los Angeles, and died before 'Abdu'l-Baha

⁷⁹The most comprehensive account is in Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 171-339.

FIGURE 8 'Abdu'l-Baha's Visit to America: 1912



Sources: *Star of the West*, 2 (March 2, 1912): 2; Balyuzi (1971)

reached him. 'Abdu'l-Baha made the trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles anyway in order to visit his grave, and that southern excursion probably precluded any possibility of a journey to the northwest.

The second exception is that 'Abdu'l-Baha spent almost a month in the small towns of Dublin, New Hampshire, and Eliot, Maine, neither of which had an established Baha'i community. The former, however, was a well-known summer resort frequented by a number of Baha'is from the large cities on the northeast seaboard while the latter was the location of Green Acre Institute, a famous liberal conference center that happened to be owned by a Baha'i named Sarah Farmer.⁸⁰ During the time that 'Abdu'l-Baha was staying at those two locations a number of Baha'is took up temporary residence nearby, and in both places, despite their small size, he made public addresses.

With these two exceptions, it is valid to say that 'Abdu'l-Baha visited only and all those places where substantial numbers of Baha'is resided. The major implication of this concurrence is that it would tend to reinforce Baha'i growth in those areas where the Faith was already concentrated--at least that is what one would presume. Is it not to be expected that the public interest generated by 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to a particular locality would heighten the level of awareness of the innovation and create a large pool of potential converts? Would not the additional benefit of a ready supply of change agents increase the chances of turning potential converts into real ones? One would think so. This line of reasoning would lead one to expect that those geographic

⁸⁰Miss Farmer eventually converted Green Acre to a purely Baha'i institution and when she died she left it to the Faith.

zones already penetrated by 1912 would, with the passage of time, become even more entrenched and enjoy the sort of demographic impulsion that often associates with early development. That is not to say that the Faith would not diffuse to the remainder of the continent; it simply suggests that numerical multiplication would proceed at an equal or more rapid rate in those original core areas visited by 'Abdu'l-Baha--a process which would perpetuate their early dominance.

But that is not the way the Faith grew in North America. The early concentration of Baha'is in a number of urban centers in the industrial northeast, in the midwest, and on the west coast was gradually replaced by a more even distribution over the whole continental area. Concentrations continued to exist, but they became, if anything, less pronounced, and in some instances shifted to regions that in 1912 had had no Baha'is whatsoever.

There is one main reason why the reality of diffusion failed to conform to the expected pattern. Throughout the twentieth century the Baha'i Faith has vigorously pursued a policy of geographic dispersion. That policy has been strong, clear, and consistent. Implementation of the policy has stimulated an extraordinary amount of migratory behavior among Baha'is, usually from areas where they are highly concentrated to regions of relative scarcity. Therefore, whatever growth was generated by 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to the old core areas of the Faith in North America rapidly was siphoned off for distribution throughout the periphery. Data will be presented in a later chapter to document this process.

CHAPTER IV

ISOLATION, PERSECUTION, AND FAITH: THEIR EFFECT ON DIFFUSION

RELIGIO-CULTURAL ISOLATION

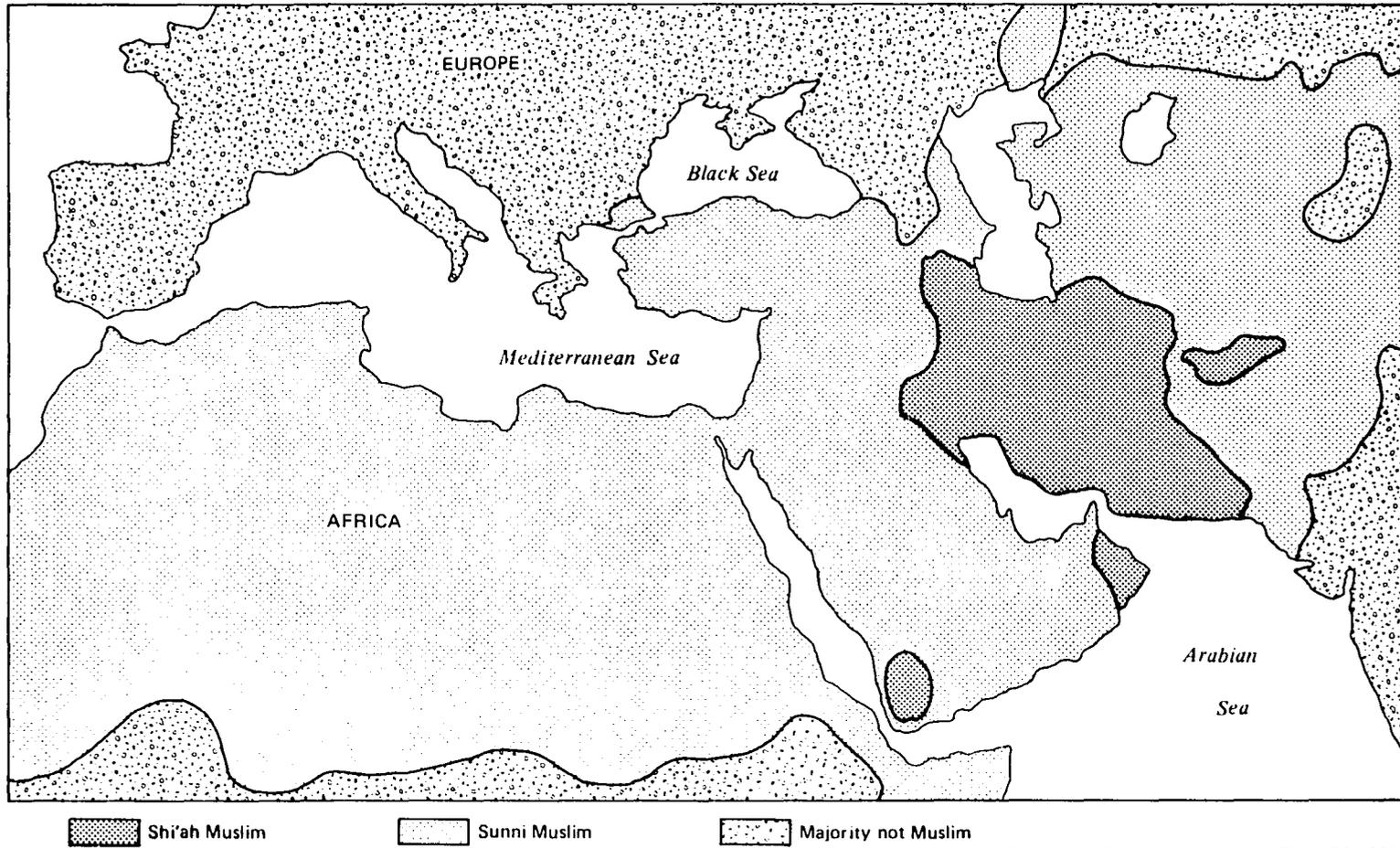
Early expansion of the Baha'i Faith was greatly inhibited by the nature of its religious and cultural roots. Issuing as it did from an Islamic context, the Faith was initially perceived as a sect of this great, world religion--an attitude adopted both by political and religious leaders within the Islamic realm and by foreign observers from abroad who happened to be in the region at the time. In order to burst its cultural bonds, the new religion had first to develop and employ intercultural channels of communication strong enough to overcome the cultural biases inherent in the perception of any foreign observer, refined enough to permit uncorrupted transmittal of the Baha'i message, and reliable enough to ensure that foreign adopters would not fall away from the Faith through lack of contact with its leadership and inspiration. Social customs and physical appearances alone were an imposing barrier to acceptance of the Faith by a foreigner. When one contemplates the racial views in the United States and the attitude of cultural supremacy in Great Britain during the middle of the nineteenth century, for example, it immediately becomes apparent that socio-ethnic dissimilarities between diffusion agents and potential adopters probably were sufficient to obstruct the diffusion of the Faith from its Islamic cultural hearth to the Christianized Western world. But even more awesome was the magnitude and effectiveness of the language barrier.

Until the messages of the Bab and Baha'u'llah could be presented directly to a foreigner in either an oral or written form there was little likelihood that the Faith would be able to make much headway outside its source region.

The problem of religo-cultural insulation in the early years of the Faith was even more acute than one might suppose. A schism developed in the first centuries of the Muslim dispensation which resulted in a division between Sunni and Shi'ah adherence. Although originally political in origin, the rift eventually took on some theological overtones that were to have an impact on the fortunes of the Baha'i Faith. The Sunni sect, which is by far the larger, looks upon Mohammed's statement that He is the Seal of the Prophets as evidence that His was to be the last of God's prophetic revelations. The Shi'ah, on the other hand, believe that divinity will return to earth in the form of the twelfth Imam, who as a savior will reestablish justice in the world. Because of their messianic hope, the Shi'ah have been much more receptive to the Babi and Baha'i revelations than the Sunni, particularly since the Bab was of Shi'ah origin and His advent was immediately preceded by the ascendancy of a mystic who, among other things, proclaimed the eminent appearance of the twelfth Imam.¹ This, however, placed the Baha'i Faith in an awkward geographic position. As Figure 9 shows, Iran is a Shi'ah enclave in the Sunni world. Thus it is that in spite of high adoption rates within Persia during the first few years of the Faith's existence, acceptance in Sunni-dominated areas has traditionally been slow and irregular.

¹The life and teachings of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i are summarized in The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 1-18.

FIGURE 9 The Distribution of Sunni and Shi'ah Regions



PERSECUTION

As difficult as it is to draw firm conclusions regarding the impact of cultural and religious contexts on the spread of the Baha'i Faith, even more elusive is the role of persecution as a stimulant or inhibitor of the diffusion process. That persecution did occur is a documented fact;² the question is, What sort of impact did it have? The intent of the persecution was to exterminate a movement that was threatening the religious and political authorities of Persia by converting large numbers of people--many of them influential--to belief in a new social order. Wholesale slaughter of the early Babis decimated the leadership, disarranged the followers, and drastically curtailed the activities of the struggling movement.

Now in those days [circa 1852], by reason of grievous sufferings and unremitting persecution, this community (the Babis) was dissolved in the lands of Persia, and their assembly was scattered, and most of them were slain with all manner of torments and the harshest punishments; their possessions were plundered, their wives and children were led into captivity, and if one of them survived, he hid himself in some corner, or chose for himself exile from his country.³

In terms of tangible resources, then, persecution diminished the Faith as a religious force. Such a conclusion, however, probably only holds for the short term. In the long run, Persian suppression of the Faith

²E. G. Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians (3rd ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970), pp. 111-112, 434, 440-441, 562-566; Browne (trans. and ed.), A Traveller's Narrative, II, pp. 323-334, 400-412; Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, pp. 496-504.

³Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 7.

became less intense and Baha'i communities reestablished themselves and exceeded their original strength. Furthermore, the history of persecution now works to the advantage of the Faith by attracting the sympathies of many people who, although extracted from a broad variety of cultural settings, display the universal human abhorrence of injustice.

Even at the time, however, persecution had an opposite effect to that which was intended. It enhanced Babi resolve, publicized the movement, and made heroic martyrs of the founding figure and the thousands of followers who died for Him. A climax of this process was reached in 1852. When a Babi youth, probably with the assistance of two accomplices, attempted to assassinate the Shah--an act which, if properly manipulated by the government, could have done more than anything else to undermine the appeal of the Faith--the immediate response of the authorities was to hold all Babis responsible for the deed and to carry out an extermination campaign against them. But the human drama which ensued was so powerful that it was bound to leave an indelible impression on some of the many onlookers. Imagine, if you will, that you are an observer on that day in 1852 when the would-be assassin, Sadiq-i-Tabrizi, paid the price for his crime and drew the Babi movement into a vortex of retribution.

The first to suffer on that calamitous day was the ill-fated Sadiq, who was instantly slain on the scene of his attempted crime. His body was tied to the tail of a mule and dragged all the way to Tihiran, where it was hewn into halves, each of which was suspended and exposed to the public view, while the Tihranis were invited by the city authorities to mount the ramparts and gaze upon the mutilated corpse. Molten lead was poured down the throat of his accomplice, after having subjected him to the torture of red-hot pincers and limb-rending screws. A comrade of his, Haji Qasim, was stripped of his clothes, lighted candles were thrust into holes made in his flesh, and was paraded

before the multitude who shouted and cursed him. Others had their eyes gouged out, were sawn asunder, strangled, blown from the mouths of cannons, chopped in pieces, hewn apart with hatchets and maces, shod with horseshoes, bayoneted and stoned. Torture-mongers vied with each other in running the gamut of brutality, while the populace, into whose hands the bodies of the hapless victims were delivered, would close in upon their prey, and would so mutilate them as to leave no trace of their original form. The executioners, though accustomed to their own gruesome task, would themselves be amazed at the fiendish cruelty of the populace. Women and children could be seen led down the streets by their executioners, their flesh in ribbons, with candles burning in their wounds, singing with ringing voices before the silent spectators: "Verily from God we come, and unto Him we return!" As some of the children expired on the way their tormentors would fling their bodies under the feet of their fathers and sisters who, proudly treading upon them, would not deign to give them a second glance. A father, according to the testimony of a distinguished French writer, rather than abjure his faith, preferred to have the throats of his two young sons, both already covered with blood, slit upon his breast, as he lay on the ground, whilst the elder of the two, a lad of fourteen, vigorously pressing his right of seniority, demanded to be the first to lay down his life.⁴

A spectacle of this sort raises the issue of innovation adoption above the level of mere rational decision making. The intellectual pros and cons of adoption get relegated to the background as the individual observer experiences an overwhelming potency of emotions. E. G. Browne argues persuasively that benefits flowed to the Babis as a consequence of their reactions to adversity.

These executions were not merely criminal, but foolish. The barbarity of the persecutor defeated its own ends, and, instead of inspiring terror, gave the martyrs an opportunity of exhibiting a heroic fortitude which has done more than any propaganda, however skillful, could have done to ensure the triumph of the cause for which they died. Often I have heard Persians who did not themselves belong to the proscribed sect tell with admiration how Suleyman Khan, his body pierced with well-nigh a score of wounds, in each of which was inserted a lighted candle, went to the place of execution singing with exultation:

⁴Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 64-65.

"In one hand the wine cup, in the other the tresses of
a friend -
Such a dance do I desire in the midst of the
marketplace!"

The impression produced by such exhibitions of courage was profound and lasting; nay, the faith which inspired the martyrs was often contagious as the following incident shows. A certain Yezdi rough, noted for his wild and disorderly life, went to see the execution of some Babis, perhaps to scoff at them. But when he saw with what calmness and steadfastness they met torture and death, his feelings underwent so great a revulsion that he rushed forward crying, "Kill me too! I am also a Babi!" And thus he continued to cry till he too was made a partaker in the doom he had come out only to gaze upon.⁵

Browne's observations regarding the vitalizing power that accrued to the Faith as a consequence of the extreme persecution that occurred cannot be proven. However, his views do seem convincing in light of Lord Curzon's summary of the status of the Baha'is in Persia some 40 years later:

. . . The lowest estimate places the present number of Babis in Persia at half a million. I am disposed to think from conversations with persons well qualified to judge, that the total is nearer one million. They are to be found in every walk of life, from the ministers and nobles of the Court to the scavenger of the groom, not the least arena of their activity being the Mussulman priesthood itself.⁶

Whatever the effect that persecution and oppression have had on the Faith, there is little doubt about how Baha'is view this issue. Baha'u'llah crystallized the Baha'i point of view in the following words:

Behold how in this dispensation the worthless and foolish have fondly imagined that by such instruments as massacre, plunder and banishment they can extinguish the Lamp which the Hand of Divine Power hath lit, or eclipse the Day Star of everlasting splendor. How utterly unaware they seem to be of the truth that such adversity is the oil that feedeth the flame of this Lamp! . . .⁷

⁵Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians, pp. 111-112.

⁶Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, p. 499.

⁷Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, p. 72.

Statements such as this have inculcated the Baha'i mentality with an outlook that not only tolerates and accepts adversity but even at times looks forward to it as a sign of impending Baha'i growth.

The particular case of banishment, one of the forms of adversity mentioned by Baha'u'llah in the above quotation is especially significant when studying the geographic aspects of Baha'i diffusion. Baha'u'llah's repeated exiles were instrumental in (1) establishing the Faith outside Persia, (2) determining the location of many of the early non-Persian centers of Baha'i activity, and (3) providing new sources from which later expansion would emanate. Wherever Baha'u'llah went a small group of believers sprang up around his place of confinement, and in the two instances when he was forced to relocate, a part of that community remained in place, acting as nuclei for eventual expansion.⁸ Furthermore, it can be documented that Constantinople eventually became the source for widespread diffusion. Egypt and the Caucasus were opened to the Faith from there, as was Syria.⁹

One must not be left with the impression that Baha'u'llah had no control over His own movements. In 1853 the Shah banished Him from Persia, but permitted Him the choice of destination. The Russian

⁸This statement is certainly correct for Baha'u'llah's removal from Baghdad; in the case of his displacement from Constantinople the evidence is not conclusive: Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 155-156, 180-181. The importance of Baghdad, Constantinople, and 'Akka as foci for immigration, residence, and subsequent out-migration of key Baha'is can be appreciated by reading 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful.

⁹Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 176.

Government offered Baha'u'llah asylum, but He declined, electing instead to settle in Baghdad.¹⁰ During His residence in that city, Colonel Sir Arnold Burrows Kemball, British Consul General in Baghdad, offered to arrange British citizenship, but this invitation also was declined.¹¹ If Baha'u'llah had opted to settle in either Russia or the British Empire it is hard to imagine the implications for subsequent Baha'i diffusion.

The history of the Baha'i Faith, insofar as it relates to the diffusion process, can be viewed in terms of challenge and response, the perspective so ably employed by Arnold Toynbee.¹² Cultural parochialism and persecution represented external challenges to the growth and expansion of the Faith during its critical early years while the Baha'i unwillingness to compromise beliefs or abandon expansionist policies was indicative of the basic Baha'i response. This response, representing as it does an internally derived reaction to circumstances, can be understood best as a translation of beliefs and values into action.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Diffusion is at least in part a consequence of particular responses to particular circumstances. Since a response is largely shaped by

¹⁰Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹Ibid., p. 131.

¹²Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, abridgement of volumes I-X by D. C. Somervell (2 vols.; New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), I, pp. 88-169, II, pp. 97-108. Toynbee addresses the specific issue of religious persecution and its consequences (I, pp. 153-169), but he primarily concerns himself with challenges to civilizations and their ensuing responses. At a later point in his work, however, he recognizes the possibility that it may be religious movements that initiate civilizational growth (see esp. II, pp. 97-98).

prevailing beliefs, it follows that beliefs will have some effect on the character of diffusion. Two Baha'i beliefs have deeply affected diffusion.

The first has to do with how the Faith perceives its role in the world. It has already been demonstrated that Baha'is believe (1) that the most pressing need in the world today is global unity, and (2) that the most powerful instrument for filling that need is the Faith itself. When this perspective is combined with the fundamental Baha'i principle that every believer has a spiritual obligation to actively strive for realization of the new world order, the result is a community outlook that emphasizes the importance of spreading the Faith to new believers and new territories. When, in addition, it is remembered that individual Baha'is have a spiritual obligation to abide by the decisions of a divinely ordained administrative order in all non-personal matters, it immediately becomes apparent that support for centrally planned expansion will be very great. In the early days this meant that when the Bab, Baha'u'llah, or 'Abdu'l-Baha asked an individual believer to travel to a particular locale and teach the Faith, the response almost invariably would be immediate and positive. Later on it meant that expansionary plans developed by the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice were met with instantaneous approval and universal support.

A second way in which Baha'i beliefs affect diffusion involves the concept of a unified religion. Since Baha'is recognize the legitimate foundations of all the world's great revealed religions and consider their founding figures to be Prophets of God equal in status with Baha'u'llah, potential adopters from these other religious traditions do not have to completely reject their background in order to accept the

Baha'i message. To be sure, in any particular case there will be beliefs and values that do not mesh with the Baha'i model, but in the final analysis acceptance of the Baha'i Faith often can be viewed as a modification--rather than a rejection--of the potential adopter's existing religious tradition. The way the Baha'i Faith relates to other religions not only encourages adoption; it strongly discourages reversion. Just as Muslims have historically been highly resistant to Christian overtures because they already accept Christ, so too do Baha'i believers rarely become Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, or Hindus since they already accept the divinity of those religions' founders.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP CRISES ON BAHAI GROWTH

Baha'i growth has relied heavily on the use and acceptance of authority. The individuals and the administrative bodies vested with authority by the sacred writings of the Faith have used their positions of responsibility to promote dissemination. The believers, although generally submissive to the authoritative will, have on occasion experienced division over the issue of its legitimacy. These periods of internal disorder have usually been brief in duration, but fragmentary evidence suggests that they tend to correspond to periods of relatively weak Baha'i growth.¹

Baha'i authority is perceived as being divine in origin and thus an integral part of the Faith. Recognition of this authority is incumbent upon all Baha'is. The importance of this precept to the life of the Faith is manifestly evident in a brief statement made by Shoghi Effendi regarding the religious character of the mechanisms of authority: ". . . To disassociate the administrative principles of the Cause from the purely spiritual and humanitarian teachings would be tantamount to a mutilation of the body of the Cause, a separation that can only result in the disintegration of its component parts, and the

¹For a thorough discussion of the leadership crises that have overtaken the Faith during its 134 year history see: Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith."

extinction of the Faith itself."² Baha'is, therefore, have a spiritual obligation not merely to accept the wellsprings of authority but to actively support them.³

²Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 5.

³The rationale behind the Baha'i concern with legitimate authority and the emphasis which Baha'is place on the divinity of their own authoritative institutions is carefully explored by Shoghi Effendi:

"None, I feel, will question the fact that the fundamental reason why the unity of the Church of Christ was irretrievably shattered, and its influence was, in the course of time undermined, was that the Edifice which the Fathers of the Church reared after the passing of His First Apostle was an Edifice that rested in nowise upon the explicit directions of Christ Himself. The authority and features of their administration were wholly inferred, and indirectly derived, with more or less justification, from certain vague and fragmentary references which they found scattered amongst His utterances and recorded in the Gospel. Not one of the sacraments of the Church; not one of the rites and ceremonies which the Christian Fathers have elaborately devised and ostentatiously observed; not one of the elements of the severe discipline they rigorously imposed upon the primitive Christians; none of these resposed on the direct authority of Christ, or emanated from His specific utterances. Not one of these did Christ conceive, none did He specifically invest with sufficient authority to either interpret His Word, or to add to what He had not specifically enjoined.

"For this reason, in later generations, voices were raised in protest against the self-appointed authority which arrogated to itself privileges and powers that did not emanate from the clear text of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which constituted a grave departure from the spirit which that Gospel did inculcate. . . .

". . . Unlike the Dispensation of Christ, unlike the Dispensation of Muhammed, unlike all the Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Baha'u'llah in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, and regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task. Both in the administrative provisions of the Baha'i Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the followers of Baha'u'llah can summon to their aid such irrefutable evidence of Divine Guidance that none can resist, that none can belittle or ignore. Therein lies the distinguishing feature of the Baha'i Revelation. Therein lies the strength of the unity of the Faith, of the validity of a Revelation that claims not to destroy or belittle previous Revelations, but to connect, unify, and fulfill them. . . . This is why

Periods of crisis in the history of the Faith have been precipitated by direct challenges to the legitimacy of the recognized retainers of Baha'i authority. Figure 10 outlines the historical flow of authority within the Faith and shows when strong challenges have been mounted with the intention of diverting that flow. The figure confirms that the Faith has been most vulnerable during periods of authority transferral.

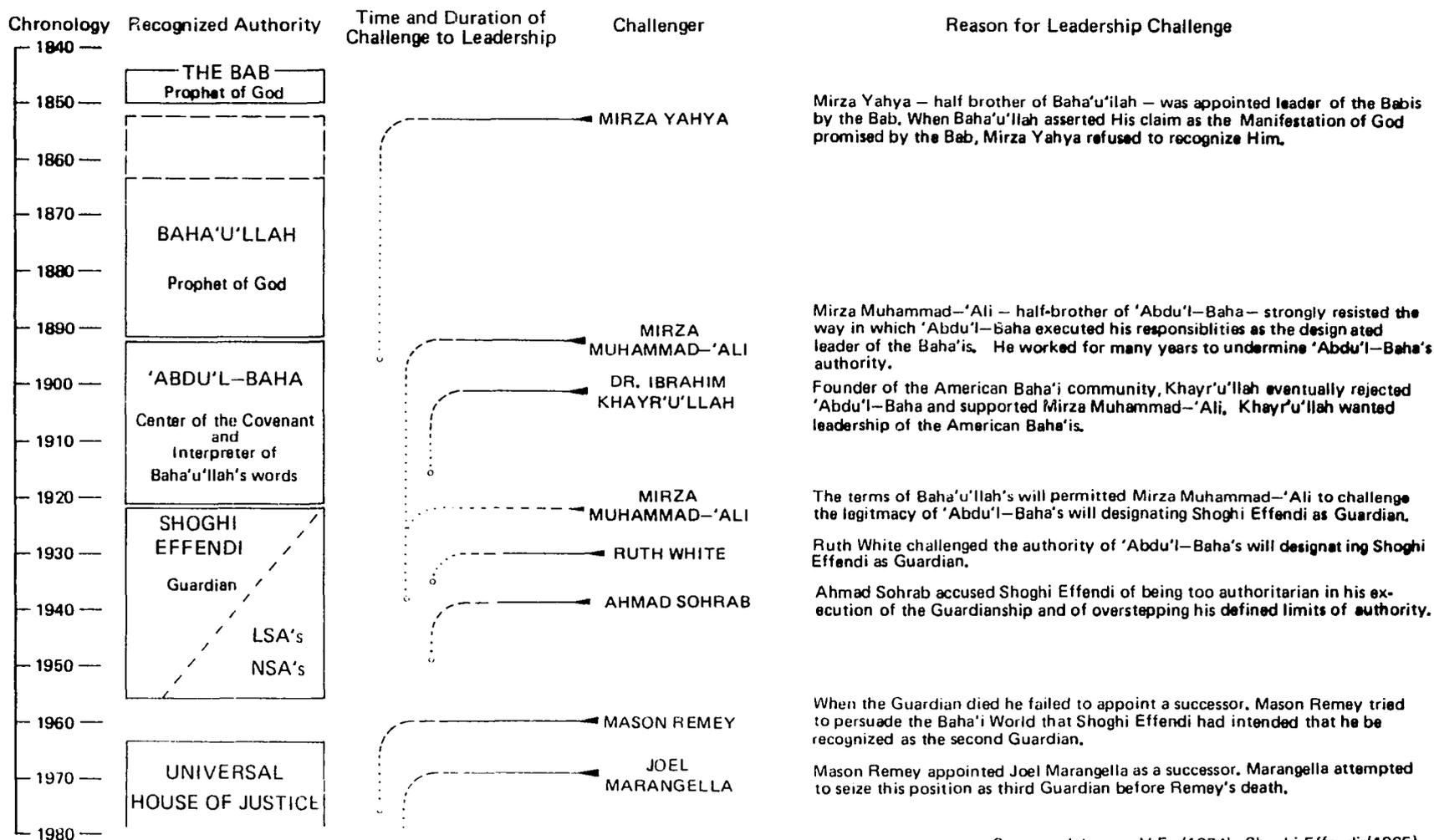
The first major threat to the continuity of Baha'i authority occurred in 1863 when Baha'u'llah declared Himself to be the Promised One whose coming was foretold by the Bab. At that time, the nominal head of the Babis was Mirza Yahya, a half-brother of Baha'u'llah who had been given his position of community leadership by the Bab himself. Mirza Yahya refused to recognize his kinsman as the Promised One, and the result was a struggle for control of the Faith. Baha'u'llah attracted the vast majority of the believers, but this did not diminish the intensity of the conflict. Although Browne is skeptical,⁴ it would appear that open hostilities between the two adversaries eventually contributed to the Turkish decision to transfer Baha'u'llah and his family and followers to 'Akka and Mirza Yahya and his devotees to Famagusta.⁵ In spite of this enforced separation, conflict and rivalry continued between the two, a situation that was made physically possible because of the Turkish government's procedure of keeping the rivals under surveillance by

such an emphasis has been placed [by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha] in their Will and Testament upon the powers and prerogatives of the ministers of their Faith."
 Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 20-22.

⁴Browne, A Traveller's Narrative, II, pp. 99-100.

⁵Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 179.

FIGURE 10 Transfers of Authority and Challenges to Leadership within the Baha'i Faith



Sources: Johnson, V.E. (1974); Shoghi Effendi (1965)

including a few Baha'i "spies" with Mirza Yahya's contingent and vice versa. With the passage of time, Baha'u'llah claimed the allegiance of an increasing proportion of all the believers connected with the religious tradition initiated by the Bab whereas the influence of Mirza Yahya so waned that at the time of his death in 1912 no followers, aside from immediate family, were present at his funeral.⁶ It is clear that in the long term, Baha'u'llah weathered this challenge to His self-proclaimed authority, but during His lifetime the activities of Mirza Yahya had some inhibiting effect on the growth of the Faith. In particular, Mirza Yahya was instrumental in agitating Turkish suspicion towards the Baha'is, thereby encouraging restrictions on the movement of believers to and from the presence of Baha'u'llah and the transmittal of correspondence between Him and his far-flung followers.⁷ The situation became even more difficult when seven Baha'is sought out and killed the non-Baha'i informers planted by the Turkish government. There is no evidence to indicate that the action was condoned by Baha'u'llah, but as can be imagined the result was, at least in the short run, even more stringent confinement of the Baha'i community. The intent here is not to pass judgment on the actions of either the Baha'is or the followers of Mirza Yahya; rather it is to demonstrate how it is that internal division could and did stifle the potential for Baha'i growth. In this instance, internal conflict severely disrupted the already tenuous lines

⁶Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 7.

⁷'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 16-17; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 189.

of communication between the leader of the religion and the great majority of His followers located far to the east.

The next authority crisis occurred at the time of Baha'u'llah's passing in 1892. Although clearly designated in Baha'u'llah's will as the one to whom all Baha'is should turn, 'Abdu'l-Baha's right to guide the destiny of the Faith was contested by a half-brother named Mirza Muhammad-'Ali. The result was a family division of great magnitude. Nearly all 'Abdu'l-Baha's relatives opposed him and sided with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, leaving 'Abdu'l-Baha with the support of his wife, an unmarried sister, four daughters, and an uncle.⁸ The family was extensive; they all lived in 'Akka; they all were knowledgeable about the Faith and its more prominent adherents. Thus, as the conflict developed both sides were in continuous touch with the believers, trying to assert their divergent claims to leadership. Eventually the vast majority of the rank and file fell into line behind 'Abdu'l-Baha, but during the struggle energy was diverted from the task of diffusing the Faith. No quantitative information can be marshalled to support this statement, but the conclusion is logical considering the circumstances. Perhaps the best that can be done is to show how each side in the struggle viewed the effect of the conflict on the Faith. Mirza Jawad, an historian sympathetic to Muhammad-'Ali, drew the following conclusions:

But alas, alas for what we see to-day! All these spiritual virtues and humane practices have undergone a complete change. Concord has been replaced by dissension, constancy by cruelty, and affection by enmity. Dissent and mutual avoidance have appeared in this community, and their concatenation hath been dissolved and their assembly dispersed. All this that hath

⁸Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 242.

been mentioned hath happened by reason of the love of self and seeking after supremacy emanating from "the Most Mighty Branch" (al-Ghusnu'l-A'zam) 'Abbas Efendi [i.e., 'Abdu'l-Baha], and his opposition to the last Testament of His Holiness our Great Master Baha'u'llah.⁹

Shoghi Effendi, narrating events from 'Abdu'l-Baha's perspective at a time more distant from the events, also perceived an adverse effect on the Baha'i community, but concluded that it was a temporary state of affairs that eventually led to internal purification (in other words, 'Abdu'l-Baha's adversaries were subdued):

Though the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali precipitated many sombre and distressing events, and though its dire consequences continued for several years to obscure the light of the Covenant, to endanger the life of its appointed Center, and to distract the thoughts and retard the progress of the activities of its supporters in both the East and the West, yet the entire episode, viewed in its proper perspective, proved to be neither more nor less than one of those periodic crises which, since the inception of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and throughout a whole century, have been instrumental in weeding out its harmful elements, in fortifying its foundations, in demonstrating its resilience, and in releasing a further measure of its latent powers.¹⁰

Even though these two narrators represent the opposing forces in that authority struggle, they do agree that the Baha'is of that time were demoralized and incapacitated by the crisis.

One of the more significant developments associated with the conflict between the two half-brothers was the defection of Dr. Ibrahim

⁹Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 74. It is not completely clear that when Mirza Jawad writes "this community" he is referring to all Baha'is and not just those in 'Akka. Browne, however, has presumed that Jawad was using the phrase in the general sense since his margin notes for this paragraph read "lamentation over present degeneration of Baha'is."

¹⁰Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 252.

Khayr'u'llah from 'Abdu'l-Baha to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali. Dr. Khayr'u'llah was the first Baha'i to travel to the United States. During the years 1893-1898 he converted significant numbers of people to the Faith. He returned to Egypt and 'Akka for a visit in 1898, but a year and a half later he was back in North America. Shortly after his return, however, it became apparent that his allegiances had shifted and the small, vulnerable band of American Baha'is was buffeted by the same kinds of divisive forces that had momentarily crippled the Baha'is of the East six years earlier. Of the fact that there was a crisis among the Baha'is of America there can be little doubt.¹¹ However, in spite of Dr. Khayr'u'llah's eminent position as the original teacher of many of those American believers, he was unable to persuade very many of them to switch their allegiance as he had done. As a result, ". . . The great majority of the American Baha'is adhered to the party of 'Abbas Efendi ['Abdu'l-Baha], who had established there as elsewhere a great personal ascendancy which his half-brother Muhammad-'Ali completely failed to rival. . . ." ¹² The results of Dr. Khayr'u'llah's defection are hard to evaluate, but there are some suggestive clues. Estimates of the size of the Baha'i population in the United States in 1900 (shortly before Dr. Khayr'u'llah's shift in allegiances) vary wildly. Browne notes that the press reported figures as high as 10,000 and even 30,000, but that Mr. A. P. Dodge, an American Baha'i passing through Cambridge in 1900, visited him and personally estimated that there must be at least 3,000

¹¹Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 259; Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 85; Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 168.

¹²Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 168.

believers.¹³ This figure, too, may be a little high, but Mary Lesch, an early Baha'i living in the Chicago area, tabulated just under 1,440 Baha'is by name in a series of enrollment books that she maintained until 1899.¹⁴ It is safe to assume, therefore, that as of the time of Dr. Khayr'u'llah's defection there were at least 1,400 Baha'is in the United States. In fact, the number may have been substantially higher. What is interesting is that a 1906 census of religious bodies for the United States reports a total of 1,280 resident Baha'is.¹⁵ Even allowing for the likelihood of underenumeration, this information would suggest that during the period 1900-1906 the United States Baha'i population declined. What can account for this sudden reversal? Why should rapid and accelerating growth at the outset suddenly be displaced by stagnation and contraction? There are, perhaps, a number of explanations that could be proposed, but the idea that an internal crisis over leadership interrupted the diffusion momentum of the Faith at least has some (albeit circumstantial) support.¹⁶

¹³Ibid., pp. 148-152.

¹⁴Data source: Mary Lesch's hand-recorded log books of Baha'i enrollments, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

¹⁵U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1906 (2 parts; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910); Part II: Separate Denominations: History, Description, and Statistics, pp. 41-44. This was one of four decennial censuses of religion (1906-1936). The statistics contained in these four censuses were compiled by soliciting membership information from the separate religious groups. No actual census was ever conducted.

¹⁶Dr. Khayr'u'llah himself perceived a decline in the dynamism of the Faith and assigned it to the dissension that arose out of the authority struggle. Browne (comp.), Study of the Babi Religion, p. 171; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 179.

The activities of Dr. Khayr'u'llah can be considered as an expression of the fundamental rift that had formed at the time of Baha'u'llah's death over the issues of succession and authority--a rift that sharply divided the members of the Prophet's family and apparently disrupted the smooth functioning of the affairs of the Faith. Mirza Muhammad-'Ali continued to oppose 'Abdu'l-Baha throughout the duration of his ministry, and at the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's death was instrumental in resurrecting the old issues of succession and authority. The acceptance of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith in 1921 was contingent upon acceptance of the will and testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the provisions of which were challenged by Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters.¹⁷ As in previous instances, the results were initial shock and bewilderment among the believers followed by eventual support for the leader designate on the part of the vast majority of all Baha'is.

Within the Faith, the issue of authority is considered to be vital to the continued existence of the religion. Rebellion against recognized authority is viewed as being a selfishly motivated attempt to undermine the Baha'i unity, thereby rendering the Faith incapable of achieving its primary objective (spiritual union of all people). Direct challenges to recognized Baha'i authority are indeed considered to be signs of spiritual disease, and all loyal Baha'is are expected to avoid contact with this contagious, and fatal, malady. Baha'is sense that their own disunity would incapacitate the Faith and would certainly curtail geographic diffusion. Thus in most cases the early Baha'i

¹⁷Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, p. 119; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 327.

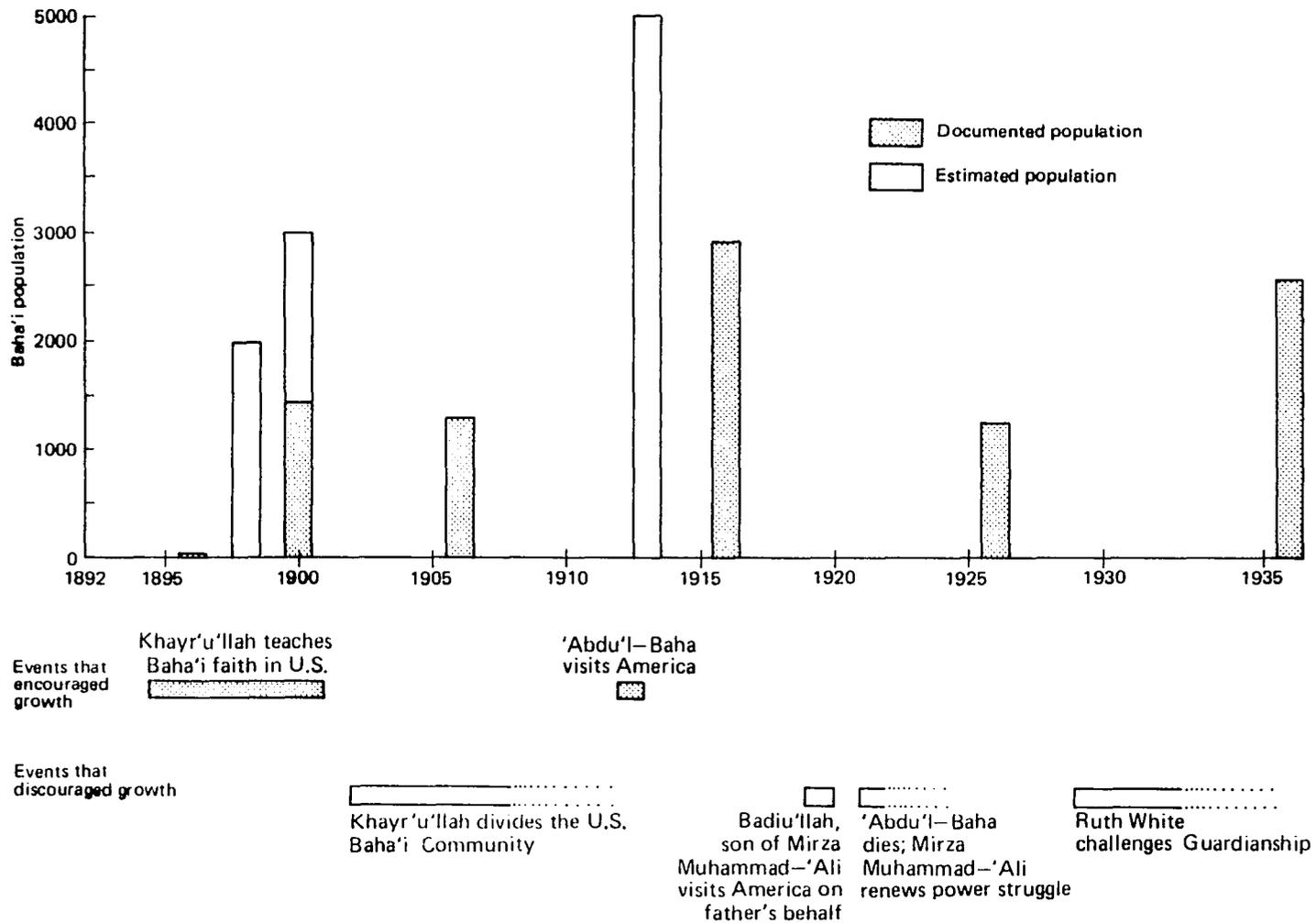
avoided the contender for power and clung to the recognized leader. The seriousness with which the Baha'i Faith regards violators of the Faith's covenant regarding authority is vividly portrayed in a series of telegraphic exchanges between a prominent American Baha'i and 'Abdu'l-Baha. The tone of the exchange captures not only the Baha'i attitude toward rebellion, but also the crisis atmosphere which it engenders:

. . . On 8 November 1921 He ('Abdu'l-Baha) cabled Roy Wilhelm, His trusted correspondent, "How is situation and health friends?" to which Mr. Wilhelm, the next day, was obliged to reply: "Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia agitating violation centering Fernald, Dyer, Watson. New York, Boston refused join, standing solidly constructive policy." An immediate reply was cabled back by 'Abdu'l-Baha on 12 November, in the strongest language, and clearly indicating his distress: "He who sits with leper catches leprosy. He who is with Christ shuns Pharisees and abhors Judas Iscariot. Certainly shun violators. Inform Goodall, True, and Parsons telegraphically." That same day the Master in a second cable to Roy Wilhelm said: "I implore health from divine bounty." These were the last messages America ever received from Him.¹⁸

If, as Baha'is believe, rebellion against authority causes the dynamic spirit of the Faith to wither, then it is reasonable to expect that the population growth rate will decline. Figure 11 extends the comparison between population size and authority contention that was developed when discussing the activities of Dr. Khayr'u'llah. There does seem to be a pattern of population growth associated with events supportive of the established authority figure and population decline at times when the authority has been challenged and countermeasures taken. Furthermore, the remarkable growth of the Faith in the first few years after its introduction to America suggests that the subsequent

¹⁸Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, p. 49.

FIGURE 11 The Baha'i Population in America: 1894–1936



Sources: Berger (1954): 115,142; Browne (1961): 148; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1929,1941); U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census (1910,1916)

levelling off and lack of substantial growth over a thirty year period may have been caused by the irregularly appearing but persistent authority struggles. In other words, both the short run and long run trends in population size offer support for the thesis.

The recent shift from leadership by individual to leadership by groups of individuals has had certain implications for the diffusion process. Since the hierarchy of assemblies that comprise the current administration is elected on a regular basis according to established rules, the spectre of leadership transferral is not so traumatic as in past times when personal commitment to the Faith occasionally became entangled with personal dedication to the leader. Today, authority transfer occurs with such frequent regularity as to virtually eliminate the difficulties caused by the initial human tendency to cling to the old and reject the new. Furthermore, the fact that authority now rests with institutions rather than individuals obviates the whole issue. This is the same sort of institutionalization process as occurs when a monarchy becomes more important than the monarch: "The king is dead; long live the king."

At the same time, however, the charismatic personal leadership given to the Faith by the Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi is gone forever. Their inspiration lives on in the form of the written word, but the superhuman aura which is a part of their charisma has been diminished by their passing. The willingness of early Baha'is to sacrifice their lives for the cause in many cases may have been inspired by their closeness to the religious source. This does not imply that faith, dedication, and spiritual intoxication die with the Prophet;

it does suggest that, after His death, such qualities must appear through a vicarious, rather than direct, process. Baha'i diffusion today depends on self-purification, planning, dedication, and cooperative effort. At the time of the Bab these same elements were present, but there was in addition a mysterious spontaneity about the religion that was pervasive and infectious.

CHAPTER VI

POLICY AND PLANNING: THE KEY TO BAHAI DIFFUSION

POLICY

Since the beginning of its 134 year history the Baha'i Faith has followed an expansionist policy regarding its own diffusion. Clearly stated, vigorously pursued, and consistently adhered to, expansionism has always been a conscious policy molding the activities of many of the believers. In this study, expansion--or diffusion--is conceived primarily in terms of demographic growth in time and space. Numbers and distribution of Bahais are taken to be indicative of the relative level of diffusion achieved by the Faith at any given time. Frequently, it is necessary to measure diffusion in terms of the existing administrative units, but this is really a surrogate variable that presumably indicates the presence of Bahais.

The Baha'i Faith, though, has a much broader perspective regarding its own diffusion. Its expansionist policy is aimed at dissemination of the principles and beliefs of the Faith. This definitely means that the religion solicits new adherents, but it also means that Baha'i energy is expended on activities which encourage adoption of Baha'i principles by non-Baha'i agencies. Thus, for instance, during the 1920s and 1930s many Bahais actively participated in the Esperanto movement,¹ and in more recent times Bahais have been involved in the formation and

¹Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, pp. 271-272.

functioning of the United Nations.² Furthermore, even in their dealings with individuals Baha'is often promote their religious principles without ever mentioning the Faith directly. To a high degree, however, the Faith has consistently endeavored to convert individuals, a policy that meshes well with the demographic orientation of this diffusion study.

To Baha'is, dissemination of the Faith is not merely a policy; it is a destiny. They believe that moral and ethical decline are combining with such divisive forces as nationalism, economic inequity, and racial prejudice to produce a world in which established social and political forces are rapidly disintegrating. Baha'is anticipate a catastrophic collapse of human civilization, a state of affairs that will signal the advent of a new world order in which Baha'i principles of human relations will prevail. Baha'is will be swept up in these tumultuous events but at the same time must strive to promulgate the Faith so that: (1) its influence can ameliorate the severity of the catastrophe, and (2) the seeds for a new world order based on Baha'i principles will already be sown. This sequence of events was frequently alluded to by Baha'u'llah³ in whose writings one can discern the basic theme of global upheaval and a new world order. The prevailing Baha'i perception of its own role in the impending period of transition has been elaborated and crystallized by Shoghi Effendi:

²The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, pp. 788-802; The Baha'i World 1968-1973, XIV, pp. 358-377.

³Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice (3rd ed.; Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 67-69; Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 181, 201.

As we view the world around us we are compelled to observe the manifold evidence of that universal fermentation which, in every continent of the globe and in every department of human life, be it religious, social, economic, or political, is purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established. A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet. The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive. The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a system which may well serve as a pattern for that world policy towards which a strangely-disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal. The constructive process stands associated with the nascent Faith of Baha'u'llah, and is the harbinger of the New World Order that Faith must ere long establish. The destructive forces that characterize the other should be identified with a civilization that has refused to answer to the expectation of a new age, and is consequently falling into chaos and decline.

A titanic, a spiritual struggle, unparalleled in its magnitude yet unspeakably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is being waged as a result of these opposing tendencies, in this age of transition through which the organized community of the followers of Baha'u'llah and mankind as a whole are passing.

The Spirit that has incarnated itself in the institutions of a rising Faith has, in the course of its onward march for the redemption of the world, encountered and is now battling with such forces as are, in most instances, the very negation of that Spirit, and whose continued existence must inevitably hinder it from achieving its purpose. The hollow and outworn institutions, the obsolescent doctrines and beliefs, the effete and discredited traditions which these forces represent, it should be observed, have in certain instances, been undermined by virtue of senility, the loss of their cohesive power, and their own inherent corruption. A few have been swept away by the onrushing forces which the Baha'i Faith has, at the hour of its birth, so mysteriously released. Others, as a direct result of a vain and feeble resistance to its rise in the initial stages of its development, have died out and been utterly discredited. Still others, fearful of the pervasive influence of the institutions in which the same Spirit had, at a later stage, been embodied, had mobilized their forces and launched their attack, destined to sustain in their turn after a brief and illusory success, an ignominious defeat.⁴

⁴Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 170-171.

Through weighty discourses such as this, Shoghi Effendi mobilized Baha'i opinion regarding world affairs and the role of the Faith in them. One can easily sense the power and assurance that is exuded by his words, and to a large extent it is his writings that have endowed the Baha'i world community with a sense of confidence about its own destiny and responsibility. The followers of Baha'u'llah emerged from the era of the Guardianship not just optimistic about the future of the Faith and of the world and not merely apprehensive about the chaotic conditions currently prevailing, but actually knowing that the world will pass through a period of severe trial and that ultimately the principles and values of the Faith they cherish will prevail. All that remains is to promote the interests of the Faith so that the period of transition can be as swift and painless as possible. But one should never be left with the impression that Baha'is are unmotivated, lulled by their belief in destiny into a state of inactive expectancy. Indeed, in spite of the promise of the advent of a regenerated world, the Baha'is are admonished in their own holy writings to strive, continuously strive, to assist its birth.⁵

In summary, one can say that diffusion of the Faith is Baha'i policy of premier importance, that its implementation is a holy obligation incumbent on all Baha'is, that its execution is endowed with a considerable sense of urgency, and yet that its consummation is assured.

Since this study is primarily concerned with geographic aspects of the demographic spread of the religion, the following discussion of basic

⁵See, for example, Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 69-70.

diffusion strategies will be confined to issues relevant to population expansion. There are three fundamental strategies in the Baha'i population diffusion policy: (1) increase in the number of believers, (2) achievement of geographic dispersion, and (3) attainment of diversity (insofar as characteristics of believers is concerned).

Numerical Increase

Effecting Conversions

Increase in the number of believers is, at least at this stage in the development of the Faith, a diffusion strategy that relies heavily on conversion of non-believers. Conversion, in turn, is to be effected primarily by means of person-to-person contact between Baha'is and non-Baha'is. Teaching the Faith is a spiritual obligation and statements by all the central figures reinforce the importance of that duty.

The Bab:

". . . Raise the cry: 'Awake, awake, for, lo! the Gate of God is open, and the morning light is shedding its radiance upon all mankind! The Promised One is made manifest; prepare the way for Him, O people of the earth! Deprive not yourselves of its redeeming grace, nor close your eyes to its effulgent glory!' Those whom you find receptive to your call, share with them the epistles and the tablets we have revealed for you, that, perchance, these wondrous words may cause them to turn away from the slough of heedlessness and soar into the realm of the Divine Presence . . ."6

Baha'u'llah:

. . . "Say, Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds."7

⁶The Bab as quoted in The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 85-86.

⁷Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 38.

'Abdu'l-Baha:

It is known and clear that today the unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message. And if the work of delivering the Message be neglected, the assistance shall be entirely cut off, for it is impossible that the friends of God could receive assistance unless they be engaged in delivering the Message. Under all conditions the Message must be delivered, but with wisdom. If it be not possible openly, it must be done quietly. . . .⁸

Shoghi Effendi:

. . . It is our bounden duty to do all in our power to give the Cause from day to day a fuller publicity, to maintain and stimulate the interest aroused, and to concentrate at the same time our attention on a chosen few, endeavoring tactfully and persistently to make of them earnest and unreserved supporters of the Baha'i Faith.⁹

The Baha'i obligation to teach the Faith is clear and undeniable. Contrary to what one might expect, however, the individual believer is neither obliged to submit to a prescribed and standardized teaching formula nor abandoned to his own devices, undirected and unassisted. The numerous writings of the Guardian contain many references to the question of how one should go about teaching the Faith. He confirms that the individual believer is an independent agent,¹⁰ and yet offers advice on how Baha'is should undertake their teaching obligation. He states that successful teaching requires individual Baha'is to exhibit ". . . a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with peoples of a different race,

⁸Baha'i World Faith, p. 385.

⁹Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p. 72.

¹⁰Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 42.

class, or color."¹¹ He then goes on to advise the potential teacher as to how he should proceed to establish contact with potential converts:

. . . Let him survey the possibilities which the particular circumstances in which he lives offer him, evaluate their advantages, and proceed intelligently and systematically to utilize them for the achievement of the object he has in mind. Let him also attempt to devise such methods as association with clubs, exhibitions, and societies, lectures on subjects akin to the teachings and ideals of his Cause such as temperance, morality, social welfare, religious and racial tolerance, economic cooperation, Islam, and Comparative Religion, or participation in social, culture, humanitarian, charitable, and educational organizations and enterprises which, while safeguarding the integrity of his Faith, will open up to him a multitude of ways and means whereby he can enlist successively the sympathy, the support, and ultimately the allegiance of those with whom he comes in contact. . . .¹²

In dealing with an individual, Shoghi Effendi makes a number of suggestions to the would-be Baha'i teacher:

. . . Let him consider the degree of his hearer's receptivity, and decide for himself the suitability of either the direct or indirect method of teaching, . . .¹³

. . . Let him refrain, at the outset, from insisting on such laws and observances as might impose too severe a strain on the seeker's newly-awakened faith, and endeavor to nurse him, patiently, tactfully, and yet determinedly, into full maturity, and aid him to proclaim his unqualified acceptance of whatever has been ordained by Baha'u'llah. . . .¹⁴

. . . Let him not be content until he has infused into his spiritual child so deep a longing as to impel him to arise independently, in his turn, and devote his energies to the quickening of other souls, . . .¹⁵

The Demography of Conversion

Conversion represents the aggressive approach to the problem of numerical increase, an approach which is most appropriate in the early

¹¹Ibid., p. 18.

¹²Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹³Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

stages of a religious movement when total numbers are small, the age structure may be old, the sex ratio is low,¹⁶ and family structures are incomplete. Under these conditions the potential for natural increase is poor since there are liable to be relatively few married couples who are both believers and who are still young enough to have children. Furthermore, those children who do grow up in the shade of the religion may, upon reaching adulthood, find it hard to locate potential marriage partners who also are Baha'is. The result will be a high rate of intermarriage with non-believers and a consequent perpetuation, or even intensification, of the family structure problem characteristic of the older generation.

Demographic problems of this sort typified the United States Baha'i population during the first forty to fifty years of its existence, and as a result much the greatest proportion of all numerical growth was a consequence of conversion rather than natural increase. With the passage of time, however, the numbers of American believers increased and the demographic abnormalities associated with the earliest stage of growth began to diminish in intensity. Consequently, the Baha'i community's potential for natural increase has improved and the reliance on conversion to bring about population growth, although still extremely

¹⁶It is typical for female adherents to outnumber male adherents, especially in smaller scale, more recent religious movements. For documentation of this, peruse the wealth of statistics contained in the following: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1936 (2 volumes; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941); Vol. II, Part I: Denominations A to J, Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work.

strong, is no longer quite so complete. Since Baha'i authoritative writings strongly emphasize teaching the Faith, however, it is reasonable to expect that conversion will continue to be the main component of population change. The importance of conversion to population growth is further enhanced by the geographically dispersed character of the Baha'i community. Even though Baha'i numbers are becoming sufficiently large to make feasible a higher rate of intra-group marriage and a consequent increase in the number of children raised entirely within a Baha'i home environment, the highly dispersed nature of the Baha'i population, both globally and at the national level in North America, means that any one local community is still likely to be very small and thus vulnerable to such demographic facts as high rates of intermarriage with non-Baha'is and high incidence of family situations in which only some of the family members are Baha'is. The nature of the situation is exemplified by the dispersed Baha'i population of the United States. Although adult Baha'is in the United States numbered well in excess of 40,000 in 1976, there was no one local community, even in the largest cities, that approached a size of 1,000. Indeed, only two dozen communities exceeded 100 in size, and of those only eight had Baha'i populations in excess of 200. Nearly all these "large" Baha'i communities are located in major urban centers where Baha'is continue to represent an infinitesimally small fraction of the local population, thus negating the idea that the larger Baha'i communities are examples of population within which social activities, including marriage, are likely to be self-contained. Conversion, therefore, continues to be the primary force behind population growth in the United States.

In the United States during the period January 16, 1976 - April 21, 1976, there were 810 enrollments into the Baha'i Faith and 861 Baha'i youths who achieved adulthood.¹⁷ This would suggest a fairly equal balance between conversion and natural increase, but in fact the significance of conversion is greatly understated by these figures since a substantial portion of all enrollments in recent years has involved conversion of people aged 18 through 20. Consequently, many of the Baha'i youths who achieved adult status during the three month period were recent converts and not children who grew up in the Faith.

Discouraging Disaffection: Consolidation

In contradistinction to conversion, which is an aggressive method of increasing population numbers, there is an important protective strategy employed by the Baha'i community which has the effect of insuring that population growth is not inhibited by excessive rates of disaffection. Naturally, Baha'i sacred writings have emphasized the necessity of remaining steadfast to the cause of Baha'ullah,¹⁸ but at a more practical level there are numerous references that identify specific ways in which believers can be strengthened in their commitment to the Faith.

¹⁷ Enrollment figures were obtained from enrollment files in the National Teaching Committee office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

¹⁸ Baha'u'llah, Prayers and Meditations, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 346. The index listing for "steadfastness" indicates the significance it has in Baha'i literature.

'Abdu'l-Baha declared that Baha'is must work in groups in order to achieve their objectives¹⁹ and both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha stressed the obligation of individual believers to "take council together" and to "consort in unity."²⁰ This shows that the Baha'i Faith places a premium on cooperative effort and generally discourages an individualistic, isolated approach to the religion. By maintaining a high level of interaction among Baha'is, the religion discourages theological division while heightening the individual believer's commitment. Shoghi Effendi explicitly defined the strategy and objective of this defensive approach when he stated that local Spiritual Assemblies ". . . must endeavor to promote amity and concord among the Friends [Baha'is], efface every lingering trace of distrust, coolness and estrangement from every heart, and secure in its stead an active and wholehearted cooperation for the service of the Cause."²¹

To some extent, the Baha'i emphasis on cooperative endeavor helps to reconcile those two aspects of the Faith that encourage individual believers to (1) develop a personal and self-sufficient attitude towards Baha'i knowledge and spirituality, and yet (2) establish a pattern for living that transcends not only the individual and the family, but even the Baha'i community, so as to achieve an attitude of responsibility to

¹⁹Baha'i World Faith, pp. 401, 403.

²⁰Baha'u'llah, Gleanings, pp. 184, 315; Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 187, 506.

²¹Principles of Baha'i Administration: A Compilation (3rd ed.; London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1973), p. 39.

the global human family. Both themes, the individualistic and the all-embracing, frequently are present in Baha'i sacred writings,²² and it is easy to see that preoccupation with them would tend to inhibit the development of the Baha'i Faith as an independent world religion having its own unique character. Without some group cohesion and internal perception of uniqueness the Baha'i diffusion process would likely have been accompanied by gradual dilution of the Baha'i principles, eventual dissolution of Baha'i unity, and ultimate absorption and assimilation (as well as corruption) of the original Baha'i message.

In more recent times, however, it has become evident that attempts to strengthen Baha'i commitment have involved group assistance and cooperative effort at least in part to assure that numerical gains through conversion are not offset by losses through disaffection. This is apparent from the fact that group efforts to insure steadfastness, commonly referred to as "consolidation," are frequently discussed in the same context with group efforts to effect conversions. Consider the clarity with which the following quotation outlines a two-pronged strategy for insuring numerical growth:

While . . . vital teaching work is progressing each National Assembly must bear in mind that expansion and consolidation are inseparable processes and must go hand in hand. The interdependence of these processes is best elucidated in the following passage from the writings of the beloved Guardian: "Every

²² Both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha stressed the importance of each believer independently investigating the Faith (A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), p. 27; Baha'i World Faith, p. 246); and they both emphasize man's obligation to recognize the need for, and reality of world unity (Baha'i World Faith, pp. 168, 210, 246; Baha'u'llah's The Hidden Words, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (revised ed.; Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), p. 20).

outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Baha'i institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development. From this vital, this ever-present need, attention must, at no time, be diverted, nor must it be, under any circumstances neglected, or subordinated to the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Baha'i administrative institutions. That this community . . . may maintain a proper balance between these two essential aspects of its development . . . is the ardent hope of my heart." To ensure that the spiritual life of the individual believer is continuously enriched, that local communities are becoming increasingly conscious of their collective duties, and that the institutions of an evolving administration are operating efficiently, is, therefore, as important as expanding into new fields and bringing in the multitudes under the shadow of the Cause.²³

It should be noted that because this research is admittedly pre-occupied with Baha'i growth (particularly as represented by numerical increase) expansion and consolidation are considered from the limited point of view of their implications for the growth of the size of the Baha'i community. In fact, of course, reference to expansion and consolidation in Baha'i literature suggests that the twin processes are important not only for numerical growth but also for the growth and development of (1) the administrative system, (2) the Baha'i image in the eyes of the non-Baha'i world, and (3) the unique aspects of Baha'i life. Be that as it may, the above quotation leaves no doubt that the Baha'i concepts of expansion and consolidation are to a considerable degree tied to the notion of numerical growth.

The Baha'i concept of consolidation is frequently associated with the task of confirming and strengthening new believers.

²³Arise to Serve: A Compilation (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 111-112. This quotation is from a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies engaged in mass teaching campaigns. The letter is dated February 2, 1966.

After declaration, the new believers must not be left to their own devices. Through correspondence and dispatch of visitors, through conferences and training courses, these friends must be patiently strengthened and lovingly helped to develop into full Baha'i maturity. The Beloved Guardian, referring to the duties of Baha'i assemblies in assisting the newly declared believer, has written, ". . . the members of each and every assembly should endeavor, by their patience, their love, their tact and wisdom, to nurse, subsequent to his admission, the newcomer into Baha'i maturity, and win him over gradually to the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the teachings."

Expansion and consolidation are twin processes that must go hand in hand. The friends must not stop expansion in the name of consolidation. Deepening the newly enrolled believers generates tremendous stimulus which results in further expansion. The enrollment of new believers, on the other hand, creates a new spirit in the community and provides additional manpower that will reinforce the consolidation work.²⁴

The Baha'i community's obligation to strengthen new believers is definitely a defensive strategy in that it discourages disaffection. When the obligation is effectively fulfilled, however, the consequences can be not mere maintenance of Baha'i enrollments (a defensive stance), but actual increase in the number of declarants (an aggressive posture): "The friends should be made to realize that in teaching the Faith to others they should not only aim at assisting the seeking soul to join the Faith, but also at making him a teacher of the Faith and its active supporter."²⁵

Although there has been this recent emphasis on unified community action, the Baha'i Faith continues to rely on both individual and

²⁴Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968 (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), pp. 32-33. Specific methods and common problems associated with Baha'i expansion and consolidation are outlined on pages 33-36.

²⁵Arise to Serve: A Compilation, p. 114.

cooperative effort to achieve its growth objectives. That growth is stimulated and safeguarded by means of the twin strategies of expansion and consolidation. The rationale underlying the expansion and consolidation strategies, the legitimacy of their pursuit, and even the tactics to be employed in their execution, have been clearly laid down by the accepted sources of authority within the Faith. In other words, Baha'i diffusion, in the form of growth in the number of believers, is not merely current policy; it is part of the Baha'i belief system ultimately rooted in the writings of those individuals and those administrative bodies that Baha'is the world over recognize as being divinely inspired and fundamentally infallible.

Dispersion

The Origins of the Dispersion Strategy

Geographic dispersion has been a theme of Baha'i diffusion ever since 1844 when the Bab instructed his first disciple, Mulla Husayn, to spread word of the Faith throughout Persia:

". . . Gird up the loins of endeavour, and arise to diffuse my cause. . . . Even as the cloud that rains its bounty upon the earth, traverse the land from end to end, and shower upon its people the blessings which the Almighty, in his mercy, has deigned to confer upon you. . . ."26

In a similar fashion, the Bab appealed to the remainder of the Letters of the Living to ". . . Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His [Baha'u'llah's] coming. . . ."27 Indeed, the Bab even gave

²⁶The Bab as quoted in The Dawn-Breakers, p. 85.

²⁷Ibid., p. 94.

a mild degree of territorial expression to His plans for geographic spread by assigning to each disciple his own native province as a teaching area.²⁸ All of this clearly signifies a very early Baha'i preoccupation with geographic dispersal--a dispersal designed to insure that teaching efforts would result in a widely distributed Baha'i community.

Baha'u'llah, too, encouraged geographic dispersion, and in doing so enlarged the arena of Baha'i activity so as to include not just Persia and the associated Shi'ah realm, but the entire world. In certain instances, the actions of Baha'u'llah, rather than His words, testify to His belief that His religion would become world embracing. The letters that He wrote to kings, rulers, and religious leaders of the world exhorting them to accept His Message²⁹ are a testimonial to the territorial breadth of His vision. That vision was given expression within the text of the letters:

. . . God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, 'the Kingdom is God's', may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples.³⁰

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.³¹

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹The complete text of these letters is contained in: Baha'u'llah, The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah to the Kings and Leaders of the World (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1972).

³⁰Ibid., p. 112.

³¹Ibid., pp. 116-117.

The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System--the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.³²

. . . Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.³³

Baha'u'llah viewed His own advent as the beginning of a worldwide religious movement. In order to effect the global transformation involved, He apparently dispatched believers to a number of distant regions.³⁴ At the same time, He encouraged all believers to help bring about geographic dispersion of the Faith:

. . . "They that have forsaken their country . . . for the purpose of teaching Our Cause--these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power . . . By My Life! No act, however great, can compare with it, except such deeds as have been ordained by God, the All-Powerful, the Most Mighty. Such a service is indeed the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of every goodly act."³⁵

The passing of Baha'u'llah in 1892 marked the beginning of 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, and it was this man, the Prophet's son, who stimulated and coordinated a truly global diffusion of the Baha'i Faith. Baha'u'llah had given His religion a global outlook and had, from His places of confinement, encouraged the geographic dispersion of His believers, but it was not until the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha that dispersion on a worldwide scale really began to take place. It was 'Abdu'l-Baha who sent Dr. Khayr'u'llah to the United States to teach the Faith, and it was that

³²Ibid., p. 118.

³³Ibid., p. 122.

³⁴See especially, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, pp. 18, 75-76, 135, 46-47; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 176.

³⁵Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 57.

event which initiated global diffusion. In the years that followed, 'Abdu'l-Baha corresponded personally with a number of individual believers encouraging them to disperse and teach the Faith. Finally, in the latter years of his ministry, he outlined an overall form and direction for this dispersal process in the Tablets of the Divine Plan which he addressed to the North American believers.

The words of 'Abdu'l-Baha most clearly define his commitment to the principle of dispersion: ". . . now is the time that you may divest yourselves from the garment of attachment to this phenomenal realm, be wholly severed from the physical world, become angels of heaven and travel and teach through all . . . regions."³⁶ This particular quotation is drawn from a tablet addressed to the Baha'is of North America encouraging them to diffuse the Faith to the rest of the Western hemisphere. In other tablets to the American believers 'Abdu'l-Baha emphasized the need to spread the Faith to all parts of the world:

Consider! The station and the confirmation of the apostles in the time of Christ was not known, and no one looked on them with the feeling of importance--nay, rather, they persecuted and ridiculed them. Later on it became evident what crowns studded with the brilliant jewels of guidance were placed on the heads of the apostles, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of John.

Likewise your confirmation is not known at the present time. I hope that ere long it may throw a mighty reverberation through the pillars of the earth. Therefore it is the hope of 'Abdu'l-Baha that just as ye are confirmed and assisted on the continent of America, ye may also be confirmed and assisted in other continents of the globe--that is, ye may carry the fame of the Cause of God to the East and to the West and spread the Glad Tidings of the Appearance of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts throughout the five continents of the World.³⁷

³⁶'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1975), p. 11.

³⁷Ibid., p. 12.

In fact, throughout all of 'Abdu'l-Baha's tablets to the American believers there are numerous passages urging them to scatter around the world in order to spread the Faith.

Shoghi Effendi continued the Baha'i emphasis on dispersal. He appealed to the believers to travel extensively, to settle in foreign lands, and to continually seek opportunities to introduce the Faith in localities hitherto unaware of its message. One of the most intriguing aspects of Shoghi Effendi's character is his meticulous concern with not exceeding his proscribed authority as interpreter of the sacred writings--a concern that results in his frequently citing the actual words of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and allowing those words to stand as their own interpretation. Shoghi Effendi merely appealed to the believers to do what his grandfather and great-grandfather already had told them to do. Consider, for instance, the way in which Shoghi Effendi, on the third anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, when writing to the American believers about the need to disperse, quotes his grandfather's eloquent appeal to the same body of believers regarding the same issue:

. . . Let us recall, and seek on this sad occasion the comfort of, the last wishes of our departed yet ever-watchful Master ['Abdu'l-Baha]:--

"It behooveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime, and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest, and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha!' (O Thou the Glory of Glories). . . . The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the divine guidance; till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway

of that beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!"

Having grasped the significance of these words, having obtained a clear understanding of the true character of our mission, the methods to adopt, the course to pursue, and having attained sufficiently the individual regeneration--the essential requisite of teaching--let us arise to teach His Cause with righteousness, conviction, understanding and vigor. Let this be the paramount and most urgent duty of every Baha'i. Let us make it the dominating passion of our life. Let us scatter to the uttermost corners of the earth; sacrifice our personal interests, comforts, tastes, and pleasures; mingle with the diverse kindreds and peoples of the world; familiarize ourselves with their manners, traditions, thoughts and customs; arouse, stimulate and maintain universal interest in the Movement, and at the same time endeavor by all the means in our power, by concentrated and persistent attention, to enlist the unreserved allegiance and the active support of the more hopeful and receptive among our hearers. . . .³⁸

This, perhaps better than any other single statement, captures the spirit and dedication underlying the Baha'i commitment to geographic dispersion.

The Dispersion Strategy Today

Dispersion remains to this day as one of the fundamental diffusion strategies employed by the Baha'i Faith. During the ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi the size of the Baha'i community was so small and the amount of territory remaining unopened to the Faith was so great that those two religious leaders persistently and eloquently emphasized the role of dispersion in the global diffusion process. The Universal House of Justice has perpetuated this trend³⁹ even though the world status of the Faith has changed dramatically. Today, there are

³⁸Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p. 69.

³⁹See, for example, Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 6-7, 24, 75-77.

firmly established Baha'i communities and administrative bodies in nearly all non-communist nations of the world, a situation that would presumably diminish the need for dispersion on the same scale as in the past. Nevertheless, the Baha'i community, its leadership, and its growth plans continue to place great importance on the dispersion of believers. There seem to be two reasons for this. In the first place, the character of the dispersion process has changed. In the early days dispersal by individuals meant movement to large territories--frequently national in status--that were totally devoid of believers and utterly ignorant of the Baha'i message. The task was to convert a nuclear group of people who, along with the original pioneer, could subsequently work for expansion of the religion's influence in that area. In more recent times, dispersion has involved the movement of believers to particular localities within those larger territorial units for the purpose of increasing the network of places having Baha'is and enlarging the total number of Local Spiritual Assemblies. To put it simply, dispersion in the early days was concerned with establishing Baha'i communities in every country whereas dispersion nowadays is aimed at founding Baha'i communities in every city, town, and village of every country. In both cases the scale of operations is global, but in the latter case the degree of geographic articulation is much greater.

The necessity for international movement of pioneers persists. Many countries and regions of the world have what might be called infant Baha'i national communities which are perhaps numerically smaller than some of the older, more established national communities, and are less knowledgeable about, and less experienced with, Baha'i beliefs and laws.

Of equal importance is the lack of material resources that frequently characterizes some of these national areas. As a result of these imbalances, pioneers often disperse across national boundaries to serve the needs of less well endowed national communities. One should not be left with the impression that there are established one-way flows of pioneers, however, for no matter how small and struggling a given national Baha'i community it invariably inherits a responsibility to supply pioneers to some other part of the world.⁴⁰

The second reason for the continued strong emphasis on dispersion has to do with the Baha'i belief that the world around us is in a state of decay and disintegration. As was outlined at the beginning of this chapter, Baha'is look upon the world as currently passing through a revolutionary change wherein established institutions and beliefs will be swept away and replaced by a new world order that embodies Baha'i laws. Baha'is do not expect the transition to be smooth; indeed, they anticipate heightened levels of persecution and intensified anti-Baha'i propaganda as the established religious, economic, and political powers recognize the increasing threat which the Baha'i Faith poses to their authority. It is expected that anti-Baha'i activity will be paralleled by a general disintegration in global conditions--a disintegration that Baha'is perceive in the form of heightened international tensions,

⁴⁰Notice, for example, the international projects assigned to nearly all the National Spiritual Assemblies in the Five Year Plan: Universal House of Justice, Analysis of the Five Year International Teaching Plan, 1974-1979 (Welwyn Garden City, England: The Broadwater Press Limited, 1975), pp. 21-45.

increasing national isolationism, deteriorating economic and social conditions, and perhaps even global war. As all of these darkening forces gather momentum it will become increasingly difficult for Baha'i activities to proceed unimpeded. It is this concern which motivates Baha'is to continue to urgently strive for dispersal. The prevailing belief is that if well-grounded Baha'i communities are established in as many different localities as possible then the capacity of the Faith to weather the storm of transition will be at its greatest and the subsequent potential of the religion to direct the form of the new world order will be optimized.

Diversity

Diversity as an Ideal

The Baha'i thrust to achieve diverse membership, although presently comparable in priority to the objectives of numerical growth and geographic dispersion, has grown out of a Baha'i tradition that is far less explicit. It has been possible to identify specific appeals by all the major figures in the Faith urging the Baha'i community to strive to achieve the twin objectives of growth and dispersion, but the concept of compositional diversity has gradually emerged as a fundamental planning objective as a consequence of much more subtle statements by Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi. The principal difference is that these men focused attention on the need for diversity by noticing it and praising it whenever it was present among a group of Baha'is. They practiced positive reinforcement, and the result was the gradual development of a Baha'i consciousness of the desirability of diversity.

This is not to say that Baha'i leadership failed to make appeals to the members on behalf of the cause of compositional diversity. In fact, there are explicit statements which exhort Baha'is to actively pursue diversity of membership, but compared to the emphasis on growth and dispersion, the number of such exhortations is relatively small. A consequence of this is that diversity was not a goal in some of the earlier Baha'i growth plans.⁴¹

In spite of the fact that diversity has been somewhat slow to emerge as an explicit planning objective, historically it has been a noticeable characteristic of many Baha'i communities. Even in the time of the Bab believers were drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and from all walks of life.⁴² In more recent years there are additional bits and pieces of evidence that support this contention. A survey of North American Baha'is in 1936⁴³ reveals that they were drawn in substantial

⁴¹Exception can be taken to this statement on the grounds that 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets of the Divine Plan--the earliest identifiable Baha'i plan and the master scheme for all subsequent planning efforts--clearly identifies a need for Baha'i membership to be expanded so as to include a wide variety of racial and ethnic stocks. In spite of this, however, it was not until after the Second Seven Year Plan (1945-1952) that specific goals were formulated to insure balanced growth insofar as racial background, religious background, language, sex, age, and social class are concerned.

⁴²Comte de Gobineau, an eminent French historian who was contemporary with the Bab, repeatedly emphasized that Babis were drawn from many different backgrounds (see The Dawn-Breakers, pp. 501, 659, 663). Comte de Gobineau's view has been collaborated by that of E. G. Browne (*Ibid.*, p. 644).

⁴³A detailed analysis of this survey will be undertaken at a later point in this study. The survey did not solicit information regarding economic and occupational characteristics of the membership, but all the respondents from the Chicago area were asked to identify their occupation. The responses showed substantial diversity, and it is on the

numbers from a variety of religious backgrounds, were representative of a broad spectrum of economic and occupational situations and were surprisingly representative of the Black race (5.1 percent of all Baha'is were black even though at that time the Faith was largely confined to the Northeast, the Midwest, and the West Coast).⁴⁴

Furthermore, the philosophical foundations for a Baha'i emphasis on diversity were laid by Baha'u'llah when he proclaimed the unity and brotherhood of all mankind:

"The Tabernacle of Unity," Baha'u'llah proclaims in his message to all mankind, "has been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. . . . Of one tree are all ye the fruit and of one bough the leaves. . . . The world is one country and mankind its citizens. . . . Let not a man glory in that he loves his country; let him glory in this, that he loves his kind."⁴⁵

This is the clarion call of the Baha'i Faith, and it should be obvious that the followers of Baha'u'llah can hardly hope to respond to the call unless they are willing, and indeed eager, to incorporate into their midst the diversity that characterizes the world's human multitude. The

basis of this fragmentary evidence that 1936 Baha'is are considered to have been "representative of a broad spectrum of economic and occupational situations." The following figures give a rough idea of how the data broke down for the 115 Chicago respondents who indicated their occupations: professionals-22; blue-collar workers-14; service workers-35; students-2; housewives-35; unclassified-7.

⁴⁴And yet, according to Shoghi Effendi, Baha'is were not as diverse in America as in India and Burma where the greatest variety of races, creeds, and tongues were incorporated into the Faith. Shoghi Effendi, Dawn of a New Day (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970(?)), p. 148.

⁴⁵Baha'u'llah as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 41.

only other option would be to attempt an eradication of all human diversity in an effort to bring about a centralized world system, but this is not the objective. In fact, as 'Abdu'l-Baha made clear, the Baha'i Faith encourages diversity because it is an expression of God.

Should anyone contend that true and enduring unity can in nowise be realized in this world inasmuch as its people widely differ in their manners and habits, their tastes, their temperament and character, their thoughts and their views, to this we make reply that differences are of two kinds; the one is the cause of destruction, as exemplified by the spirit of contention and strife which animates mutually conflicting and antagonistic peoples and nations, whilst the other is the sign of diversity, the symbol and the secret of perfection and the revealer of the bounties of the All-glorious.

. . . Consider the flowers of the garden; though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruit, the branches, and the trees of the garden were all of the same shape and color! Diversity of color, form and shape enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when diverse shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Nought but the celestial potency of the word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas and convictions of the children of men.⁴⁶

Diversity as an Objective

'Abdu'l-Baha clearly delineated the Baha'i position. He indicated that diversity is not merely acceptable; it is laudable. In his Tablets of the Divine Plan he explicitly called upon the American Baha'is to

⁴⁶The Divine Art of Living: Selections from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, comp. by Mabel Hyde Paine (revised ed.; Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), pp. 109-110.

obtain converts among all the world's ethnic groups.⁴⁷ Racial extract and religious background are the two types of human diversity that 'Abdu'l-Baha emphasized but these notions of diversity were eventually supplemented with numerous others. The effort to encompass racial variety, however, has always remained the key objective in the Baha'i thrust toward diversity of membership. An example of this focus can be drawn from a message written by Shoghi Effendi in 1938 when he was attempting to inspire and direct the American believers who recently had been given responsibility for conducting the First Seven Year Plan.

Let any one who feels the urge among the participators in this crusade, which embraces all the races, all the republics, classes, and denominations of the entire Western Hemisphere, arise, and circumstances permitting, direct in particular the attention, and win eventually the unqualified adherence, of the Negro, the Indian, the Eskimo, and Jewish races to his Faith. No more laudable and meritorious service can be rendered the Cause of God, at the present hour, than a successful effort to enhance the diversity of the members of the American Baha'i community by swelling the ranks of the Faith through the enrollment of the members of these races.⁴⁸

Numerous examples could be cited of the way in which Shoghi Effendi appealed to Baha'is the world over to incorporate into their midst peoples of all racial backgrounds,⁴⁹ but the above quotation can stand as an example of the sort of specific appeal he commonly made.

Racial variety was always his strongest thrust, but other forms of human diversity were stressed by the Guardian as well:

"Every laborer in these fields, whether as traveling teacher or settler, should, I feel, make it his chief and constant

⁴⁷'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 8.

⁴⁸Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 45.

⁴⁹See, for example, Arise to Serve: A Compilation, pp. 68-104.

concern to mix, in a friendly manner, with all sections of the population, irrespective of class, creed, nationality, or color, to familiarize himself with their ideas, tastes, and habits, to study the approach best suited them, to concentrate, patiently and tactfully, on a few who have shown marked capacity and receptivity, and to endeavor, with extreme kindness, to implant such love, zeal, and devotion in their hearts as to enable them to become in turn self-sufficient and independent promoters of the Faith in their respective localities. . . ."50

If one were to ignore the general intent of the above quotation and focus instead on its technicalities it might be possible to conclude that the Guardian was asking not for diversity and representativeness, but rather for nothing more than a thorough search to identify and convert those souls most receptive to the Faith, regardless of their background. If this were to become the prevailing Baha'i view of its own obligation, then with time the membership of the Faith could become uniform and unrepresentative since people have a tendency to be more positively disposed towards those who are like themselves. But the Guardian prohibited such a trend by flatly stating that ". . . every organized community, enlisted under the banner of Baha'u'llah should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it."⁵¹ Indeed, he insured the realization of this principle by stipulating that

". . . it should be the duty of every Baha'i community so to arrange its affairs that in cases where individuals belonging to the diverse minority elements within it are already qualified and fulfill the necessary requirements, Baha'i representative institutions, be they Assemblies, conventions, conferences, or committees may have represented on them as many of these diverse elements, racial or otherwise, as possible. The adoption of such a course, and faithful adherence to it would not only be a source

⁵⁰Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 54.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 29.

of inspiration and encouragement to those elements that are numerically small and inadequately represented, but would demonstrate to the world at large the universality and representative character of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, and the freedom of His followers from the taint of those prejudices which have already wrought such havoc in the domestic affairs, as well as in the foreign relationships, of the nations."⁵²

This conscious policy of discrimination in favor of minorities works in union with a general preoccupation with representativeness to achieve a surprising result. It builds into the whole Baha'i expansionary program a self-corrective mechanism that insures balanced growth. As soon as it becomes apparent to the believers in a community that their composition is not representative of the population at large, there is a spontaneous concern with the bias and a subsequent modification of the expansionary goal so as to redress the perceived imbalance.

The Baha'i population of the United States, for example, was almost devoid of American Indians in 1936, but since then growth plans have repeatedly emphasized the need to reach this minority group (a need, incidentally, that 'Abdu'l-Baha strongly emphasized as early as 1917 when he drafted the Tablets of the Divine Plan) with the result that American Indians drawn from a wide variety of tribes now comprise a disproportionate share of the total Baha'i population. Similarly, during the 1950s the United States Baha'is became aware of a relative lack of young people, and the subsequent emphasis on youth enrollments brought about a dramatic shift in the age composition of the population. Currently, young people are numerous in the Faith and many suspect that the imbalance may have shifted in the other direction.

⁵²Ibid., p. 30.

In any event, demographic representativeness has become one of the criteria by which the Baha'i community evaluates its own image. Baha'u'llah grounded the principle of diversity in the overall belief structure of the Faith; 'Abdu'l-Baha insisted on the principle being reflected in the actual composition of the Baha'i population; Shoghi Effendi showed the believers how to close the gap between the ideal and the reality. The strength and continuity of this leadership has established a tradition that the Universal House of Justice has perpetuated. The following extract from a 1967 letter to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world indicates not only the importance placed on diversity by the Universal House of Justice, but also the breadth of the concept in the current Baha'i world:

The paramount goal of the teaching work at the present time is to carry the message of Baha'u'llah to every stratum of human society and every walk of life. An eager response to the teachings will often be found in the most unexpected quarters, and any such response should be quickly followed up, for success in a fertile area awakens a response in those who were at first uninterested.

The same presentation of the teachings will not appeal to everybody; the method of expression and the approach must be varied in accordance with the outlook and interests of the hearer. An approach which is designed to appeal to everybody will usually result in attracting the middle section, leaving both extremes untouched. No effort must be spared to ensure that the healing Word of God reaches the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the old and the young, the devout and the atheist, the dweller in the remote hills and islands, the inhabitant of the teeming cities, the suburban businessman, the laborer in the slums, the nomadic tribesman, the farmer, the university student; all must be brought consciously within the teaching plans of the Baha'i Community.⁵³

⁵³Arise to Serve: A Compilation, pp. 119-120.

PLANNING

The Importance of the Individual

Demographic expansion through numerical increase, geographical dispersion, and compositional diversity has been Baha'i policy since the earliest days of the Faith. But how has this policy been implemented? A scientific answer to this question is extremely difficult to formulate since the agents of diffusion--usually individual believers--respond to a series of principles and guidelines that, although universally accepted by the Baha'i world community, are not accompanied by a set of societal rewards and punishments designed to encourage the desired behavior. In other words, the individual believer may feel morally or spiritually obliged to work for the objectives defined in a Baha'i plan, but if he fails to make the sacrifice required, his status as a Baha'i is not jeopardized. Conversely, dedicated support for plan objectives does not insure the individual believer of a higher standing in the group.⁵⁴

There are certain rewards toward which a believer conceivably would be motivated to strive, in particular the appointive position of Continental Counsellor or Auxilliary Board Member. Similarly, before the passing of Shoghi Effendi a Baha'i could hope to achieve selection as a Hand of the Cause. All these positions, however, require enormous commitment and dedication on the part of the holder, and they invest him with neither authority nor any form of economic compensation. Since the only apparent

⁵⁴There is one notable exception to this generalization. During the Ten Year Plan (1953-1963) any believer who migrated to an unopened country or territory during the first year of the plan was designated as a "Knight of Baha'u'llah," a title that conferred prestige and respect on its recipient.

motivation for seeking any of these appointments is social status within the group, and since the very act of appointment invites intensified commitment and increased sacrifice, it is reasonable to expect that the likelihood of appointment acts as an incentive only for those individuals who already have a strong dedication to the Faith--the very believers who are likely to strive for planning objectives anyway.

Implementation of Baha'i plans, therefore, relies very heavily on active support from the community of believers. The administrative structure and doctrinal orientation of the Faith create a favorable climate for the pursuit of planned global expansion, but the actual process of plan implementation has proceeded largely through efforts of individual Baha'is. From this perspective it would appear that the degree to which the Faith successfully executes its plans may be a reasonable indicator of the strength and dynamism of the Faith and the level of commitment of its believers.

'Abdu'l-Baha and the Tablets of the Divine Plan

Implementing the Plan

Until 1916 the course of Baha'i diffusion was governed by the transmittal of directions from the charismatic leader (the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and finally 'Abdu'l-Baha) to individual followers. There may have been a guiding plan for Baha'i expansion, but if so it only existed in the minds of the major figures of the Faith; the rank and file were not aware of any such grand design. In 1916 and 1917, however, the structure of the Baha'i diffusion process began to undergo a profound change. During this period 'Abdu'l-Baha penned a series of messages to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada in which he designated them as the teaching

instrument chosen to undertake a global dissemination of the Faith.⁵⁵ He indicated that the Baha'i community of North America must devote itself to the task of spreading the Faith to all parts of the world. Within the text of these messages 'Abdu'l-Baha reinforced this basic theme by identifying specific countries, territories, and localities that North American Baha'is ought to open to the Faith.

'Abdu'l-Baha conceived of a diffusion process that was to rely on the migration and circulation of believers to those areas of the world totally unaware of the Faith. These itinerant Baha'is were to establish personal contact with local individuals and inform them of the existence and character of the religion. This diffusion process was expected to result in conversions to the Faith and subsequent establishment of Baha'i communities.

'Abdu'l-Baha interspersed his messages with advice concerning the spiritual conditions a Baha'i must attain before successfully participating in the global campaign. He emphasized two essential prerequisites: (1) firmness of belief, and (2) fellowship, love, and unity among the believers. In addition, he indicated that any Baha'i intending to teach the Faith must be pure, independent, spiritual, tranquil, resolute, and magnanimous. If a believer who wishes to participate in Baha'i diffusion exhibits these qualities, then, as 'Abdu'l-Baha puts it, ". . . his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. . . ."56

⁵⁵This series of messages eventually came to be known as the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Although five of these messages were published in Star of the West in 1916, it was not until two years later, after World War I that the remainder of the Tablets of the Divine Plan reached the Baha'i believers in North America.

⁵⁶'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 20.

'Abdu'l-Baha was particularly concerned with the communication problem posed by language differences. He insisted that "The teachers traveling in different directions must know the language of the country in which they will enter. . . ."57 and he further insisted that "Books and pamphlets must be either translated or composed in the languages of these countries . . . , to be circulated in every part and in all directions."58

'Abdu'l-Baha also encouraged the believers to come together in meetings for the purposes of discussing teaching strategies and informing each other about the beliefs and history of the Faith (presumably so that they might be more competent and effective diffusion agents).59

Regional Structures

The Tablets of the Divine Plan include fourteen separate messages, four of which were addressed to the entire body of believers in North America and ten of which were addressed to the believers in five distinct regions on the continent. The pairs of messages sent to each of the five regional divisions of North America strongly encouraged internal dispersion but did not emphasize interregional (or intercontinental) dissemination; the four messages directed to the whole of North America, on the other hand, ignored the question of internal diffusion and focused exclusively on the need for international expansion.

Figure 12 shows the regional structure that 'Abdu'l-Baha imposed on North America and indicates the localities that are known to have had

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 20.

FIGURE 12 Regions and Subregions of North America Specifically Targeted for Diffusion by 'Abdu'l-Baha in *Tablets of the Divine Plan: 1919*



Sources: 'Abdu'l-Baha (1975); *Star of the West* 10 (August 1, 1919), 156-164; *Star of the West* 10 (February 17, 1919), 327, 331

Baha'i communities at the time the Tablets of the Divine Plan reached American shores in 1919. It is apparent that the Baha'i Faith was at that time much more firmly established in some regions than in others (see Table 2). In the northeastern states, for example, almost all states had at least one local Baha'i community. In the central states the number of Baha'is was relatively large, but they were concentrated in Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota, the remaining areas being nearly bereft of believers. The western states exhibited a similar distributional dichotomy as in the central states; almost all the Baha'is in the region concentrated in California and Washington while in the other states there were few believers. The remaining two regions--the southern states and Canada--contained only a handful of believers in 1919.

The varying status of the Faith from one region to the next was recognized by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and in his messages to the separate regions he stressed the importance of proclaiming Baha'u'llah's message in those areas unoccupied by Baha'is. For the Northeast he urged believers to focus their teaching efforts on unopened cities in the region;⁶⁰ for the central and western regions he directed them to depart from the areas of Baha'i concentration and attempt to establish the Faith in the relatively unoccupied states;⁶¹ in both the South and Canada he commented on the extreme paucity of believers and encouraged diffusion throughout all parts of both regions (in the case of Canada he placed particular importance on extending the ecumene to the Franklin Islands and Greenland--perhaps the most remote areas in North America).⁶²

⁶⁰'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 29.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 39-40, 44.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 34, 49.

TABLE 2

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BAHAI'S RESIDING IN EACH OF THE FIVE REGIONS
OF NORTH AMERICA THAT 'ABDU'L-BAHA DEFINED IN HIS
TABLETS OF THE DIVINE PLAN: 1919

Region	Number of Baha'is	Percentage of Total
Northeast	620	26
Central	840	35
West	740	31
South	170	7
Canada	20	1

Sources: Star of the West, 10 (August 1, 1919):156-164; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1916, Part 2: Separate Denominations: History, Description, and Statistics (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), pp. 43-45; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1926, Vol. II: Separate Denominations: Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), pp. 70-72.

Note: Star of the West contains a listing by name of 1120 North American Baha'is who petitioned 'Abdu'l-Baha to visit them in 1919. It was assumed that their geographical distribution was representative of the entire body of believers, and based on this assumption, percentage distribution figures were calculated. The size of the United States Baha'i population was estimated by taking the censal totals from the two censuses of religions (1916 and 1926) and interpolating a value for 1919. The estimated total number of United States Baha'is was then distributed among the four regions in the United States according to the percentage figures already derived. The number of Baha'is in Canada was estimated by assuming that the figure would equal one percent of the total Baha'i population in North America.

Alaska vs. Greenland

A curious geographical aspect of the Tablets of the Divine Plan is that the structure of the messages makes it apparent 'Abdu'l-Baha intended that Greenland should be considered part of North America while Alaska should not. Since the Tablets of the Divine Plan are really only concerned with the North American continent as an administrative entity it is not important for the Baha'i political boundaries to coincide with the actual physiographical limits of the continent. Nevertheless, 'Abdu'l-Baha's perception of Alaska as being "foreign" or "overseas" territory does mean that it was treated as an area that all North American Baha'is must work to open to the Faith. If Alaska had been included as a part of one of the five North American regions, then the task of teaching there would have been the prime responsibility of the believers residing in the region to which it belonged--a situation that might have inhibited the growth of the Faith in Alaska since the available Baha'i resources in a single region were, and always will be, inferior to the resources wielded by the whole North American community. This would have been particularly so if Alaska, as might logically be expected, had been designated as part of the Canadian region; at that time the whole of Canada contained only about one percent of the total North American Baha'i population.

Greenland, on the other hand, represents the opposite situation. As a colonial extension of Denmark, Greenland might reasonably have been expected to fall into the "overseas" category in spite of its physiographic links with North America. 'Abdu'l-Baha, however, designated it as a part of the Canadian region, thereby placing prime responsibility

for its development on the shoulders of something less than two dozen Baha'is residing in Montreal.

The six decades which have passed since the unveiling of the Tablets of the Divine Plan have seen substantial Baha'i achievements in Alaska but only modest growth in Greenland. In 1957 Alaska was organized as an independent National Spiritual Assembly area and by 1973 there were 170 localities with resident Baha'is, 30 of which contained sufficient numbers of believers to permit the existence of local Spiritual Assemblies. During a recent planning period (1964-1973) Alaska was the first National Spiritual Assembly to achieve its assigned goals. In contrast to this, Greenland had only three localities with Baha'is in 1973 (all of which were local Spiritual Assemblies), and has never been organized even as a part of a National Spiritual Assembly area.

It is possible that the original administrative status assigned to these two areas by the Tablets of the Divine Plan was at least partially responsible for the amount of subsequent Baha'i growth. One must be careful not to draw too firm conclusions in this case, however, since in the very early stages of diffusion it frequently happens that the heroic activities of one dedicated individual establishes a basic pattern of relative numerical strength which persists in later years, a state of affairs to which 'Abdu'l-Baha gave latent recognition when he observed, ". . . It has often happened that one blessed soul has become the cause of the guidance of a nation. . . ."⁶³

⁶³Ibid., p. 30.

Diffusion at the Global Scale

In the four tablets that he addressed to the entire body of North American believers, 'Abdu'l-Baha presented an imposing list of places to which the Baha'is were to disseminate the Faith. Figure 13 identifies all the locations specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha in his appeal. The geographical distribution of these localities is such that there can be no doubt about the scope of operations envisioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha-- diffusion was to be truly global in scale. In fact, the identification of target areas by 'Abdu'l-Baha was nearly always couched in language that suggested he was mentioning specific localities only to exemplify the territorial breadth of the expansionist scheme he had in mind. He made frequent statements indicating that the Faith must be established everywhere in the inhabited world;⁶⁴ his list of localities merely accentuates this theme.

An examination of Figure 13 reveals a more detailed tabulation of territories in some parts of the world than in others. In particular,, 'Abdu'l-Baha was careful to list all significant political entities in the Americas and Europe, most of the inhabited island groups in the Pacific, and the majority of the political units then existing in South, Central, and East Asia, but in contrast he made scant mention of territories in Africa and the Near East. There may be an explanation for these regional differences in emphasis. In the case of the Near East and North Africa it would be reasonable to think that 'Abdu'l-Baha may have looked upon this predominantly Muslim zone as being most approachable

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 12, 15, 19-21, 24-25.

Places Specifically Targeted in 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Tablets of the Divine Plan* to Which North American Belie



via the substantial Baha'i communities already there. Iran, and to a lesser extent Iraq, Turkey, Palestine, the Caucasus, and Egypt all harbored Baha'i communities that had much more familiarity with the religious, linguistic, and cultural character of the region than the fledgling Baha'i communities of North America. As for the remainder of Africa, 'Abdu'l-Baha's failure to specify more localities within the region may have been a consequence of the political organization of the sub-Saharan part of the continent in the early part of the century. During that time the region contained only two independent nations (Liberia and Ethiopia) and large portions of the interior were either unknown or only sketchily explored by the West. Perhaps the lack of easily identifiable, independent countries discouraged 'Abdu'l-Baha from articulating sub-Saharan Africa in his Tablets of the Divine Plan.

When considered in its entirety, the Tablets of the Divine Plan represents an extraordinarily ambitious undertaking for the North American Baha'is. A community of something less than 2,500 believers⁶⁵ had been given the task of spreading the Faith to all parts of the world. Even to send one Baha'i to each of the places specifically mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Baha would have required the relocation of about 7 percent of the whole Baha'i population. This figure becomes even more imposing when one stops to consider that there must have been a substantial number of Baha'is whose spouses were not adherents and who therefore were not at

⁶⁵U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1916 (2 parts; Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919); part II: Separate Denominations: History, Description, and Statistics, pp. 43-45.

liberty to change their places of residence for the sake of the Faith. Add to this the fact that the North American Baha'is were already widely dispersed and thinly spread and it becomes apparent that any substantial amount of migration would have been likely to jeopardize the existence of a number of local communities, most of which had fewer than two dozen adherents and many of which consisted of nothing more than an isolated believer or family. Under these severe limitations it seems highly improbable that the objectives of the Tablets of the Divine Plan could ever have been met without first converting a corps of new followers who would swell the ranks of the believers and increase the manpower for the task of global diffusion.

The Tablets as a Plan for Action

Weaknesses

There are many ways in which the Tablets of the Divine Plan fails to fulfill the traditional functions of a plan of action. Typically, a successful plan is highly specific--specific about objectives, specific about time horizons, specific about methods of implementation. The Tablets of the Divine Plan is not.

'Abdu'l-Baha does mention specific territories and localities to which the Faith must be spread, but as has already been indicated, this appears to be little more than a graphic way of indicating that Baha'is must spread the Faith to all places in the world. Even if the list of territories mentioned is taken as definitive of planning objectives (an attitude which, incidentally, appears to have had some acceptance among North American Baha'is during the subsequent decades), there is no clear way of determining whether those objectives were achieved. Generally,

'Abdu'l-Baha appealed to the North American Baha'is to go to the places he mentioned and proclaim the Baha'i message. If Baha'is followed this directive and no local residents overtly responded to the message could the plan objectives be considered as accomplished? The tone of the Tablets of the Divine Plan is such that one is left with the distinct impression that although awareness of the Baha'i Faith is a vast improvement over ignorance, adoption of the Faith by local people is the real intent of Baha'i diffusion efforts. If conversion, then, is the real objective, how many residents in a given territory must declare themselves as Baha'is before the planning objective of diffusing the Faith to that territory can be considered to have been accomplished? If, on the other hand, it is incorrect to think that conversion was the underlying goal in the Tablets of the Divine Plan then presumably all that 'Abdu'l-Baha was expecting was proclamation of the Faith in each of the territories mentioned. But how does one know when proclamation has been sufficient to fulfill the plan goal? At one extreme, it is possible to envision a situation in which a Baha'i who travels internationally as a part of his employment succeeds in making passing mention of the Baha'i Faith in his conversation while visiting one of the goal areas. At another, one might picture a Baha'i who moves to a goal area specifically to teach the Faith and who constantly proclaims it through his behavior and regularly encourages adoption in discussions, speeches, and correspondence. At what level between these two extremes can successful proclamation of the Faith in a goal area be considered to have occurred? This conjecture regarding what constitutes achievement of plan objectives is intended to show the lack of specificity in the Tablets of the Divine Plan and the kind of difficulty which arises when it is used as a plan for action.

The problem of plan implementation is exacerbated by the complete lack of any reference to time horizons in 'Abdu'l-Baha's messages. There is a theme of urgency running through the whole of the Tablets of the Divine Plan,⁶⁶ but nowhere is mention made of any sort of deadline or expected completion date. Under these conditions successful execution of the plan might proceed at whatever pace is convenient, regardless of any notions of urgency.

The use of the Tablets of the Divine Plan as a planning instrument is made even more difficult by the lack of any well-developed sense of priorities. There is no apparent commitment to staged diffusion whereby the Faith is to be spread to certain critical territories first and to less vital regions at a later time. In the plan all territories are billed as important. 'Abdu'l-Baha does identify a handful of key places which, for a variety of reasons, he regards as being particularly important,⁶⁷ but he does not suggest that Baha'i energies should be concentrated on diffusing the Faith to those regions first. Thus there is no progression of events posited in the Tablets of the Divine Plan and

⁶⁶The urgent need for Baha'i action is most clearly expressed by 'Abdu'l-Baha when he discusses World War I, suggesting that it fulfills the biblical apocalyptic prophecies contained in Revelations and Daniel and urging the believers to realize that ". . . this is the time for the diffusion of the fragrances." 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 45.

⁶⁷Panama, Bahia (in Brazil), and Greenland definitely receive special attention, but 'Abdu'l-Baha also appears to emphasize the importance of Alaska, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic (referred to as Santo Domingo), South Africa, and the Franklin Islands of northern Canada. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, pp. 10, 14, 25-26, 49, 53.

it is therefore difficult to evaluate the degree of completion achieved by the plan at any given time.

Insofar as implementation is concerned, 'Abdu'l-Baha did incorporate certain valuable directives. Mention has already been made of the spiritual qualities he identified as prerequisite to successful Baha'i dissemination; one will also remember that he emphasized the importance of linguistic adaptability, translated materials, and teacher training "seminars." Furthermore, he made it evident that the process of diffusion was to occur through interpersonal contact; individual Baha'is were to travel to target areas and establish contact with local residents. Taken as a whole, these recommendations on how to implement the plan were surprisingly comprehensive and pragmatic. In fact, one would have to conclude that it is in the area of plan implementation that the Tablets of the Divine Plan are most specific and concrete.

Nevertheless, successful execution of the plan was hampered by the almost total lack of an administrative structure through which activities designed to fulfill plan objectives could be developed, promoted, and guided. In 1919 North America had no National or local Spiritual Assemblies.⁶⁸ The Hands of the Cause appointed by Baha'u'llah all had died and 'Abdu'l-Baha had not appointed a new contingent. Continental Counsellors were a thing of the future. International teaching

⁶⁸Neither the Baha'i Temple Unity nor the numerous local assemblies existing in North America at that time had the formalized structure, recognized authority, and defined functions that came to be associated with Spiritual Assemblies during the period of Shoghi Effendi's guardianship. Peter Ludwig Berger, "From Sect to Church: a Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, the New School for Social Research, 1954), p. 171.

conferences had not yet been conceived. In fact, at that time North American Baha'is had no commitment whatsoever to institutionalized administrative organs for the simple reason that none yet existed. Under these conditions it was necessary for the Tablets of the Divine Plan to be received, reviewed, and implemented by the North American believers as individuals. Consequently, cooperative group reaction to the plan was difficult.

Long-Term Influence

In spite of its weakness as a plan of action, the Tablets of the Divine Plan exercised an immense influence on subsequent Baha'i diffusion. In many ways this influence was not immediate, direct, or obvious, but with sixty years of hindsight it is clear that 'Abdu'l-Baha's messages granted legitimacy to, and even established a positive attitude toward, the role of planning in Baha'i life. The Tablets of the Divine Plan made it clear that all Baha'is should orient their lives towards promulgation of the Faith. The entire North American community was given a direction in which to move; it was as an indicator of this direction that 'Abdu'l-Baha's messages were to have their most enduring impact. The Tablets outlined a single, albeit extravagant, objective from which the North American community gradually inherited a unity of purpose. This outlook spread to other Baha'i communities around the world when Shoghi Effendi began to implement 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan for global diffusion.

The role of Shoghi Effendi in implementing the Tablets of the Divine Plan highlights their importance as a source of legitimacy for ensuing planning efforts. Shoghi Effendi treated the Tablets as a

mandate and initiated a series of Baha'i growth plans designed to achieve the overall objective of global diffusion designated in the Tablets. In a letter to the American believers dated April 14, 1938, and written nearly a year after the initiation of his First Seven Year Plan, Shoghi Effendi made the following comment regarding the relationship between his planning efforts and 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets: ". . . The Seven Year Plan, to which every American believer is fully and irrevocably pledged, is in itself but an initial stage in the unfoldment of 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision of America's spiritual destiny."⁶⁹ In other words, Shoghi Effendi viewed the Tablets of the Divine Plan as a master plan and considered the series of growth plans initiated by him (and continued after his death by the Universal House of Justice) as nothing more than a mechanism by which staged completion of 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan could be effected.

It should be pointed out that as a master plan 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets perpetuate the three key elements of Baha'i expansionist policy discussed earlier in this chapter. Numerical increase, geographical dispersion, and compositional diversity of the believers--these objectives are inherently part of 'Abdu'l-Baha's messages. Geographical dispersion is explicit in the Tablets of the Divine Plan; numerical increase and compositional diversity are treated as natural consequences of geographical dispersion.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Baha'i News, 116 (June, 1938):1.

⁷⁰The objective of numerical increase and compositional diversity may not be explicit in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, but that does not make them any less real. Read, for instance, 'Abdu'l-Baha's discussion of collective centers. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of the Divine Plan, pp. 24-27.

The Consequences of the Tablets

Slow Diffusion: 1919-1937

The North American believers had always been aware of their religious obligation to assist the diffusion of the Faith. Previous to 1919, however, the multitude of problems arising out of difficult communication with 'Akka, the lack of a clearly defined administrative system, and the dearth of adequately translated Baha'i literature combined to limit geographic expansion. A few Baha'is did labor to bring about dissemination of the Faith and in some instances the results were startling,⁷¹ but it was not until receipt of the Tablets of the Divine Plan that North American Baha'is began to perceive themselves as a community with the special spiritual mission of spreading the Faith worldwide. Even after the Tablets had been received, though, marked expansion did not occur. The Tablets were the fundamental planning document for North American Baha'is for nearly two decades (1919-1937), but the quantity of diffusion during the period was not substantial--at least not compared with the enormous objectives outlined in the plan. Most of the growth that did occur was confined to those areas where the Baha'is were already well established: the United States and Canada, Great Britain, Germany, and other European locales. In all these regions, North

⁷¹Probably the most heroic international effort was that of Agnes Alexander who developed a Baha'i community in Hawaii in 1902 and helped establish the Faith in Japan in 1914. Agnes B. Alexander, Personal Recollections of a Baha'i Life in the Hawaiian Islands (revised edition; Honolulu: The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the Hawaiian Islands, 1974), pp. 4-22; Japan Will Turn Ablaze (Japan: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), introduction and p. 1; The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV, pp. 423-430.

American Baha'is were important agents of diffusion,⁷² but outside their own national region their initiative must be viewed as vital but supportive. Diffusion would not have occurred without the generating impulses of American travel teachers, but neither would new believers have been recruited and confirmed without the teaching and consolidation efforts of local Baha'is.

Although the modest growth of the Faith was mostly confined to entrenchment and reinforcement in those areas that were already a part of the Baha'i ecumene, one exception stands out. A preliminary network of Baha'i communities developed in Australia and New Zealand where previous to 1919 there were no believers. This development in an isolated and thinly populated part of the world was the work of John and Clara Dunn, an elderly American couple who, in response to 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets of the Divine Plan, moved to Australia in 1921 and began to proclaim the Baha'i Faith.⁷³ For two years their efforts resulted in no conversions, but after 1923 a number of people became Baha'is and initiated a pattern of growth that by 1933 was expressed in the form of five local Spiritual Assemblies and two localities with groups of believers. In 1923 the Dunns visited New Zealand and established the Faith there.

In overall terms, however, measurable growth of the Baha'i Faith was not much greater after the Tablets of the Divine Plan. One

⁷²The Baha'i Centenary: 1844-1944, pp. 185-189.

⁷³Ibid., p. 181; Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand: 1923-1957 (Sydney: Halstead Press for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Australia Incorporated, 1971), p. vii; The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, pp. 859-862.

immediately suspects that the vagueness of the Tablets was responsible for this, but close inspection of historical information suggests that such a conclusion would be unwarranted. There are two explanations of why the Tablets did not stimulate an immediate and dramatic increase in the number of Baha'i localities throughout the world: (1) the potential effectiveness of the Tablets was dampened by a set of events and trends lying outside the control of 'Abdu'l-Baha's plan, and (2) a reliance on statistics indicative of adoptive behavior and relocation, but not capable of measuring increased awareness of the Faith among non-Baha'is, resulted in an underestimation of the actual growth of the Faith.

The Leadership Crisis in 1921

Of those events which countermanded the expansionary thrust of the Tablets, the most immediate was the death of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1921 and the controversy which ensued regarding his appointment of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament is unequivocal in language and not amenable to alternative interpretations,⁷⁴ but the Baha'i community apparently was caught off guard; no one expected the creation of such a powerful position of leadership within the Faith and certainly no one anticipated the appointment of a 24-year old youth as first Guardian.⁷⁵ At its core, the Baha'i Faith has always been

⁷⁴ 'Abdu'l-Baha, Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 11.

⁷⁵ Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha: An Analysis (New York: Universal Publishing Co., for the New History Foundation, 1944), p. 11; Rabanni, The Priceless Pearl, pp. 42-43.

authoritarian, but during the years when 'Abdu'l-Baha oversaw the formation and development of the North American community, the Baha'is there, while greatly attracted by the liberal principles of the religion, willingly declared their allegiance to this Christ-like son of Baha'u'llah who exuded a magnetic personality. With his passing, however, the believers were suddenly, and without warning, required to accept a newly created position of authority (Guardianship) and a virtually unknown leader (Shoghi Effendi). It was not long before Shoghi Effendi was able to establish his claim to leadership, but during the earliest years of his Guardianship challenges to his authority were widespread and multitudinous.⁷⁶ It is possible that these internal difficulties at least temporarily diminished the intensity of community response to 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets.

The Guardianship Postponed the Diffusion Process

This struggle over authority and allegiance, however, was a quickly passing phase in the development of the Faith,⁷⁷ and so it acted as a hindrance to implementation of the Tablet only for two or three years. In the long run, it was Shoghi Effendi himself who delayed response to 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets.

This is truly paradoxical since he was the greatest champion of 'Abdu'l-Baha's diffusionist cause that the Baha'i Faith has ever known.

⁷⁶Peter Ludwig Berger, "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement," pp. 113-114.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 114. The issue was resolved relatively quickly for most of the believers, but apparently a small number of Baha'is--especially family members--continued to challenge Shoghi Effendi and, in doing so, impaired his effectiveness. Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, pp. 118-124.

Whereas 'Abdu'l-Baha had led the Faith in a highly personal fashion, directly dealing with problems and issues as they arose, Shoghi Effendi perceived an immediate need for an administrative structure by means of which authority could be delegated and high-level decisions implemented. The result was that he placed a high priority on creating local and National Spiritual Assemblies in all those areas where Baha'is already resided.⁷⁸ These Assemblies were, in turn, strongly encouraged to appoint committees for a wide variety of tasks. The Guardian felt that one of his prime responsibilities was to arrange for the formation of the Universal House of Justice, an administrative body that could come into existence only after a network of National Spiritual Assemblies had been established, and so from the beginning he directed Baha'i attention to the task of establishing administrative units at the local and national levels.⁷⁹ Judging from events during Shoghi Effendi's Guardianship, it would seem that he believed that creation of a firmly grounded administrative structure was a necessary prerequisite to implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's grand design. Herein lies the key to the paradox. Shoghi Effendi was thoroughly committed to the implementation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets, but he believed that a global teaching campaign could be successfully undertaken only after an administrative system was in place.⁸⁰ As a result, his ministry can be divided into two parts: from

⁷⁸This emphasis is obvious in an early (1923) letter that Shoghi Effendi wrote to the Baha'is in America, Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, and Australia. Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, pp. 34-43, but esp. pp. 37, 39.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 63.

⁸⁰Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 9-10.

1921 to 1937 his principal objective was to develop an administrative structure whereas from 1937 to 1957 he labored almost exclusively to realize the grand expansionist vision of the Tablets of the Divine Plan.

Temple Construction Delayed Diffusion

There was one other development which may have impeded diffusion of the Faith both before and after the appearance of the Tablets of the Divine Plan. In 1903 'Abdu'l-Baha indicated that a Baha'i temple should be built in America.⁸¹ This project placed an enormous financial responsibility on the shoulders of the North American believers. Baha'is from overseas contributed money, but it was the American believers who absorbed most of the cost.⁸² Furthermore, much the larger part of the total expenditure was paid after 1920 when the temple design was chosen; previous to then, the only substantial outlay was for purchase of the site.

The magnitude of the temple project was sufficiently great that it must have been a considerable drain on the financial resources of the North American Baha'is. Since diffusion of the Faith required individual believers to commit both time and money, it is reasonable to think that construction of the temple exacted an opportunity cost in that some believers may have had to decide whether to contribute to the temple fund

⁸¹For a brief history of the temple construction, see The Baha'i Centenary: 1844-1944, pp. 122-137.

⁸²The total cost for land purchase, building construction and ornamentation and landscaping exceeded 2.5 million dollars. Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 149.

or support pioneering/travel teaching efforts.⁸³ At any rate, construction of the temple was a second major objective for North American Baha'is during the two decades following the appearance of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, and as such it must have lessened the amount of diffusion that would have occurred if the community had had to concern itself exclusively with global dissemination.

But the temple cannot be viewed as having only a negative effect on diffusion of the Faith. 'Abdu'l-Baha predicted that:

"When the foundation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar [temple] is laid in America, . . . and that divine edifice is completed, a most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence . . . From that point of light the spirit of teaching, spreading the Cause of God and promoting the teachings of God, will permeate to all parts of the world."⁸⁴

Clinging to 'Abdu'l-Baha's promise, the American believers strived to complete the temple so that global diffusion could progress more rapidly. The North American believers came to view temple construction and Baha'i expansion as inseparable, mutually supportive objectives.

It is curious that the need to complete the temple pushed the North American community into adopting planning strategies. In 1925 the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada issued a plan designed to raise money for temple construction and increase the number of

⁸³A message from the Guardian to the North American believers in November, 1939, clearly de-emphasized the temple project and awarded a higher priority to teaching activities. His statement shows that he perceived temple construction and teaching as competing activities, one of which could be expanded only at the expense of the other. "The Teaching Requirements of the Seven Year Plan," Baha'i News, 137 (July, 1940):3.

⁸⁴'Abdu'l-Baha as quoted by Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 351.

believers in America.⁸⁵ Even though the principal objective was to further construction of the temple,⁸⁶ the title given to the plan was: A Plan of Unified Action to Spread the Baha'i Cause Throughout the United States and Canada. This (which, indeed, reflects the viewpoint of the document) indicates the degree to which temple construction and geographical diffusion had become bound together in the minds of the believers. The main objective outlined in the plan was to raise money to complete construction of the superstructure of the temple, a goal that was to be attained between January 1, 1926 and December 31, 1928. Although the planning period had to be extended a few months, the financial objective eventually was attained and temple construction proceeded. In 1931, a similar three year plan was instituted to raise more money to complete the temple.⁸⁷

These two plans are most intriguing since they set specific goals that were to be achieved within a defined period. Furthermore, these goals were based on an analysis of available Baha'i resources and were, therefore, "realistic." These Plans of Unified Action, although verbally endorsed and financially assisted by the Guardian, apparently were spontaneously developed by the American National Assembly in an effort

⁸⁵A Plan of Unified Action to Spread the Baha'i Cause Throughout the United States and Canada: January 1, 1926-December 31, 1928 (South Eliot, Maine: National Spiritual Assembly, 1925).

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 8.

⁸⁷A New Plan of Unified Action to Complete the Baha'i Temple and Promote the Cause in America (National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, 1931).

to carry forward with construction of the temple. When, in 1937, Shoghi Effendi initiated a series of teaching plans designed to spread the Faith worldwide, he, unlike his grandfather but very much like the Plans of Unified Action, established specific goals and time limits. It could be that the plans formulated to bring about completion of the temple favorably impressed Shoghi Effendi and influenced the design of his growth plans.

It can be concluded that temple construction may have hindered Baha'i diffusion in the short run, but probably encouraged dissemination of the Faith after the 1930s.

Awareness vs. Adoption as an Indication of Diffusion

Earlier it was suggested that part of the explanation of why Baha'i growth was not more dramatic in the two decades following the appearance of the Tablets of the Divine Plan is that available statistics regarding diffusion of the Faith are inadequate for that time period. In particular, tabulations of the numbers of believers and their geographical distribution--the kinds of data available for this study--really only indicate patterns of adoption or relocation. They do not measure the level of awareness of the innovation that is present in the population. It should be realized that when 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets reached America Baha'is were not only absent in most of the world--the world was unaware of the existence of the Baha'i Faith. There is some reason to believe that during the two decades following the appearance of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets substantial diffusion occurred in the sense that large numbers of people in many different parts of the world came to know about the new religion.

Until 1937, most organized Baha'i activity aimed at dissemination of the Faith involved public proclamation of Baha'i principles. Typically, a dedicated Baha'i would arrange a tour during which he or she would speak to groups, societies, clubs, and the like, informing the audiences about the character of the new Faith.⁸⁸ This method of dissemination, commonly referred to by Baha'is as travel teaching, differs markedly from pioneering which requires the settlement of a Baha'i in a new area where he or she attempts to establish a network of personal relationships that can be used to pass on information regarding the innovation.

Traditional diffusion research emphasizes the importance of mass media in creating awareness of an innovation and personal contact in

⁸⁸'Abdu'l-Baha's travel teaching in Europe and America provided a model for Baha'is who wished to promulgate the Faith. His example was followed by Martha Root, the person later designated by Shoghi Effendi as ". . . that archetype of Baha'i itinerant teachers . . ." Largely as a result of Shoghi Effendi's praise, Martha Root became the exemplary travel teacher for Baha'is around the world. At the same time, the nature of her activity indicates the character of travel teaching during the interwar years. Here is Shoghi Effendi's summary of Martha Root's accomplishments:

"The first to arise, in the very year the Tablets of The Divine Plan were unveiled in the United States of America, in response to the epoch-making summons voiced in them by 'Abdu'l-Baha; embarking with unswerving resolve and a spirit of sublime detachment, on her world journeys, carrying her four times around the globe, in the course of which she traveled four times to China and Japan and three times to India, visited every important city in South America, transmitted the message of the New Day to kings, queens, princes and princesses, presidents of republics, ministers and statesmen, publicists, professors, clergymen and poets, as well as a vast number of people in various walks of life, and contacted, both officially and informally, religious congresses, Theosophical societies, women's clubs and other kindred associations, this indomitable soul has, by virtue of the character of her exertions and the quality of the victories she has won, established a record that constitutes the nearest approach to the example set by 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself to His disciples in the course of His journeys throughout the West."

Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 386-387.

stimulating adoption.⁸⁹ Within the Baha'i Faith, travel teaching has been the most commonly used method of creating awareness while pioneering has been the traditional method of generating conversions. Of course, travel teaching is more personal, less formalized, and a far less efficient means of distributing information about an innovation than such traditional forms of mass media as newspapers, radio, and television. But even so, travel teaching can legitimately be viewed as a form of mass media since it attempts to reach relatively large numbers of people all at once. It often is as concerned with creating awareness as it is with encouraging adoption, and it does not rely on personal relationships to be effective.

The Baha'i reliance on travel teaching to create awareness of the Faith probably has occurred because of a number of advantages that compensate for the inherent inefficiency of this method of information dissemination. First, the more standard forms of mass media are expensive and yet do not permit easy identification of, and subsequent contact with, those individuals who are attracted by the Baha'i message. Travel teaching allows the substitution of labor for money and does make it possible to readily detect which members of the audience are favorably inclined toward the Faith. Second, the format of travel teaching is unusually flexible since it permits at least some amount of interaction between the speaker and the audience. The travel teacher, being in touch with the audience, can make a presentation that appeals to the listeners' interests and orientations and can answer questions and rectify misunderstandings. Finally, the reliance on public speaking usually means

⁸⁹Rogers and Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations, pp. 208-209.

that travel teaching reaches groups of people who, simply by being in attendance, have shown an interest in the innovation.

Previous to 1937, Baha'i expansionist efforts relied almost exclusively on travel teaching, but after that time Shoghi Effendi's growth plans placed increasing emphasis on pioneering.⁹⁰ The result may have been that during the interwar years Baha'is were successful in generating awareness of the Faith but failed to precipitate any substantial number of conversions in areas lying outside the Baha'i ecumene; adoptions in virgin areas seem to have awaited the systematic implementation of the pioneering strategy.

Baha'i Growth Plans Since 1937

By 1937 Shoghi Effendi had successfully implemented an administrative order that extended to all parts of the Baha'i ecumene. At the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, National Spiritual Assemblies were non-existent⁹¹ and local Spiritual Assemblies were vague, amorphous bodies with no clearly defined duties. But during the following sixteen years Shoghi Effendi formalized the function, form, and legitimacy of both. In the early years of the Guardian's stewardship a number of believers resisted, either actively or passively, the "institutionalization" of the

⁹⁰This is not intended to suggest that early Baha'is did not rely on personal contacts to bring about conversions. The truth is just the opposite. Conscious, community endeavor, however, did rely very heavily on travel teaching to carry the Baha'i message to new territories.

⁹¹In North America, it is generally conceded that the Baha'i Temple Unity gradually evolved into a National Spiritual Assembly (see Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 333) but elsewhere in the world National Assemblies were simply created when the Guardian thought the time was right.

Faith, but eventually Shoghi Effendi's innovations were accepted by the body of believers so that by 1937 much of the administrative order that presently defines the Faith was already in place.⁹²

In 1937 Shoghi Effendi organized and focused expansionary efforts by instituting a Seven Year Plan for Baha'i growth. In conformity with the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which Shoghi Effendi used to legitimize the Seven Year Plan,⁹³ the American believers were charged with the responsibility of accomplishing the designated objectives. This initial plan was closely followed by a sequence of plans--never more than two years separating one planning period from the next--covering the entire 41 years from 1937 to the present.

Table 3 describes the series of plans that have directed Baha'i diffusion over the past four decades. It shows that the first plans, covering the period 1937-1963, were designed by Shoghi Effendi, while the last two, spanning the years 1963-1979, were developed by the newly formed Universal House of Justice. All the plans have relied for their execution on the participation of America, but the total dependence in the first two plans has given way to a sharing of responsibility by all national areas.

⁹²Two dramatic changes in the administrative structure have occurred during the intervening years. The Guardianship--which 'Abdu'l-Baha had conceived of as an ongoing institution passed from generation to generation by each incumbent appointing his own successor--died with Shoghi Effendi because he never made the necessary appointment, while the Universal House of Justice came into existence six years after his passing. The formation of the Universal House of Justice had long been anticipated and was, in fact, the ultimate objective behind Shoghi Effendi's efforts to build the administrative order. The extinction of the Guardianship, however, was totally unexpected.

⁹³Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 9.

TABLE 3. BAHAI GROWTH PLANS: 1937 - 1979

Planning Period; Name of Plan; Plan Architect	National Spiritual Assembly Responsible for Executing the Plan	Overall Objectives of the Plan
1937-1944 First Seven Year Plan Shoghi Effendi	North America	1) Complete exterior ornamentation of th 2) Spread Faith to all parts of North Am 3) Spread Faith throughout Latin America
1946-1953 ^a Second Seven Year Plan Shoghi Effendi	North America	1) Consolidate previous accomplishments a) increasing number of Baha'i locali b) creating new National Assemblies 2) Complete interior ornamentation of th 3) Spread Faith to unopened European cou
1953-1963 Ten Year Plan Shoghi Effendi	All existing NSA's 1) United States 2) Canada 3) Central America 4) South America 5) British Isles 6) Germany/Austria 7) Italy/Switzerland 8) Egypt/Sudan 9) Iraq 10) Persia 11) India/Pakistan/Burma 12) Australia/New Zealand	1) Develop Baha'i institutions at World 2) Consolidate home fronts of 12 existin 3) Consolidate all other opened territor 4) Open chief remaining virgin territori
1964-1973 Nine Year Plan Universal House of Justice	All 69 Existing National Assemblies	1) Expand scope, increase intensity of W 2) Increase size and geographic distribut a) Baha'i population b) Baha'i institutions c) Baha'i resources
1974-1979 Five Year Plan Universal House of Justice	All 115 Existing National Assemblies	1) Preserve and consolidate past achieves 2) Bring about vast and widespread expans 3) Develop distinctive character of Baha'

of the Plan	Specific Goals Relevant to Geographic Diffusion																							
ornamentation of the Temple all parts of North America throughout Latin America	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Form at least one LSA in every state and province in North America 2) Establish a nucleus of resident believers in each Central and South American 																							
ous accomplishments by: number of Baha'i localities National Assemblies ornamentation of the Temple in opened European countries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Form one LSA in each of the following countries: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) (Iberian Peninsula) - Spain, Portugal b) (Low Countries) - Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg c) (Scandinavian States) - Sweden, Norway, Denmark d) Italy, Switzerland 2) Constitute the following new National Assemblies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Canada (in 1948) b) Regional NSA in Central America (in 1951) c) Regional NSA in South America in 1951) 3) Spread Baha'i message from Canada to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Newfoundland and Greenland b) Franklin Is., Yukon, Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) Increase <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) 175 b) 218 c) 900 5) Multiple 6) Increase 7) Win support 8) Multiple 9) Publish 10) Make suggestions 11) Supplement 																						
stitutions at World Center fronts of 12 existing NSA's other opened territories opening virgin territories on planet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Open virgin territories Form new NSA's Translate Baha'i literature into new languages 2) Increase to 300 the number of LSA's in the United States NSA area 3) Double number of LSA's in Canada, Persia, Iraq 4) Double number of LSA's and localities in Egypt/Sudan, British Isles, Germany 5) Double number of LSA's in each of the 10 republics that compose the following 6) Quadruple number of LSA's and treble number of localities in Italy/Switzerland 7) Quadruple number of LSA's and double number of localities in the following: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France 																							
increase intensity of World Center activities and geographic distribution of: education missions services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Open virgin territories Resettle territories Form new NSA's Translate Baha'i literature into new languages Enrich Baha'i literature in certain languages Enroll more believers from certain races/minorities 2) Increase numbers of Local Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>LSA's</th> <th>total localities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>a) Americas</td> <td>707 to 2,135</td> <td>3,483 to 7,115</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Africa</td> <td>1,361 to 4,599</td> <td>3,277 to 17,361</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Europe</td> <td>182 to 382</td> <td>571 to 1,661</td> </tr> <tr> <td>d) Asia</td> <td>2,234 to 6,561</td> <td>7,262 to 27,361</td> </tr> <tr> <td>e) Pacific</td> <td>82 to 277</td> <td>411 to 811</td> </tr> <tr> <td>f) Total</td> <td>4,566 to 13,954</td> <td>15,004 to 54,361</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 		LSA's	total localities	a) Americas	707 to 2,135	3,483 to 7,115	b) Africa	1,361 to 4,599	3,277 to 17,361	c) Europe	182 to 382	571 to 1,661	d) Asia	2,234 to 6,561	7,262 to 27,361	e) Pacific	82 to 277	411 to 811	f) Total	4,566 to 13,954	15,004 to 54,361		
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consolidate past achievements and widespread expansion active character of Baha'i life	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase numbers of Local Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>LSA's</th> <th>total localities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>a) Americas</td> <td>3,234 to 5,033</td> <td>15,860 to 20,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Africa</td> <td>4,990 to 6,579</td> <td>15,169 to 18,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 		LSA's	total localities	a) Americas	3,234 to 5,033	15,860 to 20,000	b) Africa	4,990 to 6,579	15,169 to 18,000														
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Geographic Diffusion

every state and province in North America
 resident believers in each Central and South American republic

the following countries:
 Spain, Portugal
 France, Belgium, Luxembourg
 - Sweden, Norway, Denmark

new National Assemblies:

Latin America (in 1951)
 Latin America in 1951)
 in Canada to:
 Greenland
 Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava

- 4) Increase number of Baha'i localities in U.S. so that by 1948 there are:
 - a) 175 LSA's
 - b) 218 localities where groups have become larger
 - c) 900 localities where isolated believers have become groups
- 5) Multiply the number of Baha'i localities in Canada and Alaska
- 6) Increase the number of French speaking Baha'is in Canada
- 7) Win support of Indians, Dukhabours, and Negroes in Canada
- 8) Multiply the number of LSA's in Latin America
- 9) Publish more Baha'i literature in Spanish, Portuguese, French (for Latin America)
- 10) Make special efforts to reach Indian tribes in Latin America
- 11) Supplement Baha'i literature in languages of the 10 targeted European countries

	Americas	Africa	Europe	Asia & Pacific	Totals
are into new languages	27	33	30	41	131
number of LSA's in the United States NSA area	21	3 ^b	13	11 ^c	48 ^d
in Canada, Persia, Iraq	10	31	10	40	91
and localities in Egypt/Sudan, British Isles, Germany/Austria, India/Pakistan/Burma, Australia/New Zealand					
in each of the 10 republics that compose the following two NSA's: Central America, South America					
and treble number of localities in Italy/Switzerland					
and double number of localities in the following unorganized areas: Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Finland, France					

	Americas	Africa	Europe	Asia	Pacific	Total
are into new languages	27	9	19	9	6	70
in certain languages	4	6	2	8	4	24
in certain races/minorities	4	26	2	8	6	46 ^e
in Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the following margins:	26	31	10	55	11	133
LSA's	5	0	17	23	0	45
total localities	12	3	4	29	7	55
707 to 2,135						
3,483 to 7,100						
1,361 to 4,599						
3,277 to 17,383						
182 to 382						
571 to 1,682						
2,234 to 6,561						
7,262 to 27,302						
82 to 277						
411 to 856						
4,566 to 13,954						
15,004 to 54,323						

	LSA's	total localities
1 Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the following margins:		
3,234 to 5,033	15,860 to 20,611	
4,990 to 6,579	15,169 to 18,416	
405 to 488	2,088 to 2,085	
8,029 to 11,157	34,873 to 42,011	

53-1963
 Seven Year Plan
 Shoghi Effendi

- All existing NSA's
- 1) United States
 - 2) Canada
 - 3) Central America
 - 4) South America
 - 5) British Isles
 - 6) Germany/Austria
 - 7) Italy/Switzerland
 - 8) Egypt/Sudan
 - 9) Iraq
 - 10) Persia
 - 11) India/Pakistan/Burma
 - 12) Australia/New Zealand

- 1) Develop Baha'i institutions at World Center
- 2) Consolidate home fronts of 12 existing NSA's
- 3) Consolidate all other opened territories
- 4) Open chief remaining virgin territories on planet

64-1973
 Nine Year Plan
 Universal House of Justice

All 69 Existing National Assemblies

- 1) Expand scope, increase intensity of World Center activities
- 2) Increase size and geographic distribution of:
 - a) Baha'i population
 - b) Baha'i institutions
 - c) Baha'i resources

74-1979
 Ten Year Plan
 Universal House of Justice

All 115 Existing National Assemblies

- 1) Preserve and consolidate past achievements
- 2) Bring about vast and widespread expansion
- 3) Develop distinctive character of Baha'i life

Sources: Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 399; Shoghi Effendi, 1946-1953: The Guardian's Seven Year Plan for the American Baha'is (National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, n.d.); Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, pp. 8-2; "Message from the Guardian to the [1946] Convention," Baha'i News, 184 (June, 1946):1-2; Beatrice Ashton (comp.), Objectives Ten Year Spiritual Global Crusade of the Baha'i World Faith (U.S.A.: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, 1964), pp. 5-6, 10, 11-13, 14, 27-38; Universal House of Justice, The Nine Year Plan: 1964-1973 (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1974), pp. 35-51, unpaginated Xeroxed supplement; Universal House of Justice, Analysis of the Five Year International Plan: 1974-1979 (Welwyn Garden City, England: The Broadwater Press Limited for the Universal House of Justice, 1975), pp. 72-69, 75, 77-103.

of resident believers in each Central and South American republic

of the following countries:
 a) - Spain, Portugal
 Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg
 tes) - Sweden, Norway, Denmark
 d
 wing new National Assemblies:
 ntral America (in 1951)
 outh America in 1951)
 from Canada to:
 reenland
 n, Mackenzie, Keewatin, Ungava

- 4) Increase number of Baha'i localities in U.S. so that by 1948 there are:
 a) 175 LSA's
 b) 218 localities where groups have become larger
 c) 900 localities where isolated believers have become groups
 5) Multiply the number of Baha'i localities in Canada and Alaska
 6) Increase the number of French speaking Baha'is in Canada
 7) Win support of Indians, Dukhabours, and Negroes in Canada
 8) Multiply the number of LSA's in Latin America
 9) Publish more Baha'i literature in Spanish, Portuguese, French (for Latin America)
 10) Make special efforts to reach Indian tribes in Latin America
 11) Supplement Baha'i literature in languages of the 10 targeted European countries

	Americas	Africa	Europe	Asia & Pacific	Totals
es	27	33	30	41	131
	21	3 ^b	13	11 ^c	48 ^d
ature into new languages	10	31	10	40	91

umber of LSA's in the United States NSA area
 s in Canada, Persia, Iraq
 s and localities in Egypt/Sudan, British Isles, Germany/Austria, India/Pakistan/Burma, Australia/New Zealand
 s in each of the 10 republics that compose the following two NSA's: Central America, South America
 SA's and treble number of localities in Italy/Switzerland
 SA's and double number of localities in the following unorganized areas: Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg,
 rk, Finland, France

	Americas	Africa	Europe	Asia	Pacific	Total
es	27	9	19	9	6	70
	4	6	2	8	4	24
	4	26	2	8	6	46 ^e
ature into new languages	26	31	10	55	11	133
ure in certain languages	5	0	17	23	0	45
from certain races/minorities	12	3	4	29	7	55

ocal Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the following margins:

LSA's	total localities
707 to 2,135	3,483 to 7,100
1,361 to 4,599	3,277 to 17,383
182 to 382	571 to 1,682
2,234 to 6,561	7,262 to 27,302
82 to 277	411 to 856
4,566 to 13,954	15,004 to 54,323

ocal Spiritual Assemblies and total localities by the following margins:

LSA's	total localities
3,234 to 5,033	15,860 to 20,611
4,990 to 6,579	15,169 to 18,416
405 to 488	2,088 to 2,085
8,029 to 11,157	34,873 to 42,011
379 to 613	1,456 to 2,189
17,037 to 23,870	69,541 to 85,312

semblies to supply pioneers to 261 territories

	Americas	Africa	Europe	Asia	Pacific	Total
s	0	4	0	6	0	10
	3	9	2	1	1	16
ature into new languages	2	10	1	7	0	20
re in certain languages	13	32	29	32	3	109

^aDuring this same period a number of separate growth plans were developed and executed by National Spiritual Assemblies. The characteristics of those plans will be detailed in a separate table.

^bIncludes two regional NSA's

^cIncludes four regional NSA's

^dIncludes six regional NSA's; requires the dissolution of two regional NSA's

^eInvolves dissolution of seven regional NSA's existing in 1964

The Ten Year World Crusade was the first plan to spread responsibility among all existing National Spiritual Assemblies, but as will be noted, the distribution was such that the United States still carried the lion's share of the burden. The Universal House of Justice plans departed markedly from this pattern of reliance on the United States. Instead, the amount of responsibility assigned to any one national area appears to have been based on an evaluation of manpower, resources, and historical strength of the Faith. All this is not apparent from Table 3 since it is a brief summary of information about each plan and does not detail the specific goals actually assigned to separate national areas (such information may be obtained by referring to the documents used to compile Table 3).

Although other overall goals occasionally assert themselves, there are two key objectives that appear and reappear, plan after plan: (1) geographical and numerical expansion, and (2) consolidation of previous achievements. It is variations of these two themes that form the heart of each of the plans.

One aspect of the plans which is not apparent from Table 3 is the steady trend toward a broader range of goals. This came about gradually, each succeeding plan widening the scope of the planning process by a significant margin.⁹⁴ To some extent the process of diversification is merely symptomatic of the expanding power base of the Faith, but, whatever the reason, it should be kept in mind that Baha'i plans are no longer exclusively preoccupied with demographic and geographic expansion.

⁹⁴See, for example, Universal House of Justice, Analysis of the Five Year International Teaching Plan, 1974-1979.

Growth plans still strongly emphasize numerical increase and territorial dispersion, but increasing attention is being paid to a large number of other kinds of goals that will insure the permanence and increase the worldly influence of the religion. In most instances these other goals help spread the Faith, but do so less directly and in more subtle ways than goals designed to expand the numbers and distribution of Baha'is. The remainder of this study will forego detailed analysis of these other goals in order to allow for a more thorough discussion of the conceptually simple, easily measured, and historically continuous goals associated with demographic growth and geographic expansion.

Shoghi Effendi's Plans

Shoghi Effendi's three plans contain an astute geographic strategy for disseminating the Faith. The Guardian designed the First Seven Year Plan so that it would concentrate American energies on spreading the Faith throughout the Western hemisphere. Initiated almost two years before the outbreak of World War II, the Seven Year Plan spanned most of the course of that global conflagration. It managed to identify as a target area that region of the war-torn world that remained relatively accessible to the American Baha'is. This happy coincidence of targeted areas with war-free zones was not entirely a matter of chance, however. As early as 1931 the Guardian had foreseen the renewal of armed conflict in Europe along with its associated worldwide reverberations.⁹⁵ In all

⁹⁵ Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 29-33. From the text of the Guardian's discussion it is apparent that 'Abdu'l-Baha had anticipated World War II as far back as 1920. Furthermore, Shoghi Effendi suggests that even Baha'u'llah had alluded to the incipient global conflict.

probability, he designed the First Seven Year Plan with full realization that war could break out at any time during the course of the planning period.

The Guardian's Second Seven Year Plan emphasized consolidation and expansion of Baha'i communities in the Western Hemisphere, and overseas diffusion of the Faith to a number of western European nations. By the end of World War II there were some elements of the Baha'i Faith in most countries of both western and eastern Europe but typically this amounted to nothing more than one or two localities with either an isolated believer or a small group of Baha'is. Only four countries had substantial numbers of Baha'i localities (Great Britain with 35, Germany with 19, Bulgaria with 8, and France with 5), and in the whole area there were only five local Spiritual Assemblies--four in Great Britain and one in France.⁹⁶ Obviously, the numbers of Baha'is were very small. The technological and political preeminence of Western Europe in global affairs, however, made that region a key stepping-stone to ultimate worldwide dissemination of the Faith. Furthermore, Baha'i nuclei in the area could, despite their small size, act as growth poles for the intended expansion.

Like its predecessor, the Second Seven Year Plan placed the responsibility for execution on the shoulders of the American community. As Table 4 shows, however, this period (from 1946 to 1953) witnessed a series of planning developments that complicated the diffusion pattern. Drawing their inspiration from the Guardian's example, and in some

⁹⁶Data source: The Baha'i World: 1940-1944, IX (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1945), pp. 652-659.

TABLE 4. PLANS DEVELOPED AND EXECUTED BY NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES, 1937 - 1953

Name of Plan	Planning Period	Internal Diffusion Goals
India's Six Year Plan	April, 1938 - April, 1944	1) Increase no. of LSA's in the country (speci
India/Pakistan/Burma's Four-and-a-Half Year Plan	January, 1946 - July, 1950	1) Increase no. of LSA's from 21 to 63 2) Publish <u>Baha'u'llah and the New Era</u> in 18 1
India/Pakistan/Burma's Nineteen Month Plan	September, 1951 - April, 1953	1) Form new LSA's: 10 in India, 5 in Pakistan 2) Consolidate existing LSA's: 13 in India, 3 Pakistan, 4 in Burma 3) Publish a revised translation of <u>Baha'u'llah</u> in Burmese
Persian Plan	October, 1946 - July, 1950	1) Consolidate all local Baha'i communities 2) Reestablish 62 dissolved LSA's 3) Form 22 new groups 4) Create 13 new localities
British Six Year Plan	1944 - 1950	1) Form 19 LSA's 2) Open Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ire
British Two Year Plan	1951 - 1953	1) Strengthen the 19 newly established LSA's
Six Year Plan of	1947 - 1953	1) Form 7 new NSA's 2) Form 33 new groups
Iraq's Three Year Plan	1947 - 1950	1) Form 10 new LSA's 2) Develop Baha'i communities in southern part
Canada's Five Year Plan	1948 - 1953	1) Increase to 30 the number of LSA's 2) Increase to 100 the number of opened localit 3) Form a group in Newfoundland 4) Enroll Eskimos and Indians
Five Year Plan of Germany/Austria	1948 - 1953	1) Double number of Baha'i communities (14 to 2 2) Increase membership in each community 3) Publish 32 different Baha'i works in German 4) Expand Baha'i activities and form new center Germany/Austria
Egypt's Three Year Plan	1949 - 1953	1) Increase number of LSA's to 9 2) Increase number of opened localities to 33 3) Establish a Baha'i magazine
The Africa Plan ^c	1951 - 1953	

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1940-1944, Vol. IX (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1945), pp. 59-63; The Baha'i World: 1946-1950, Vol. XI (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1952), pp. 21, 23, 25, 28-30, 32-36; The Baha'i World: 1950-1954, Vol. XII (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 66-70; Baha'i News, 260 (October, 1952):6; Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 26-27.

^aI have been unable to identify Six Year Plan, but Vol. IX of The Baha'i World that the objective was to great within the country. In fact, d creased its number of LSA's fro

^bThis external diffusion goal of absorbed by the Africa Plan.

^cShoghi Effendi designed the Afr fore, an NSA plan like all the

als	External Diffusion Goals
in the country (specifics unknown) ^a	
from 21 to 63 the <u>New Era</u> in 18 languages	1) Spread Baha'i Faith to Ceylon, Indonesia, Siam
India, 5 in Pakistan, LSA's: 13 in India, 3 in	1) Send pioneers to eight countries: Siam, Malaya, Indonesia, Sarawak, Zanzibar, Madagascar, Nepal, and Indochina 2) Translate <u>Baha'u'llah and the New Era</u> into Indonesian, Siamese, Karen 3) Translate a Baha'i booklet into Kachin
translation of <u>Baha'u'llah and the New Era</u>	
Baha'i communities and LSA's	1) Raise existing groups to LSA's in a) Kabul, Afghanistan b) Mecca, Arabia c) Bahrain Island 2) Form groups in four localities in Arabian peninsula 3) Send pioneers to India and Iraq
northern Ireland, Ireland	
established LSA's	1) Form groups in three British dependencies in E. or W. Africa ^b 2) Translate, publish, disseminate Baha'i literature in three new African languages.
ities in southern part of country	
number of LSA's number of opened localities island plans	1) Form a group in Greenland
communities (14 to 28) each community Baha'i works in German and form new centers throughout	
's to 9 opened localities to 33 size	1) Establish Baha'i Faith in: Tunisia, Algeria, Libya 2) Strengthen Baha'i community in Abyssinia
	1) Egypt/Sudan to open Libya and Algeria 2) United States to open Liberia 3) Great Britain to open Tanganyika, Uganda, Kenya, Gold Coast 4) Persia to open Somaliland, N. Rhodesia, Nyasaland 5) India to open Zanzibar and Madagascar

en unable to identify the precise goals of India's Plan, but Vol. IX of The Baha'i World strongly suggests objective was to greatly increase the number of LSA's e country. In fact, during the plan period, India in- ts number of LSA's from 8 to 29.

ernal diffusion goal of the British Two Year Plan was by the Africa Plan.

fendi designed the Africa Plan. It was not, there- WSA plan like all the others in the table.

instances responding to specific appeals made by him, the various National Spiritual Assemblies not directly involved in the activities of the Second Seven Year Plan fashioned their own plans for consolidation and expansion. Varying in their duration and differing as to their specific goals, these national plans nevertheless had the general result of expanding the size of the Baha'i communities and strengthening the administrative systems in all of the then existent National Assembly areas. This was important because it improved their capacity to participate in the Ten Year World Crusade which was soon to follow.⁹⁷

Although many of the National plans focused exclusively on internal growth, there were a few exceptional efforts that undertook to spread the Faith beyond National boundaries. Particularly notable in this respect was the National Assembly of India, Pakistan, and Burma which in its 4-1/2 Year Plan pledged to open Ceylon, Indonesia,⁹⁸ and Siam. Having successfully fulfilled this objective by April, 1950, the Indian community embarked on an even more ambitious international project in their Nineteen-Month Plan: the reestablishment of pioneers in Siam and Indonesia (apparently, the first pioneers were unable to stay) and the

⁹⁷As can be noted in Table 4, the Indian National Spiritual Assembly was exceptional for having initiated its own growth plan as early as 1938. In fact, by the end of Shoghi Effendi's Second Seven Year Plan The National Assembly of the Indian subcontinent had formulated and executed, with a large degree of success, three separate plans that in total dramatically improved Baha'i representation in that part of the world. None of the other National Assemblies initiated plans before the end of the First Seven Year Plan.

⁹⁸At least one Baha'i lived on Java in 1943 (The Baha'i World: 1940-1944, p. 656) but perhaps by 1946 Indonesia was once again unoccupied territory.

transmittal of pioneers to Malaya, Sarawak, Zanzibar, Madagascar, Nepal, and Indochina. All but the last of these goals were achieved.

Similarly, the Persian Plan, which ran from October, 1946, to July, 1950, successfully undertook to reinforce the tiny nuclei in Kabul (Afghanistan), Mecca (Arabia), and Bahrein Island as well as to form new groups in four different localities in the Arabian Peninsula.

Egypt's Three Year Plan pledged to open Tunisia,⁹⁹ Algeria, and Libya while Britain's Two Year Plan promised to form Baha'i groups in three British dependencies in East or West Africa. Even Canada's Five Year Plan called for the opening up of Greenland and Newfoundland (Newfoundland did not join the Canadian confederation until 1949 and was not, therefore, a part of the National Spiritual Assembly area at the beginning of the planning period). All of these various international goals were achieved.

To make matters even more complicated, in 1950 the Guardian inaugurated a Two Year African Plan. That brief undertaking integrated Egypt's international goals (Three Year Plan) with the African objectives that were eventually to surface in the British Two Year Plan and the Indian Nineteen-Month Plan, and involved the United States and Persia as well. The whole project was to be administered by the British National Assembly and was to open up territories in Africa. The plan was particularly successful in Uganda where by 1953 there were 290 believers in 25 different localities (twelve local Spiritual Assemblies were formed

⁹⁹Tunisia may already have had resident Baha'is since there was a local Assembly there in 1943. The Baha'i World: 1940-1944, p. 658.

there before the end of the plan).¹⁰⁰ Perhaps even more pertinent to Africa-wide diffusion was the widely scattered network of Baha'i nuclei that the plan managed to stimulate in the various regions of North, East, and West Africa. Just as with Europe in 1944, the numbers of believers were rather small. Even so, they would prove to be the points of attraction for spectacular growth during the upcoming Ten Year Crusade.

By the time the Second Seven Year Plan, the various national plans for internal development, and the Two Year African Plan had run their courses, the Baha'i Faith stood at a point in its development where Shoghi Effendi felt justified in launching a truly global campaign that would, by the end of a decade, realize the vision originally expressed by his grandfather some 35 years earlier. The instrument which he created for this endeavor--the Ten Year Plan--involved all twelve existing National Assemblies and called for the expansion of the Faith to most of the remaining untouched territories of any consequence. In all, the plan identified 131 areas to be opened. The responsibility for placing pioneers in these virgin territories was apportioned in such a manner that the burden varied from a minimum of six goal areas for the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy and Switzerland to a maximum of 29 for the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States.

The Ten Year Plan dispersed pioneers to the goal areas very early in the planning period. That way, as much time as possible would remain before the end of the plan for the conversion of people to the Faith. The desire was to establish a worldwide network of Baha'i communities by

¹⁰⁰The Baha'i World: 1950-1954, XII (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 69-70.

1963. In fact, 1953, the first year of the plan, turned out to be pivotal in Baha'i diffusion history since pioneers were dispersed before its expiration to almost all goal areas. By the spring of 1954 these field agents were in place, the major objective of the Ten Year World Crusade had been met, and the remaining nine years of the planning period could be used to effect conversions.

Plans Designed by the Universal House of Justice

By the end of the Ten Year Crusade, almost six years after the passing of Shoghi Effendi, the Faith had managed to establish a worldwide distribution of its believers. The bulk of the Baha'is were concentrated in a few select areas--especially Iran and India, but also the United States, Bolivia, Kenya, Uganda, the Belgian Congo, and Vietnam--while many parts of the rest of the world were occupied by only a handful of believers, but in spite of this uneven distribution of numbers the mere presence of the Faith in virtually all inhabited areas of the planet provided the potential for subsequent growth everywhere.

Thus, when the first Universal House of Justice was elected in 1963, macroscale dissemination of the religion had nearly run its course and future growth would necessarily involve a shift in emphasis to a process of infilling and intensification. The two plans which have been developed by the Universal House of Justice have exhibited precisely this sort of change in focus. Both the Nine Year Plan and the Five Year Plan have been most concerned with increasing the numbers of Baha'i local Spiritual Assemblies and organized groups in all those areas of the world where initial penetration already had occurred. It is true that the Nine Year Plan designated 70 new territories to be opened up, but with the

exception of a few countries in Africa and national regions in Eastern Europe, most of these goal areas were small islands or administrative districts that, when considered together, encompassed only a tiny proportion of the world's land area and population. By the time the Five Year Plan had been formulated, unopened territories were either so scarce or so inaccessible (due to political conditions) that only ten new areas were targeted for penetration.

Perhaps the simplest way to see the shift in emphasis from organizing new territories to strengthening established national communities is to look at the number of new National Spiritual Assemblies called for by each of the plans (see Table 5).

It is obvious that the formation of new National Spiritual Assemblies proceeded most rapidly during the twenty years spanned by the Ten Year World Crusade and the Nine Year Plan. Those two plans called for the creation of large numbers of National Spiritual Assemblies (in each case the goal was exceeded). In comparison, the more recent Five Year Plan proposed a much more modest rate of growth in the number of National Assemblies, and in fact even much of that expansion was to be achieved by subdividing existing National Assemblies (of the 16 new National Assemblies to be formed, only four were to be created out of previously unorganized territory: Burundi, the Bahamas, Cyprus, and Greece).

Even the large number of National Assemblies targeted for creation during the Nine Year Plan could only have been selected as goal areas because of promising signs of Baha'i growth that manifested themselves during the preceding Ten Year Crusade. A National Assembly cannot exist until there is a network of local Assemblies present, and so the

TABLE 5
 THE NUMBERS OF NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES
 THAT WERE TO BE FORMED DURING EACH GROWTH PLAN

	NSA's at Start of Planning Period	NSA's Called for by End of Planning Period	New NSA's Required by Plan
1st 7 Year Plan (1937-44)	10	10	0
2nd 7 Year Plan (1946-53)	8 ^a	11	3
10 Year Plan (1953-63)	12	58	46
9 Year Plan (1964-73)	69	108	39
5 Year Plan (1974-79)	115	131	16

^aThis decline in the number of National Spiritual Assemblies was the result of religious persecution in the Caucasus and Turkestan where National bodies were dissolved.

appearance of a new National body is necessarily somewhat later than initial penetration of the region by the Faith. This being so, it is apparent that the absorption of new territories into the Baha'i ecumene reached its zenith during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi and had exhausted most of its options by the time the Nine Year Plan was formulated.

The two plans designed by the Universal House of Justice continued to make extensive use of pioneering as a mechanism to diffuse the Faith, but the role of the pioneer was altered by the changed conditions. Whereas a pioneer during the time of Shoghi Effendi's plans usually was the only Baha'i resident in a country, his contemporary counterpart, although the religion's single representative in a certain locality, is likely to be in a region that is already organized as a National Spiritual Assembly area and already has at least a minimal network of local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, and isolated believers. Today's pioneer, therefore, although still somewhat isolated, has access to nearby Baha'i resources that can on occasion be used to assist him in the task of encouraging conversions.

The intended function of pioneering as an institution has remained the same, however. It persists because it is a mechanism for encouraging growth in those areas that have relatively few Baha'is. It facilitates balanced Baha'i growth by effecting the spatial reallocation of manpower from "developed" to "developing" regions. It decentralizes Baha'i resources. It continues to be, therefore, an expression of the long-standing Baha'i policy of dispersion.

A Final Note Regarding Planning

The systematic planning of growth has been a relatively recent development in Baha'i history. The Faith is now in its 136th year, and yet the notion of planned expansion has been part of the Baha'i outlook for only 60 years, while the regular development and implementation of well articulated plans has been characteristic of the Baha'i Faith for only 42 years.

The brief time during which planning has been used as a tool for dissemination of the Faith should not be allowed to obscure the fact, established earlier on in this chapter, that the religion has, throughout its history, adhered to a clearly defined and relatively unchanging expansionist policy. Baha'i planning should be viewed as nothing more than a recent expression of that enduring policy. There is no way that contemporary dependence on planning can be interpreted as a sign of increasing Baha'i commitment to the notions of numerical increase, geographical dispersion, and compositional diversity; these elements of Baha'i policy have been present from the very beginning.

The fact that an expansionist policy and all that it entails is rooted in the sacred writings of the cofounders of the Faith means that the recently developed Baha'i growth plans, since they are designed to insure the execution of policy, are endowed with enormous theological import and exercise a powerful influence on the minds and actions of the believers. Even the planning tool has unqualified support since it was first used by 'Abdu'l-Baha, the divinely appointed infallible interpreter of the sacred word of God.

Although the influence of the Baha'i Faith has expanded steadily since its birth, exhibiting no significant periods of noticeable contraction,¹⁰¹ growth has been most impressive during the era of carefully planned expansion. The question, of course, arises as to whether the recent acceleration in growth has been a consequence of planning or is merely coincident with it and is actually the outcome of changing world conditions that have revolutionized the technology of transportation and communication, lowered the cultural and political barriers separating countries and regions, and modified the beliefs and values of humanity to the point where the Baha'i message is more acceptable. A modified form of this question will be considered in a later chapter when the effectiveness of planning is statistically evaluated.

¹⁰¹Dramatic declines in the fortunes of the Faith have tended to be regional rather than global, and when they have occurred they seem to have been offset by developments in some other area that in the long run proved to be even more beneficial to the Faith than the setback was detrimental. For example, the near annihilation of the Babis in Persia during the 1850s was counterbalanced by Baha'u'llah's banishment to Iraq, a development that permitted the realization of the Baha'i dispensation and was the first in a sequence of steps leading to the firm establishment of the Faith in numerous regions outside its area of origin. In a similar vein, suppression of the large, wealthy, and firmly established Baha'i communities in the Caucasus and Turkestan following the Russian Revolution coincided with the contrasting developments stimulated by the Tablets of the Divine Plan, in particular the opening up of Australia and New Zealand, the initial settlement of South Africa, and the extensive forays of the indefatigable Martha Root, first into South America and then over the next two decades, into all the other continents of the world.

CHAPTER VII

DIFFUSION IN THE UNITED STATES: POPULATION GROWTH

GENERAL COMMENTS

Material available for the study of Baha'i diffusion is of two main types: (1) demographic data indicating the time of adoption, residential location, and personal characteristics of individual adopters, and (2) information regarding the location and time of formation of individual administrative bodies (i.e., local Spiritual Assemblies). The data dealing with population are extensive and broad in scope, but somewhat fragmentary and in some instances inconclusive or contradictory; the data regarding local Spiritual Assemblies are precise, accurate, standardized in format, and complete, but lack sufficient substance to permit detailed analysis. Since the demographic data were available only for the United States Baha'i community, the decision was made to study the United States using the individual believer as the unit of analysis and to resort to the local Spiritual Assembly as a unit of analysis in a later chapter when the focus is on global dissemination.

For the purposes of this study, the United States is defined as the 48 contiguous United States. Alaska, Hawaii, and the United States possessions and territories are excluded because they are not part of the current United States National Spiritual Assembly area.

GROWTH

The First Seeds

Although public mention of the Baha'i Faith was made at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, the first Baha'i in America

was the Syrian doctor Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah who arrived in Chicago in 1894. Most of the conversions to the religion which occurred during the following four years were the result of his work; he was the de facto leader of the American Baha'is before 1898.

It is possible to obtain an accurate picture of the rate of growth of the Faith during this earliest period because a believer named Mary Lesch kept a log in which she entered the names of all people who became Baha'is during each of those years (she also recorded the place of residence of each new believer, but that information will be discussed in the next chapter). Her tabulations indicate the pattern of adoption shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6

THE BAHAI POPULATION IN AMERICA: 1893-1899

Year	Number of New Adoptees	Size of Baha'i Population at end of year ^a	Annual Growth Rate
1893	0	1	--
1894	4	5	400%
1895	7	12	140%
1896	43	55	358%
1897	293	343	533%
1898	510	858	147%
1899	580	1,438	68%

^aThis column is nothing more than a summation of the new adoptees, and as such it ignores attrition through death, disaffection, or emigration.

Source: Membership books maintained by Mary Lesch during the period 1894-1899. These manuscript books are in the National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

This information should be reasonably accurate. Mary Lesch herself became a believer in 1897, and so she would have been in a position to keep abreast of new declarations during the later years when they became more numerous. Until her declaration, most Baha'is lived near her in the Chicago area, and so in order to tabulate the declarants who preceded her she would only have had to ask them where and when they became Baha'is. It would seem most likely that, if anything, Mary Lesch's list might be marred by consistent underenumeration, a bias which would tend to compensate for the fact that the figures on total population size ignore the possible attrition through death, disaffection, and emigration.

There is one possible source of a more critical bias in Mary Lesch's roll. Her log books list 580 names for the year 1899, but then all entries cease. There is no way of knowing whether she stopped making entries at the end of 1899 or at some other time during that year. It is possible, therefore, that her tabulation for 1899 is seriously incomplete.

In spite of all the potential inaccuracies in the data source, however, it is reasonably certain that the 1,437 people tabulated by Mary Lesch did indeed become Baha'is. This suggests that early expansion was very rapid. The annual rates of growth were astronomical, ranging from a low of 68 percent to a high of 543 percent. Of course, the very small population base, especially during the first few years, facilitated high growth rates, but it should be pointed out that the growth in the absolute numbers of Baha'is during the period 1897-1899 probably was higher than for any other three-year period before 1965. In a historical perspective, therefore, initial growth was extremely rapid.

Long-Term Growth Trends

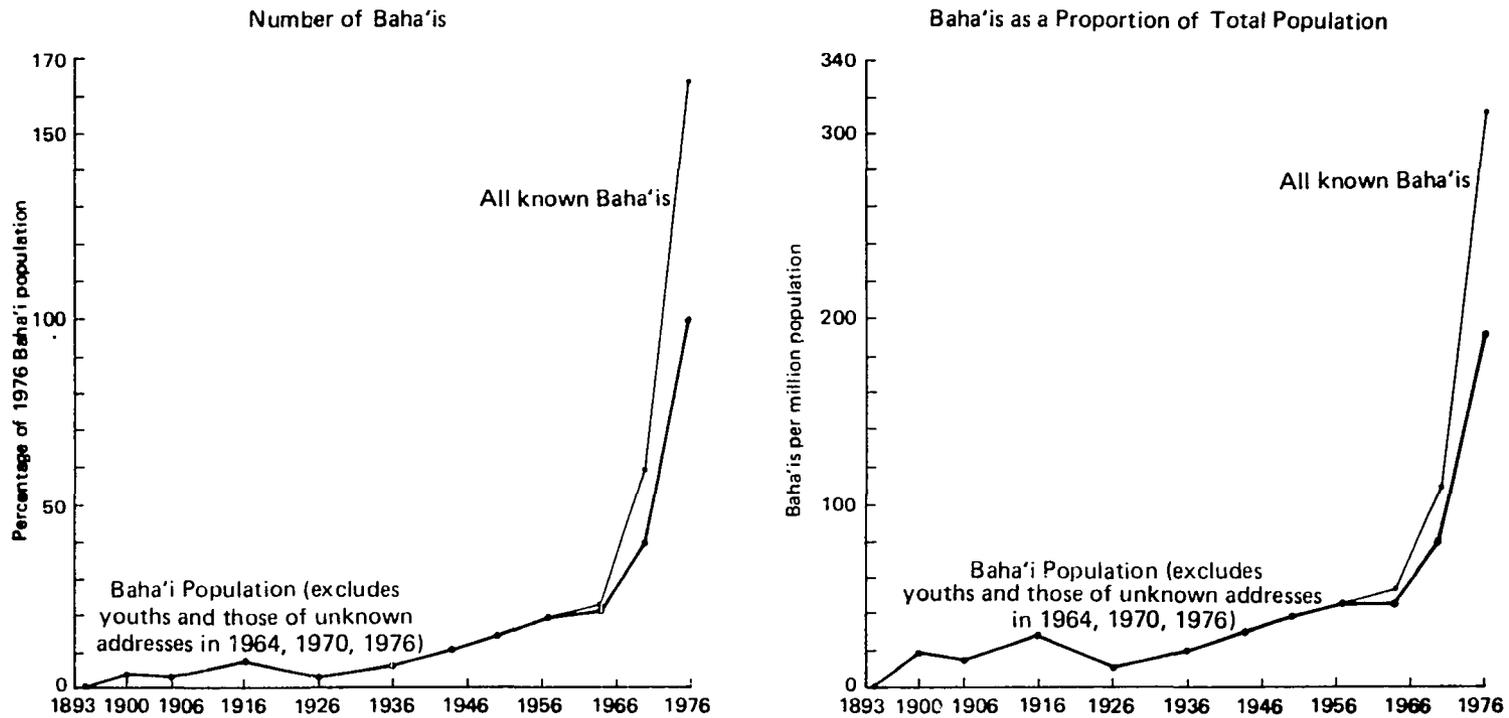
The Overall Pattern

After this first burst, the Baha'i population underwent two separate periods of decline before settling into a pattern of steady increase. Figure 14 shows the relative size of the Baha'i population at nearly regular intervals. Even though the points of reference are between six and ten years apart, it is clear that the growth rate has not been constant. If census data were available for the intermediate years they might reveal even more pronounced and more numerous fluctuations in the rate of population growth.

It is apparent from Figure 14 that between 1894 and 1926 at least two distinct peaks occurred in the size of membership. Although 1900 and 1916 are identified as the zenithal years for membership while 1906 and 1926 are pegged as the nadirs, the unavailability of data for any other years during this time span makes it impossible to assess whether those years are the extremes. In all likelihood they are not.

The growth rate showed a tendency to gradually diminish between 1926 and 1964, but became extremely high after that time. To some extent, the unusually low growth rate during the 1957-1964 period was a result of a change in enumeration procedures. During those years the Office of Membership and Records at the Baha'i National Center became aware of a growing need to differentiate between adult Baha'is who maintain an attachment to the Faith and those Baha'is who either cannot or do not participate in the social, spiritual, and administrative activities which engender group cohesiveness. During the 1950s, the Membership and Records Office began to compile their membership statistics in such a

FIGURE 14 Growth of the Baha'i Population in the United States



Note: Data for 48 contiguous states only.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1929, 1941); U. S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census (1910, 1916); Mary Lesch's Membership Roll, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; Various tabulations of membership, National Teaching Committee Office, Wilmette, Illinois; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 311*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1977*

manner as to differentiate between adult Baha'is and Baha'i youth (aged 15 to 20) while at the same time breaking down those two groups into two subsets: (1) those for whom addresses are known and (2) those for whom addresses are unknown or from whom mail has been returned. For all years up through 1957, Figure 14 is based on membership statistics that include both adults and youth and that count all Baha'is regardless of their whereabouts. For 1964, 1970, and 1976, however, only adult Baha'is with a known place of residence are included. Figure 14 contains a light line that indicates how the curve would appear if all four classes of Baha'is are included in the 1964, 1970, and 1976 statistics--as they were for previous years--and the marked depression of the 1957-1964 growth rate is no longer apparent.

For the purpose of this study, emphasis will be placed on adult Baha'is with known residence since that group is more likely to be a realistic indicator of Baha'i strength. Previous to the 1950s, the numbers of youth and "mail-return" Baha'is were so small as to be almost insignificant. In more recent times, however, their numerical importance has increased dramatically, coming to represent a substantial proportion of the total Baha'i population. This is problematic since youth status and mail-return status represent two totally different forces in Baha'i growth; the former will contribute to Baha'i expansion in the immediate future whereas the latter may be a form of attrition. This problem, however, will be held in abeyance until a systematic effort is made to analyze growth dynamics. For now the concern will be with overall growth as portrayed by the number of adult Baha'is in known places of residence.

Declining Growth Between 1926 and 1964

Why should Baha'i growth taper off between 1926 and 1964 and then accelerate dramatically? There are three possible explanations for the gradual diminution of the growth rate in the earlier years. First, the increasing population base heightened the difficulty of maintaining a steady growth rate since it required a larger number of new converts each year. It is true that the number of potential change agents was also increasing at the same pace, but as the years went by a larger and larger number of all the adherents were either very new to the Faith, which may have impaired their effectiveness, or very elderly, which may have decreased their level of activity.¹

Second, the period in question is coincident with the era when Shoghi Effendi was formulating and codifying the administrative order, a development that made the decision to adopt the Baha'i Faith an increasingly demanding commitment. Whereas in 'Abdu'l-Baha's day one could become a Baha'i and still remain a member of some other religious group, by 1964 this was no longer acceptable. Similarly, in the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha the only real requirement for becoming a Baha'i was a belief that Baha'u'llah is the Manifestation of God for this day, but by the time of Shoghi Effendi's death the religion required that the new adopter also obey a host of societal laws governing personal behavior. Even the

¹This is not to suggest that new (or for that matter, elderly) Baha'is are always less effective change agents. On the contrary, numerous individual examples contradict this sort of blanket statement. Nevertheless, all other things being equal, a Baha'i of many years has had more opportunity to become familiar with the multitudinous Baha'i writings and conform his behavior to the patterns which they recommend.

administrative order itself is an aspect of the religion that the new adopter was obliged to accept only in the latter years.² All these transformations in the nature of the religion made it more independent and increased its influence over many aspects of an individual believer's daily life, but at the same time they made adoption a more serious decision. The change in the importance of the adoption decision can be grasped more readily if it is described metaphorically: In the early days you could become a member of the Baha'i Faith by professing your love for it; by 1964 you had to marry it.

A third reason for the gradual decline in the growth rate of the United States population may be that from 1937 onward the American Baha'is were heavily committed to the execution of a sequence of international plans, each of which was more ambitious than its predecessor. This increasing commitment to overseas activity may have been a drain on the resources and manpower available for generating domestic growth.

Accelerating Growth after 1964

Turning now to the phenomenal increase in the growth rate which occurred after 1964, the most plausible explanation is associated with conditions lying outside the purview of the Faith. The decade of the 1960s was a time in which traditional religion in America (especially the Judaeo-Christian establishment) was tried and found lacking.³ Religion

²Both the societal laws and the administrative order have their roots in Baha'u'llah's writings. In America before the 1920s, however, these aspects of the religion were not yet enunciated.

³". . . America's moral and religious tradition was tested and found wanting in the sixties. . . ." Sidney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 1085.

has always taken a multitude of forms in the United States, but until the 1960s, traditional Christian orthodoxy was the norm. During that decade, however, there was a revolution in the American attitude toward religion--a revolution that dethroned conservative theology, confirmed the legitimacy of a bewildering variety of religious and quasi-religious forms, and perpetrated a new morality that simultaneously uprooted hypocrisies in the old conventional moral code and planted new behavioral modes that, although often more honest than their precursors, heralded an unprecedented level of permissiveness. Simply put, the sixties was a time in which the American people turned their backs on traditional Christianity and sought religious fulfillment either in unorthodox Christian forms or in non-Christian traditions.⁴

Ahlstrom asks why this revolution in American religious life should have occurred when it did, and in the process of posing the question he defines in colorful language the pervasiveness of the change.

. . . [One] asks why a moral and intellectual revolution that was centuries in the making should have been so suddenly precipitated in the sixties. Why . . . did the fair weather, the complacency, moral composure, national self-confidence, and optimism of the fifties, of the Eisenhower years, and even of Kennedy's early New Frontier days become so quickly clouded? Why did this decade become the moment when the WASP's wings are clipped; when the Protestant Establishment collapses; when ancient standards of sexual morality are revised; when governments relax their equally ancient prerogative of censorship; when thousands resist or evade the country's call to arms; when

⁴The broad generalizations outlined in this paragraph have been drawn almost entirely from the following sources: Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, pp. 1079-1096; Martin E. Marty, "The American Situation in 1969," The Religious Situation: 1969, ed. by Donald R. Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 25-43; Sidney E. Ahlstrom, "The Moral and Theological Revolution of the 1960s and Its Implications for American Religious History," The State of American History, ed. by Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 99-118.

ministers and thinking laity alike lose confidence in ecclesiastical institutions; when antisupernaturalism makes deep inroads in both pulpit and seminary . . .; when a two-and-a-half millenia tradition of religious opposition to "worldliness" and "secularism" is drastically weakened; when the religious category itself is profoundly questioned in the churches and the synagogues; and when the New Morality and the Death of God become popular slogans? Why, in short, have so many long-term processes dropped their bomb load on the sixties?⁵

Ahlstrom goes on to explain why he thinks the bombs were dropped, but to pursue this would draw the discussion too far away from its main thrust. The point is that a religious revolution did occur, it was serious in its implications, and it can be said to have happened during the sixties. In fact, as Ahlstrom intimates and Marty clearly states,⁶ the revolution reached its zenith in the latter part of the decade.

Like many other movements of non-Western origin, the Baha'i Faith benefited from this disillusionment with traditional religion and the resultant openness to new religious forms. It should be remembered that the Baha'i movement, which only claims the allegiance of a microscopic proportion of the total population, could experience an absurdly high growth rate even if only a very few of the disillusioned (who numbered in the millions) turned to it for answers.

Recent Growth

Description

Statistics are available which make it possible to plot recent Baha'i growth with a fair amount of precision. In one sense, this

⁵Ahlstrom, "The Moral and Theological Revolution of the 1960s and Its Implications for American Religious History," The State of American History, pp. 103-104.

⁶Marty, "The American Situation in 1969," The Religious Situation: 1969, p. 25.

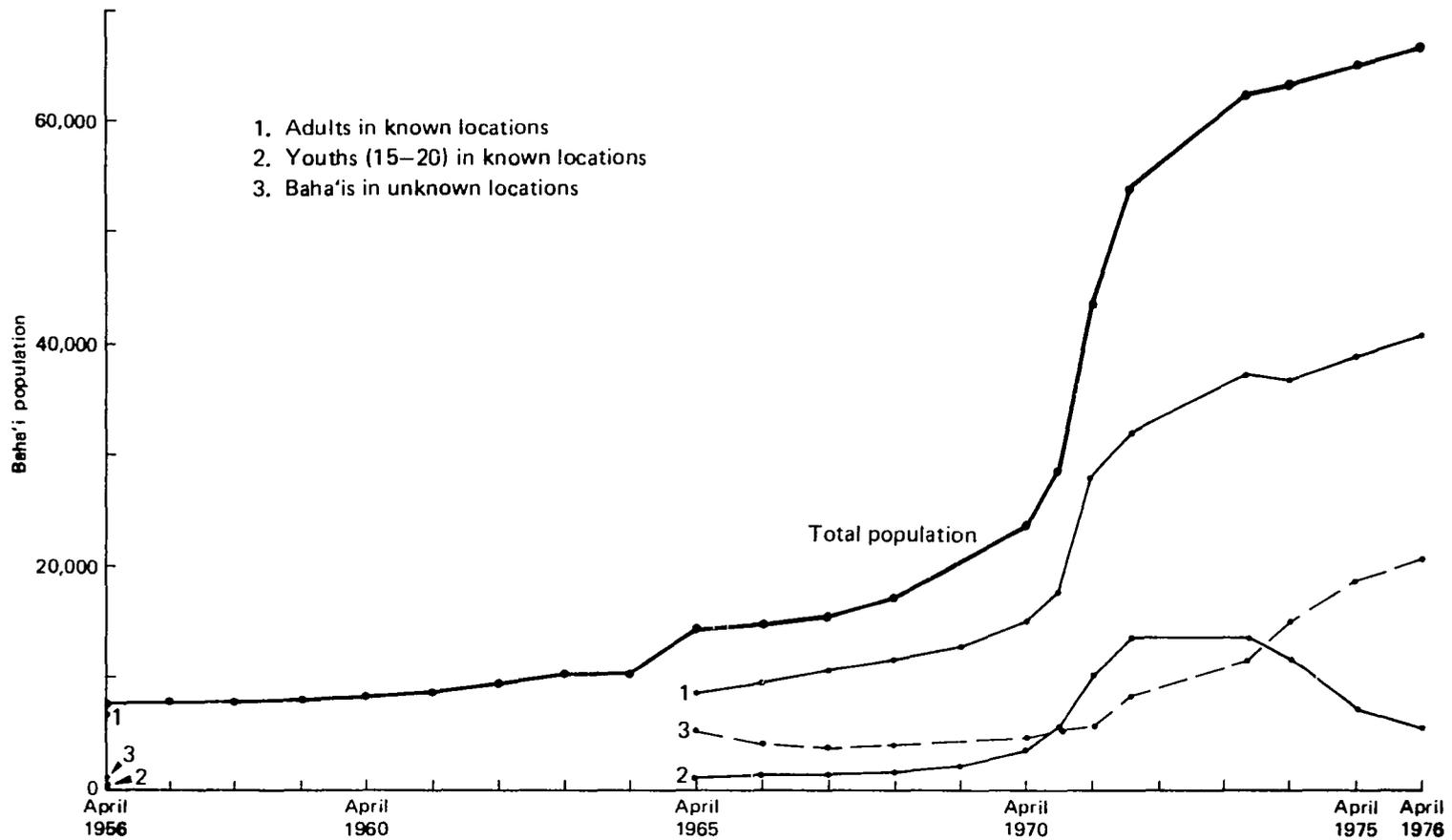
exercise is nothing more than an elaboration of the analysis of long-term growth trends. The shift to a finer temporal scale, however, reveals certain aspects of Baha'i growth which are not apparent in the cruder, more sweeping survey of the full 84 years of Baha'i expansion in America. Figure 15 shows the growth of the Faith between April, 1956, and April, 1976. With a few exceptions which can be identified by careful study of the figure, population sizes have been plotted for one year intervals. The two instances in which the time intervals are longer (April, 1968 through April, 1970, and November, 1971 through August, 1973) were occasioned by a lack of available data. These unavoidable gaps detract slightly from the consistency of the presentation, but they are offset by the availability of more frequent membership counts for the period of extremely rapid growth which occurred between them.

The previous section discussed the difference between the total Baha'i population and the more conservative indicator of population size that excludes youth and those whose whereabouts is unknown. Figure 15 plots these categories so that one can see the relative size of each group. The three components of the total Baha'i population are plotted for 1956 and for 1965-1976. If they are summed for any one year, they equal the total Baha'i population.

Mail-Return Baha'is

As can be seen by looking at the information for 1956, it is only in the recent past that mail-return Baha'is have become a significant element in the total population, while Baha'i youth remained numerically unimportant until well into the 1960s. The recent rise of these two groups coincides with the rapid increase of the total Baha'i population.

FIGURE 15 Growth of the Baha'i Population in the United States: April 1956 – April 1976



Source: Office of Membership and Records, National Baha'i Center, Wilmette, Illinois

There is a tendency for the numbers of mail-return Baha'is to increase as the total population grows. This would not be surprising were it not for the fact that such a relationship did not exist before 1956. Although data are not available for the period 1956-65, it is known that by the end of that time mail-return Baha'is had become a substantial part (36%) of the total Baha'i population. During the late 1960s, they diminished in importance, but subsequently their numbers rose rapidly, so that by 1976 they were about 31 percent of all Baha'is.

Mail-return Baha'is are by definition those adherents for whom information on place of residence is either missing or inaccurate.⁷ They are important to the administrative order of the Faith since they are a segment of the Baha'i population that almost certainly will not be participating in organized community activities. There is little likelihood that mail-return Baha'is will be contributing, either financially or personally, to the execution of the current growth plan. They may be disseminating the religion, but not within the context of the prevailing plan objectives.

Furthermore, an unknown number of mail-returns probably are not the result of an incorrect address but rather of a conscious decision on the part of the addressee to return Baha'i mail--a behavior which could indicate disaffection.

There is no way of measuring the level of commitment of mail-return Baha'is, but it does seem likely that a substantial number have become

⁷Actually, the Office of Membership and Records distinguishes between the "mail-return" and "unknown address" categories, keeping statistics on each. For the purpose of this discussion I have lumped the two groups together.

disinterested while a small portion have actually become disaffected. There is a great difference between disinterest and disaffection, however, for the former may be a temporary stage in the life experience whereas the latter is likely to be a permanent attitudinal state arrived at consciously. Furthermore, their implications for diffusion differ. A prevalence of disinterest can retard Baha'i diffusion by sapping the vitality of the movement from within whereas disaffection can be a source of direct opposition to the Faith from outside.

Baha'i Youth

In 1956, the youth comprised only 3.3 percent of the Baha'i population. This figure can be judged by comparing it to the comparable number for the United States' population in 1950: 8.5 percent. By 1965 the Baha'i youth component had risen to the still modest level of 7.5 percent. Then, during the period of extremely rapid expansion that occurred in the late 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s the growth rate for youth greatly outstripped that for the total Baha'i population, so that by November, 1971, over one-quarter of all Baha'is were aged 15 to 20. Between November, 1971, and August, 1973, however, the youth boom reached its apex and then lapsed into an absolute decline; by 1976 those in the 15 to 20 age category were only 8.1 percent of the Baha'i membership.

The recent decline is misleading. One must remember that anyone who is classified as a youth will in the near future pass on to the adult category. Since the rapid influx of youth was occasioned almost entirely by conversions (and was not simply the coming of age of children of Baha'i families) any slackening in the rate of adoption is

likely to result in an absolute decline a few years hence in the numbers of Baha'i youth. The rapid drop in the size of the youth population between August, 1973, and April, 1976, was not caused by disassociation from the Faith. Rather, it was the result of aging. This is verified by the fact that of all the Baha'is in the 15-20 age group (including those in the mail-return category) in April, 1975, over one-third became adult Baha'is before the expiration of a single year. This also indicates a concentration of Baha'i youth near the older end of the 15-20 age category, confirming the previously stated contention that most Baha'i youth are adopters and not children of Baha'i families.

One might contend, incidentally, that the recent rise in the number of mail-return Baha'is may be a reflection of a new itinerant youth element in the Baha'i population that adopted the religion but then lost interest. There may be some truth to this, since in 1975 youth comprised 12 percent of all Baha'is in the mail-return category. This may not seem a large percentage, but considering how rapidly youth became adults, the figure is substantial. Furthermore, the trajectories of the population change lines for youth and mail-return Baha'is in Figure 15 are almost mirror images from August, 1973, onwards, leading one to suspect direct transfers from the youth to the mail-return category. This notion cannot be confirmed, however, without more information regarding either (1) the age structure of the mail-return population or (2) changes in the ratio of adults to youth in the mail-return group.

The large number of youth enrolled in the late 1960s and early 1970s brought about a profound change in the age structure of the entire Baha'i population. While youth may move rapidly to the adult category,

this does not immediately alter the fact that the total population has taken on a relatively youthful complexion. In earlier times the age structure of the Baha'i population was strongly biased toward the older age groups, but the youthful character of recent growth has changed that.

Some idea of the age structure of new converts during the high growth era can be obtained from a statistical compilation that was prepared by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Services in February, 1969. Between January 8 and February 5, 1969, 193 new Baha'is enrolled in the United States, and 160 of them completed and returned questionnaires which, among other things, solicited information regarding age. Table 7 shows the age structure of the new enrollees and compares it with that of the population of the United States.

The youthfulness of the new Baha'is is remarkable, and even though a one-month survey may not be a perfect measure of the age characteristics of all the Baha'is who enlisted during the high-growth period, it is probably a reasonable indicator. When one considers that the Baha'i population tripled in size between 1969 and 1973, one begins to appreciate the extent to which the age structure of new enrollees transformed the age structure of the total population during that period.

The massive injection of youth had a number of important implications for later growth. First, it meant that the religion had a new capacity for appealing to young people in society. It is obvious that during the late sixties and early seventies some young people in America became interested in the Baha'i Faith, but this occurred despite a general absence of young Baha'is from whom they could learn about the religion. After the influx of youth, the Faith could use this new

TABLE 7

THE AGE STRUCTURE OF NEW BAHAI DECLARANTS IN THE UNITED STATES:
JANUARY 8 TO FEBRUARY 5, 1969

Age Range	Percent of New Baha'i Enrollees	Percent of U.S. Population over 14
15 - 19	41	13
20 - 24	29	10
25 - 29	9	8
30 - 34	4	8
35 - 44	6	18
45 - 54	4	16
55 - 64	3	13
65+	4	14

Source: "A Statistical Comparison of the Background of Newly Enrolled Baha'is with the U.S. Population," unpublished statistical compilation prepared by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Services, Wilmette, Ill., Baha'i National Center, 1969

resource to gain access to the social and economic niches predominantly occupied by young people and could avoid having to appeal to the young across a generation gap.

A second major implication of the Baha'i movement's demographic rejuvenation is the unprecedented flexibility suddenly incorporated into the pool of human resources available. When a middle-aged or elderly person joins the Faith he typically brings along a family, a home, an established occupation, and a host of deeply ingrained behavior patterns that are incompatible with Baha'i teachings. By contrast, a young person is relatively free of these encumbrances and is in a much better position to pattern his life after the Baha'i model and to plan a future around the goal of serving the Faith.

Two demographic advantages also accrue from enrolling relatively young people. First, the average remaining life expectancy increases, which has the dual benefit of suppressing attrition through mortality and increasing the number of years that an individual believer can work as a change agent for Baha'i diffusion. Second, the enrollment of large numbers of unmarried people greatly improves the likelihood of marriages in which both partners are Baha'is, and that would naturally lead to the creation of families with children brought up in the Bahā'i spiritual environment.

The tendency for younger people to adopt the Faith may be attributed at least in part to the wave of anti-Establishment sentiment which swept the nation during the 1960s. The social and ideological dislocation of that time was initiated largely through the efforts of a discontented and disillusioned American youth. Their concerns rapidly became the concerns of the whole nation, but they were the first and the most fervent advocates of change. They, therefore, were the ones who in largest numbers sought alternatives to traditional American ideals and religions, and in so doing, frequently discovered the Baha'i Faith.

But youth enrollment was not something that simply happened to the Baha'i Faith as a consequence of social revolution in America. During the early sixties the Baha'i community of the United States began to realize that it was attracting younger people than had been the case in earlier decades. In June, 1966, the Universal House of Justice released a letter to the Baha'i youth⁸ in every land calling upon them to serve

⁸Although for administrative purposes the Faith has specific age thresholds that distinguish between youth and adult status, in all other

the Faith in three ways: (1) by studying Baha'i teachings, spiritualizing their lives, and forming their characters in accordance with Baha'i standards, (2) by teaching the Faith to their fellow youth, and (3) by acquiring knowledge and skills that will insure their self-sufficiency and allow them to serve humanity. The letter went on to encourage youth involvement in all aspects of Baha'i life; special emphasis was placed on the importance of contributing to the achievement of the goals outlined in the Nine Year Plan (1964-1973).⁹ This message from the Universal House of Justice stimulated vigorous youth activity in the United States. In June, 1968, the first in a series of national youth conferences was held in Wilmette, Illinois. Attended by over five hundred Baha'i youth from 34 states, Washington, D.C., and Canada, the conference was called primarily to promote expansion and consolidation of the Faith. The outcome was a five-year program designed to involve young Baha'is in achieving the goals of the Nine Year Plan. The program, which in a sense could be considered a youth plan for America, had a number of objectives. Those most directly relevant to diffusion included: (1) deployment of 500 youth to homefront and foreign goal areas specified in the Nine Year Plan (350 of these were to be settled in the southern states where the Baha'i Faith was at that time under-represented), (2) doubling the number of Baha'i College Clubs from 61 to 122, (3) establishing 20 high school clubs, and (4) implementing a travelling-teacher

ways there is careful avoidance of drawing a line between these two groups. Consequently, this and the many other messages transmitted to the Baha'is by administrative bodies, are not intended for consumption just by those aged 15-20, but rather are meant to be read by anyone who feels young.

⁹Reprinted in The Baha'i World: 1963-1968, XIV, pp. 259-263.

program which would see Baha'i individuals, teams, and musical groups moving from place to place to proclaim the Faith.¹⁰

This sudden focus on youth activity may have been stimulated in part by the rising tide of youth enrollments that occurred in the early sixties. The Baha'i community, perceiving this new resource, was eager to have it serve the Faith. The religion was not just reacting to a new condition, however, for at the time of the letter from the Universal House of Justice the proportion of all American Baha'is aged 15-20 was still substantially lower than the average for the entire country (approximately 10% vs. 14%). One can conclude, therefore, that the very high enrollments of young people in 1970 and 1971 was brought about by a combination of social conditions outside the Faith and growth priorities adopted by the religion.

Growth of the Total Population

The earlier analysis of growth trends throughout the full history of the Baha'i presence in North America detected rapidly accelerating growth in the late sixties and early seventies and explained it as being the result of social upheaval. Now, however, with the information available in Figure 15, it becomes apparent that the recent upward swing in the growth rate has not been smooth and regular and that the most spectacular expansion occurred after the turbulent sixties had run their course. To be sure, Baha'i membership grew at a rapid rate between 1960

¹⁰Details of this first National Youth Conference and the youth plan that it spawned are given in The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV, pp. 327-328.

and 1970 (on the average, over 15% per year), but year to year fluctuations in the rate were great during that period, and, even more to the point, the rates of the 1960s were dwarfed by those that prevailed at the start of the 1970s. The original explanation, therefore, is not entirely adequate.

Once again it becomes necessary to look within the Baha'i Faith for an explanation of its own growth. The era of rapid increase corresponded with the Nine Year Plan which ran from April, 1964 to April, 1973. Immediately preceding and following this plan there were one-year periods during which no plan was in force. These interplan periods were times of little or no growth. The 1963-1964 year actually witnessed a slight decline in membership, the only time during the two decades covered by Figure 15 when this occurred. The 1973-1974 year did see some expansion, but the annual rate was lower than at any other time since 1958 (except for the absolute decline of 1963-1964). The decline in membership during the 1963-1964 period probably was caused by the administrative separation of Hawaii from the United States--an event which stripped the U.S. Baha'i population of a certain small proportion of its members. However, the slow growth during the 1973-1974 year may be a sign that planning stimulates growth whereas lack of planning does not. The Nine Year Plan witnessed consistently high growth rates, but the question is, what happened between April, 1970 and November, 1971? How does one account for the spectacular growth which occurred during that period? First it should be noted that the increase at that time was largely a product of activity in the South. Secondly, it should be recognized that the large number of southern enrollments

was the result of a concerted drive on the part of Baha'is. The following statement from the most recent volume of The Baha'i World summarizes events and shows the regionality of Baha'i growth during that period.

An extraordinary development in the American Baha'i Community prompted The Universal House of Justice on January 30, 1971, to cable the Baha'i world:

JOYFULLY ANNOUNCE BAHAI WORLD PROCESS ENTRY BY TROOPS RAPIDLY ACCELERATING UNITED STATES EVIDENCED BY ENROLLMENT 8000 NEW BELIEVERS SOUTH CAROLINA COURSE SIX WEEKS . . .

"The beginnings of that process," it was reported by the National Spiritual Assembly, "can be traced to the Southern Teaching Conference which was held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on September 12-14, 1969. A Deep South Committee was formed as a direct consequence and within six months its activities, encouraged by a number of scattered individual teaching successes, spearheaded large-scale enrollment of believers in the Southern States, particularly Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas. The most spectacular results were experienced in South Carolina which had two Local Spiritual Assemblies in 1968 and fifty-five by Ridvan, 1973. . . ."¹¹

To give some idea of the magnitude of this movement, South Carolina--the state that experienced 8,000 enrollments in six weeks--had 132 resident Baha'is on January 13, 1968. The South as a whole, which in December, 1969, was the home of only 18 percent of all American Baha'is, doubled its membership in well under a year and by December of 1970 had increased its proportionate share of the total to 32 percent.

The Dynamics of Growth

The population dynamics of a religious movement are more complex than those of a population to which egress and ingress are possible only

¹¹The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV, p. 228. Ridvan, incidentally, is an annual 12-day feast (April 21 - May 3) celebrating the declaration by Baha'u'llah that He was the Promised One whose advent had been foretold by the Bab.

by birth, death, and migration. The membership of a religion is influenced by these three traditional elements of population dynamics, but in addition, change in the size and age/sex structure of the population can be deeply affected by personal decisions to enter or withdraw from the group. Furthermore, most religious movements--and the Baha'i Faith is no exception--recognize the right of some legitimate source of authority to disown or reinstate members who have violated the accepted tenets of the religion. The numbers of people who decide to join or leave a religion may be large, but excommunication and reinstatement are almost always rare. They are all sources of population change, however, and for some religions, such as the Baha'i Faith, are more important dynamics of population than birth, death, and migration.

Technically, birth into the Baha'i religion is not possible since children are not supposed to be socially coerced into being Baha'is and formal induction into the Faith is a step that can be taken only as a result of a conscious personal decision made after the attainment of the fifteenth birthday. Of course, children in Baha'i families can hardly avoid being inculcated with Baha'i values and beliefs, and many ultimately decide to become Baha'is. Even so, adoption of the Faith by such children is not inevitable, and there is no way that a parent can preempt this decision which is entirely the prerogative of the offspring. The result is that for purposes of membership, there are no Baha'is younger than 15.

Further difficulty in analyzing population dynamics arises out of the fact that it is unrealistic to assume that all people can be categorized as Baha'i or non-Baha'i in a purely dichotomous fashion. Aside

from the issue of level of commitment, there are certain identifiable groupings into which Baha'is fall and as members of which they exhibit varying degrees of attachment to the Faith. It is logically appropriate and mechanically possible to identify three different classes of Baha'is and to further divide one of those classes into two subgroups:

- I. Baha'is in good standing
 - A. Those with known addresses
 - B. Those whose whereabouts are unknown (mail-return Baha'is)
- II. Baha'is whose administrative rights have been removed
- III. Excommunicated Baha'is

The difference between Baha'is of known and unknown addresses has already been examined and a case has been made for the importance of recognizing that those with unknown addresses are generally unable to be fully effective members of the Baha'i community. It is theoretically possible for mail-return Baha'is to contribute significantly to Baha'i diffusion. Indeed, anyone who knows about the religion, even if he is not Baha'i or is anti-Baha'i, has the potential to be an effective agent for diffusion of the Faith. In reality, however, it is Baha'is in good standing with known addresses who, by working within the organized structure of the Faith, effect most of its expansion.

Baha'is who fail to live within the social laws of the religion may in certain instances have their administrative rights removed. The person continues to be a Baha'i in the eyes of the Faith, but until his behavior is modified to conform to social law and adequate redress has been made for any injustice arising out of his misbehavior, he cannot participate in any of the administrative activities of the Faith--a

proscription that precludes voting, serving on Spiritual Assemblies, attending 19-day Feasts, and making financial contributions. If behavior is reformed, however, and injustices are rectified, then the person will be reinstated.

If a Baha'i attempts to divide the Faith by claiming religious authority to which he is not entitled with the object of generating a splinter movement or sect, then he can be excommunicated--a drastic step which totally disassociates him from the Faith. Such a person, referred to in the Baha'i religion as a covenant-breaker, is not merely separated from the religion in the administrative sense; he is ostracized.

Only Baha'is with known addresses have the potential to work effectively for dissemination of the Faith. On the other hand, Baha'is in the other categories cannot be viewed as potential adopters. What conceptual scheme does one use to integrate these "other" Baha'is into the prevailing tradition of diffusion study which typically only recognizes adopters and non-adopters?¹²

¹²Baker's concern with abandonment of innovations is relevant here since he focuses attention on the lack of studies dealing with this phenomenon. Of course, withdrawals are the most important record of abandonment, just as conversions (the religious form of adoption) are the clearest indicator of diffusion. Nevertheless, the recognition of the importance of awareness and knowledge as stages in the process of making the adoption decision might be paralleled by similar conceptual schemes that describe the movement from adopter, or adherent, to abandonment. The disinterest that might be inferred from both the "mail-return" status and the "lacking in administrative rights" status in the Baha'i Faith may be a similar indicator of a stage in the process of moving from adopter to rejector. D. Baker, "The Paracme of Innovation: The Neglected Aftermath of Diffusion or a Wave Goodbye to an Idea?," Area, 9:259-264.

For purposes of studying population dynamics, Baha'is with known places of residence will be taken as the core population. This is to some extent an arbitrary decision, but justifiable on the grounds that when an innovation has been adopted only by a small proportion of all potential acceptors it is more important to clearly identify the size of the group that can work for dissemination than it is to know exactly how many potential adopters remain.

Using Baha'is of known residence as the basic population, it is now possible to identify and evaluate the importance of the various forces operating to change its size (lack of data precludes analysis of age/sex structure). Vital statistics regarding this Baha'i population are available for one recent year (1975-1976), but comparable data for other years are in a less comprehensive form and cannot be used as precisely to analyze recent trends. However, bits and pieces of evidence from earlier years will make it possible to evaluate the relative stability of the various dynamics of population change. The statistics in Table 8 summarize the quantitative significance of the various population dynamics during the period April 16, 1975 - April 21, 1976.

Enrollments, withdrawals, and disappearances into the mail-return category were by far the most important elements of population change during the 1975-1976 year. All other forces operating to change the size of the Baha'i population were insignificant by comparison. Even though the Faith enjoyed a healthy rate of adoption, the growth engendered by that source was completely offset by attrition through withdrawals and mail-returns. The remaining elements of population change combined to produce a slight overall decline in the size of the total population. The

TABLE 8

FACTORS EFFECTING CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF THE
UNITED STATES BAHAI POPULATION:
APRIL 16, 1975 - APRIL 21, 1976

Total Population, April 16, 1975		100.00%
Enrollments	+7.21%	
Withdrawals		-3.14%
Mail Returns		-4.07%
Deceased		-0.84%
Deprived Admin. Rights		-0.65%
Reinstated	+0.12%	
Excommunicated		-0.00%
Immigrants	+1.73%	
Emigrants	<u> </u>	<u>-1.02%</u>
Totals	+9.06%	-9.72%
Net Change		- 0.66%
Total Population, April 21, 1976		99.34%

Source: Unpublished statistics compiled by the Office of Membership and Records, National Baha'i Center, Wilmette, Illinois.

statistical significance of withdrawals and mail-returns in the Baha'i equation for population change confirms the appropriateness of a planning strategy that emphasizes both aggressive and defensive techniques in pursuing numerical increase. The discouragement of withdrawals and mail-returns could substantially increase the capacity of the Faith to grow.

As would be expected considering the demographic rejuvenation of the Faith which occurred during the high-growth period, mortality had relatively little impact on the Baha'i population. In fact, the crude death rate for the Baha'i population was remarkably similar to that for the whole United States--8.4 per 1,000 vs. 9.0 per 1,000. This is surprising because there are no Baha'is under age 15, a group which composes

about 24 percent of the American population and which, through its relative freedom from mortality, strongly suppresses the nation's crude death rate. The implication is that for those over age 14, Baha'i mortality is substantially lower than that for the country as a whole, a situation which could most plausibly be explained as the result of (1) a more youthful age structure, or (2) a population consisting of members drawn from socio-economic and occupational niches that are blessed with a lower vulnerability to mortality. Perhaps some combination of these two factors produces the low crude death rate in the Baha'i population. The data presented earlier indicating the extreme youthfulness of converts during a one-month period in 1969 suggests that a young age structure probably is the principal reason for low mortality among Baha'is.

Removal of administrative rights is a minor, but measurable, source of attrition for the Baha'i population. It is not counterbalanced by an equivalent flow of reinstatements, and this suggests that in many cases it presages abandonment of the religion. The fact that relatively few Baha'is had their administrative rights removed and that no Baha'is were excommunicated during the 1975-1976 year indicates that, despite the conceptual classification of Baha'is discussed earlier, the only quantitatively significant group is the Baha'is of good standing and the only division of any practical importance is that between Baha'is of known and unknown addresses.

Migration plays a modest role in the Baha'i population formula, but deserves mention because the immigrant and emigrant flows are substantial when compared to those for the United States as a whole (1.7% vs. 0.2%

for immigration; 1.0% vs. an unknown value that probably is less than 0.2% for emigration).¹³

During the 1960s and 1970s, only enrollments and conversion to mail-return status have shown any strong instability. In the case of enrollments, that instability has been extreme, varying from a low annual rate of about 6.4% in 1955 to a high that probably approached, if not exceeded, 100 percent in either 1969-1970 or 1970-1971. Inferring from Figure 15, removal to mail-return status has exhibited significant, but rather more moderate, fluctuations in annual rate. During the year 1965-1966, recovery of Baha'is from mail-return limbo permitted a net contribution to the Baha'i population in the order of 12 percent while a sharp rise in the number occupying the mail-return category during 1974-1974 depleted the Baha'i population at an annual rate of about 8 percent.

Assuming long-run stability of the mail-return category--that is, assuming that in the long run mail-returns neither deplete nor increase the Baha'i population--there remains a need for an adoption rate of approximately 3 percent to maintain constant membership.

¹³Data source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1977 (98th ed., Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 81.

CHAPTER VIII

DIFFUSION IN THE UNITED STATES: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

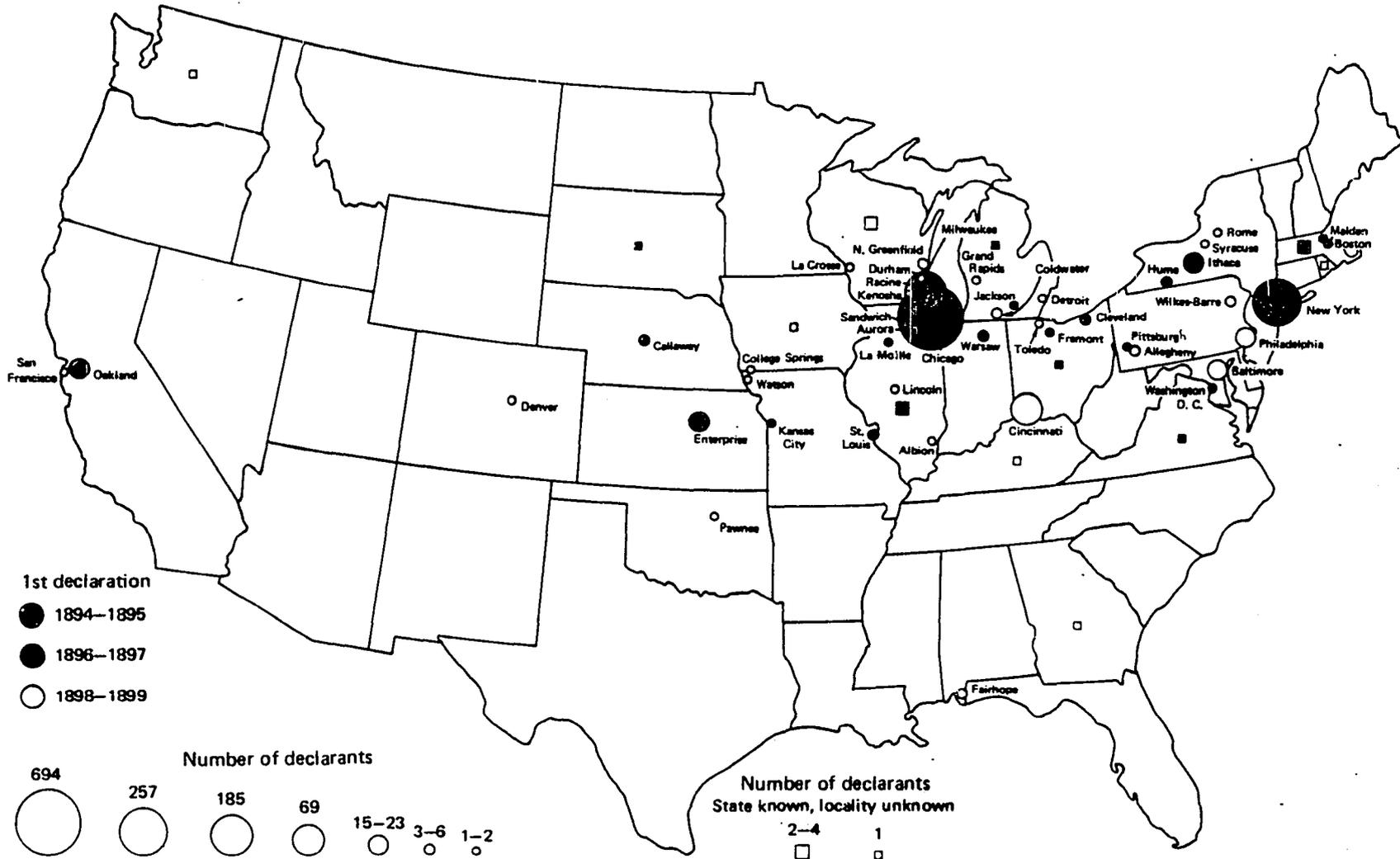
DIFFUSION BEFORE 1900

When Mary Lesch recorded the names of those who became Baha'is before the turn of the century she was careful to note their places of residence at the time they declared. When this information is mapped, the emerging geographic patterns reveal a number of diffusion trends that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Figure 16 presents Mary Lesch's geographic information in such a way as to depict the distributional change which occurred between 1894 and 1900. In an effort to preserve visual simplicity, the design of the map masks the temporal pattern of adoption which occurred in each locality. It is impossible, for example, to learn from the map that of the 694 declarants in Chicago, only 9 entered the Faith in 1894-1895, while 220 entered in 1896-1897 and 465 in 1898-1899. This weakness is not serious, however, since there are only three localities that had enrollments over an extended period of time--Chicago, New York, and Kenosha--and in each instance the number of declarations grew with each passing year.

There are two sources of error in the map which, although not quantitatively significant, should be pointed out for the sake of historical accuracy. First, in 1897, Mary Lesch aggregated all declarations (of which there were 18) for Wisconsin. After that, she tabulated the declarations individually for each town. The early growth and striking

FIGURE 16 Places in the United States Where People Became Baha'is Before 1900



Total number of declarations by 1900: 1437
(1428 declarations shown on the map: 9 occurred in unknown locations)

Source: Mary Leach's Membership roll, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois

dominance of Kenosha lead me to assume that all 18 of those declarations in 1897 occurred there. In fact, one or two may have taken place in Racine. Second, Mary Lesch listed 15 people who became Baha'is in the Oakland/San Francisco area in 1897 and then identified two new declarants for 1898 who apparently were residents of San Francisco. Lacking any means of determining how many declarations occurred in each city, I have treated the two urban centers as a single city and aggregated the data accordingly.

In 1894 and 1895, there were only 11 declarations in the United States: nine in Chicago, one in New York, and one in Malden, Massachusetts. During the next two years, however, 336 people came into the Faith. This influx of new believers was concentrated in Chicago (220), but also saw the establishment of small Baha'i nuclei in other localities previously untouched by the religion, most notably, Enterprise, Kansas (22), Kenosha, Wisconsin (18), San Francisco/Oakland, California (15), and Ithaca, New York (11). New York City only attracted eight new believers by the end of 1897. Therefore, Chicago was in a preeminent position, containing two-thirds of all American Baha'is, while Enterprise (Kansas), the San Francisco Bay Area, Ithaca, and New York City were minor subsidiary foci. During 1898 and 1899, the entrenched dominance of Chicago as the national Baha'i capital was challenged. Although Chicago continued to lead the country in the number of new declarants, sudden bursts of growth in New York and Cincinnati combined with accelerating expansion in Kenosha to diminish Chicago's share of the total Baha'i population to just under 50 percent. This same period saw the appearance of small (15-23 member) communities in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Racine (Wisconsin).

A number of observations can be made about diffusion in those early days. The first and most obvious is that Baha'i growth was confined mostly to the industrial Northeast--the traditional core area of the American population and economy. There were exceptions, but aside from the small communities established in the San Francisco area and in central Kansas, they were insignificant. Of course, the United States in 1900 was different from today. At that time, Oklahoma, Arizona, and New Mexico were still territories and southern and western centers that today are metropolises were often little more than towns. Los Angeles was a city of 100,000 and Denver was slightly larger, but Seattle, Portland (Oregon), Atlanta, Nashville, and San Antonio were much smaller. Modern centers like Salt Lake City, Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Birmingham (Alabama), and Tampa were cities of 50,000 or less. Tulsa was a village of 1,400 which placed it ahead of Tucson, Phoenix, Albuquerque, and El Paso, but still not quite as large as Miami with its 1,700 residents. The point is that by 1900 the process of urbanization had not yet created a network of large urban places outside the old Northeastern core region. The South was heavily populated but still rural; the West was still being settled. In those earliest years the Baha'i Faith was an urban-based movement; it was inevitable that the membership would concentrate in the Northeast. Of the fifteen largest cities in the country in 1900, all but four were located in the Northeast. (Of the four exceptions, only New Orleans and San Francisco could be considered as truly separated from that heartland; St. Louis and Washington, D.C. lie on its margins). By 1900, Baha'is were resident in all but two of those fifteen largest cities; only New Orleans and Buffalo lacked believers.

The urban base of the Baha'i population is the second noticeable characteristic of early diffusion. Baha'i growth concentrated in cities. The exceptions can be explained by an analysis of the movements and activities of Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah, and that will shed light on the relative growth in the large urban centers as well. Wherever Dr. Khayr'u'llah went the Baha'i Faith grew rapidly. Judging by the close association between his movements and the patterns of diffusion, he was the crucial ingredient in the Baha'i growth formula. Shoghi Effendi has even indicated that 'Abdu'l-Baha referred to him in such glowing terms as ". . . 'Baha'is Peter,' 'The Second Columbus' and 'Conquerer of America' . . ." ¹

Dr. Khayr'u'llah arrived in New York City in December, 1892. The following summer he moved on to Michigan where he stayed for a few months and began to espouse the Faith. His efforts went unrewarded, however, and it was not until after he moved to Chicago in February, 1894, that conversions began to take place. His initial ineffectiveness may have been caused by his weakness in English. After settling in Chicago, Dr. Khayr'u'llah met with greater success, and by the end of 1895 there had been nine Baha'i declarations in the city. Dr. Khayr'u'llah left Chicago at this time for a two-month journey to Europe, but shortly after his return he secured part-time employment in Kenosha, Wisconsin, some 50 miles from his Chicago home. He established a routine of living in Chicago and commuting to Kenosha one day a week, a pattern he apparently maintained until the summer of 1897 when he journeyed to

¹ Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 275.

Enterprise, Kansas (population: 517 in 1910) for an eight week summer vacation. Either coming or going, he stopped over in Kansas City, Missouri. Late in 1897, converts who had moved to New York City invited him to make a visit there for the purpose of disseminating the Faith. Dr. Khayr'u'llah did visit New York, but on the way he stopped over for some days in Ithaca to assist another of his proteges in spreading the religion; he did not reach New York until around the beginning of 1898. His stay in that city lasted six months during which time he made occasional trips to Philadelphia to promote the Faith. In June of 1898 he made a quick return trip to Chicago and Kenosha before departing from New York with Phoebe Hearst's band of pilgrims bound for 'Akka.

Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah was directly responsible for the early growth of the Faith in Chicago and Kenosha. His trip to Enterprise, Kansas precipitated all 22 of the declarations that occurred there and probably accounted for the two new Baha'is in Kansas City. His stopover in Ithaca appears to have been responsible for 11 of the 19 conversions which took place in that city. When he arrived in New York at the beginning of 1898 the Faith already had been introduced nearly three years previously. However, only nine declarations had taken place up until that time whereas during 1898, 124 new believers enrolled, virtually all of them under his guidance. His trips to Philadelphia were directly responsible for the 15 conversions which occurred in that city.²

²Historical information regarding the activities and probable impact on diffusion of Dr. Ibrahim Khayr'u'llah has been gleaned from Browne (comp.), Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 93-171.

When one examines Figure 16 it is apparent that Dr. Khayr'u'llah's efforts account for the establishment of six of the ten largest Baha'i communities. The four communities with which his name is not directly associated are (1) San Francisco/Oakland, (2) Racine, (3) Cincinnati, and (4) Baltimore. Dr. Khayr'u'llah certainly had nothing to do with the center in California; Eva Getsinger, whom he converted in Chicago, initiated that growth point when she visited the Bay area and enrolled Phoebe Hearst. Racine, although very close to Chicago and Kenosha, probably was opened in a similar second-hand fashion. Baltimore and Cincinnati, however, may owe more to Dr. Khayr'u'llah than is commonly recognized. In brief local histories written by each of these communities in the 1930s, he is mentioned as an early visitor.

Whatever the geographical implications of Dr. Khayr'u'llah's work, Baha'i population change in the first three to four decades of the twentieth century reinforced the urban orientation of the religion. As we know, Baha'i membership in those early years was to experience at least two oscillations, and the process of expansion followed by contraction appears to have winnowed out the fledgling communities in those places where the local population base was small. The overall decline in Baha'i membership between 1900 and 1906, for example, resulted in the disappearance of the Baha'i community in Enterprise and the reduction of the contingent in Ithaca to such a low level that until 1972 the town was unable to establish a permanent local Spiritual Assembly. Most large urban centers, on the other hand, managed to survive the low points in Baha'i fortunes with a small core of believers who could revitalize the local community after the crisis period had passed.

A third observation that can be made regarding the general pattern of Baha'i diffusion is the apparent development of a major core region along the southwest flank of Lake Michigan and the appearance of sub-centers at New York and Cincinnati. By 1900, 64 percent of all Baha'i declarations had occurred in the Chicago-Kenosha core region while 18 percent had happened in New York and 5 percent in Cincinnati. The ascendancy of Cincinnati was ephemeral, but both other regions continued for a number of decades to function as Baha'i heartlands. Eventually, however, their numerical dominance was eroded by the rise of other urban centers and regional concentrations.

Finally, it should be noted that in spite of the Baha'i concentration in a few large urban centers, those earliest years did witness a surprising rate of geographic dispersal. One cannot help wondering how a religious movement that could claim only 1,437 conversions during its first six years of existence on the continent could manage to procure declarations over such a wide area. If one discounts all the declarations in the three core areas, there remain only 197 enrollments. And yet these occurred in 50 different localities widely distributed across 24 states (plus the national capital). This averages less than four enrollments per place. Of course, migration and mobility of the early believers from the major source regions must have been the cause of this dispersed pattern of declarations, but the geographic distribution portrayed in Figure 16 is not a direct result of relocation of the early believers from the core area. The place of declaration has been plotted on the map, not place of residence in 1900. Even in these earliest years, Baha'is were

conscious of a need to spread their religion in the geographic--as opposed to merely demographic--sense.³

THE CHANGING PATTERN OF BAHA'I DISTRIBUTION: 1900-1976

Data Sources

In order to reconstruct a picture of twentieth century Baha'i diffusion in North America it is necessary to rely on data that are neither abundant nor faultless. A straightforward demographic analysis requires information on size of Baha'i population and size of total population for a sequence of years and for subdivisions of the national area. Estimates of total population by state and by year can be obtained from a variety of reliable sources.⁴ However, periodic censuses of the Baha'i population that disaggregate the total by state are much harder to locate

³Early histories of Baha'i communities compiled in 1939 confirm this conclusion. The histories, varying in length from one or two to 20 or 30 pages, usually identify the first Baha'i in the locality and list some of the more prominent early Baha'i activists who visited that locality for the purpose of spreading the Faith. As data sources, these histories vary enormously in quality and comprehensiveness, but even from such an inconsistent source, the peripatetic nature of a core of devoted believers is patently obvious. Just to take one example, Isabella Brittingham (a Baha'i from 1898 until her death in 1924) is mentioned as an important agent of early diffusion in the following local histories: Boston, New Haven, New York, Johnstown (N.Y.), Jersey City, Newark, Montclair, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Muskegon, Racine, Milwaukee, Denver, Phoenix, Tucson, Los Angeles, Glendale, Pasadena, Geyserville (Calif.), Seattle, and Spokane. The odds are that she worked for the Faith in many other localities where her efforts went unrecorded.

⁴Data sources: U.S. National Office of Vital Statistics, Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1900-1940 (reprint ed.; New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1976), Supplement Population Tables, Table 1, pp. 824-971; Robert D. Grave and Alice M. Hetzel, Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Health Statistics, 1968), Table 74, pp. 796-799; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1966 (87th ed., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 11; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1977, p. 11.

and, at least in early years, may embody substantial enumerational error. It is Baha'i data, therefore, which are a problem.

Information regarding numbers of Baha'is by state for different years was collected from three different sources. First, for 1900, the register of new Baha'is maintained by Mary Lesch was treated as a census. This source is deficient because: (1) it is actually a register and not a census; (2) as a register it only tabulates conversions and fails to note any disaffections, deaths, or migrations; (3) it probably is not complete even as a register of conversions. In spite of these weaknesses, however, the brevity of the time period summarized (6 years), the smallness of the movement (about 1,400 declarants), and the extreme concentration of growth in a few localities combine to improve the likelihood that the data are adequately representative of Baha'i geographic distribution in 1900.

For 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936, population figures on the Faith were obtained from a decennial publication issued by the United States Bureau of the Census. That publication summarized the results of a religious survey that was conducted in each of those years.⁵ This Census of

⁵Data sources: U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1906, Part II, Separate Denominations: History Description and Statistics, pp. 41-42; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1916, Part II, Separate Denominations: History, Description, and Statistics, pp. 43-45; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1926 (2 vols., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), Vol. II, Separate Denominations: Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work, pp. 70-76; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1936 (2 vols., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), Vol. II, Part I, Denominations A to J, Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work, pp. 76-82.

Religions was compiled by soliciting membership information from the central organizational arms of the various faiths. No actual census was undertaken. Unfortunately, in the process of publishing the 1916 figures the Census of Religions lumped together membership figures for a number of states that had relatively small Baha'i populations, and so educated guesses were made as to how those figures disaggregated by state. The distribution of the 1916 Baha'i population is the least firm data used in the analysis.

For 1944, 1950, 1964, 1970, and 1976 I used Baha'i censuses which were contained in the National Archives and the National Teaching Committee Office. It should be remembered that the Baha'i Faith strives to maintain an accurate registration system; the National Spiritual Assembly is elected by delegates who are proportionately representative of Baha'i membership in geographical subunits of the country.

Data Manipulation

I have constructed a series of maps which show the relative distribution of Baha'is in the United States for years between 1900 and 1976. The time spacing of the maps was dictated by available data. The objective was to recreate a picture of the Baha'i distribution pattern at ten-year intervals, but in some instances it has been necessary to use census years with a somewhat smaller time interval, and in one case it was impossible to avoid a 14-year span between maps.

In order to measure the relative strength of the Baha'i Faith in different regions, the number of Baha'is per million population was calculated for each state. Then, because of the desirability of isolating distribution from growth, the state figures for Baha'is per million were

converted to a percentage above or below the national average. The states were then grouped into three classes: (1) those in which the Baha'i representation in the total population was less than 60 percent of the national average, (2) those which were near the national average (60-140%), and (3) those which contained high concentrations of Baha'is (over 140% of the national average). When this information is plotted for each of the years used in the analysis, the resulting sequence of maps shows where in the country the Baha'i Faith has most successfully and least successfully penetrated the resident population. Growth or decline in the numerical size of the Baha'i population is not shown.

The three designated class intervals were arbitrarily defined. It would have been possible to construct classes using standard deviation and z-scores as the interval measures, but this would have masked the type of information the maps are intended to demonstrate. If distribution alters with the passage of time in such a way as to decrease or increase the dispersion of the state values for Baha'is per million around the national mean, then the standard deviation would vary accordingly and z-scores would adapt to the new standard deviation. By using percentage classes, however, it is possible to see whether there is a tendency for the Baha'i distribution pattern to shift toward greater national uniformity and if so which states represent such a shift. The arbitrariness of the class boundaries is not a serious analytical weakness because the concern is with distributional changes through time rather than with the distributional pattern at a given time.

Analysis

Description of Change

Figure 17 contains the series of ten maps which have been developed using the procedures outlined above. When viewed in sequence, the maps identify substantial distributional shifts.

One important change in distribution was the transformation from a situation of heavy Baha'i concentration in a few states to a much more even spread of Baha'is across the whole country. The figures in Table 9 summarize the magnitude and timing of that transition.

TABLE 9

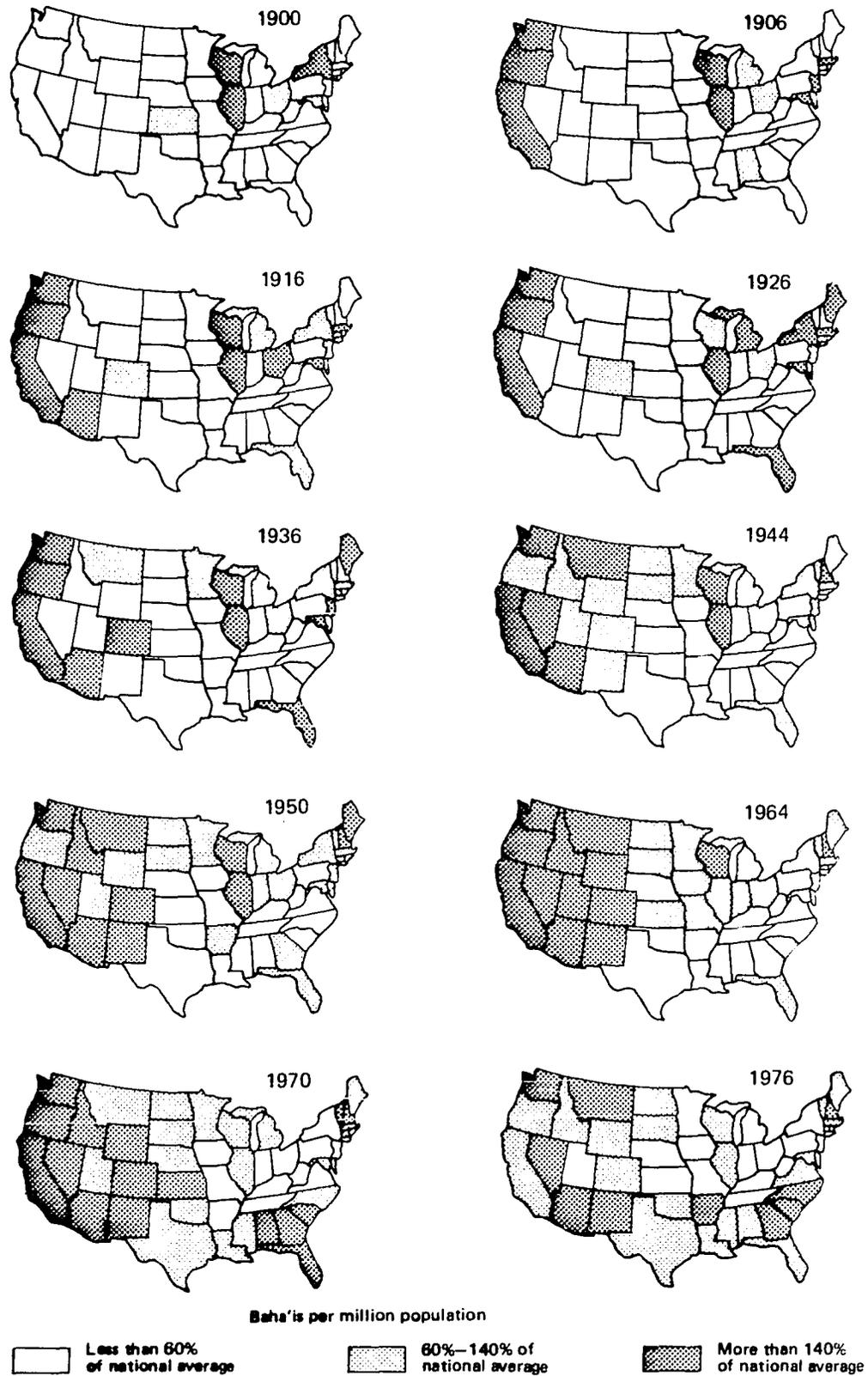
THE NUMBERS OF STATES WITH HIGH, MEDIUM, AND LOW CONCENTRATIONS
OF BAHAI'S: UNITED STATES, 1900 TO 1976

Year	Number of States in which the Concentration of Baha'is is:		
	Low	Medium	High
1900	42	3	3
1906	37	3	8
1916	33	6	9
1926	33	5	10
1936	30	7	11
1944	19	21	8
1950	16	19	13
1964	14	21	13
1970	13	19	16
1976	17	21	16

Source: Figure 17

Between 1900 and 1936 there was a gradual trend away from the heavy concentration of Baha'is in a few states. Between 1936 and 1944 the trend accelerated. Since 1944, the situation has remained stable.

FIGURE 17 The Relative Concentration of Baha'is in the United States: 1900-1976



The gradualness of the shift between 1900 and 1936 is not surprising since that was a period of slow growth; redistribution would have had to rely on migration as well as new adoptions. The rapid change during the 1936-1944 period was a product of the expansionist objective outlined in the First Seven Year Plan: establishment of at least one local Spiritual Assembly in every state. This goal precipitated large-scale dispersion because at the beginning of the planning period almost half the states had no resident Baha'is. The lack of significant change after 1944 in the numbers of states exhibiting low, average, and high Baha'i representation will be discussed later.

If we consider the geographical character of the distributional changes depicted by the maps in Figure 17, a number of trends are visible. The dominance of the Northeast in 1900 was almost immediately challenged by a rising Baha'i presence on the West Coast. Between 1906 and 1936 the West Coast and the Northeast appear to have been Baha'i core regions of roughly equal importance. Florida was a third core area--a Baha'i island in a sea of southern emptiness. After 1936, the whole West emerged as a dominant region in the Baha'i ecumene while the Northeast declined sharply in importance and the South, with the continuing exception of Florida, exhibited virtually no Baha'i strength. By 1964 this trend had reached its climax. The 1964 situation appears to have been no more than a stage in the geographic development of the Faith, however, for during the following twelve years the dominance of the West eroded rapidly while Baha'i representation in the South experienced a meteoric rise and the old Northeast core collapsed. The distributional pattern of 1900 had, through a sequence of staged changes, undergone a complete

inversion. The original Northeast heartland is now the weakest part of the American Baha'i ecumene while the South and West, undeveloped areas in 1900, presently are dominant.

Since the beginning, certain states have shown persistent strength or weakness. Illinois and Wisconsin have always been fairly well established while the three West Coast states have been strong since 1906. Appalachia, on the other hand, has never been well represented in the Faith, and Nebraska only once had even an average level of Baha'i penetration. Most other states, however, have undergone substantial change in importance during the period 1900-1976.

Explanation of Change: 1900-1936

What is one to make of these distributional transformations that have swept across the country in the past eight decades? The explanation that most reasonably accounts for this may once again require an understanding of the interaction between Baha'i attitudes on the one hand and national conditions on the other. Throughout the twentieth century the Baha'i concern for dispersion has been evident, but the ways in which that concern has been expressed and the kinds of reaction it has stimulated around the country have varied from one period to the next. Thus, for example, the years between 1900 and 1936--a time of alternating growth and decline with no sharp, sustained upswing in the overall size of the Baha'i community--was a period in which the dispersion policy, though generally recognized, was not really articulated in the form of specific planning objectives. As a result, the dispersion of Baha'is followed a pattern that conformed to the population redistribution trends of the United States as a whole. In particular, the eight states which rose

from obscurity to prominence in the Baha'i ecumene during the 1900-1936 period--California, Arizona, Florida, Washington, Oregon, New Jersey, Colorado, and Maine--had population growth rates between 1900 and 1940 that ranked first, second, third, fourth, ninth, twelfth, fifteenth, and forty-fourth. In other words, with the exception of Maine,⁶ they were high growth states indicating that Baha'is, in their effort to disperse the Faith, were gravitating toward the states where economic opportunities were perceived to be best.

The lack of a sustained, large increase in numbers during the first 36 years of the century suggests that the redistribution of the Baha'i population was caused by migration rather than by differential adoption rates. A survey of Baha'is conducted in 1936 contains evidence that that was partially the case. The respondents to the survey (approximately 60% of all Baha'is) answered two questions which, in conjunction, reveal something of the migratory behavior of the Baha'i population: (1) the place of residence at the time of declaration as a Baha'i, and (2) current place of residence (in 1936). This information was aggregated to show the number of Baha'is who moved between eleven different national regions. The most significant inter-regional migratory flows (all those involving five or more Baha'is) is mapped. The result is Figure 18. Over 16 percent of all respondents changed their regional place of residence between their time of declaration and 1936.⁷ This involved 274 moves,

⁶Maine probably became a locus of Baha'i concentration in spite of its low population growth rate because of the development of Green Acre as a Baha'i institute in Eliot.

⁷Sixteen percent may not seem like a very large figure, but the fact that over half of all respondents had been Baha'i for less than ten years would tend to keep it low.

158 (58%) of which are represented by the 19 flow lines shown in the figure.

A number of general statements can be derived from an analysis of Figure 18, the more important of which are listed below.

1. Baha'i growth in California depended on immigration.
2. Lack of substantial growth in New York was the consequence of heavy out-migration.
3. Illinois was a net supplier of migrants, but was also important as a destination area.
4. Much of the migration was over very long distances; particularly impressive was the flow from New York to California.
5. Previous to 1936, regions of the West other than California were not receiving significant inflows of migrants.
6. In spite of its numerical importance in the Baha'i community, Wisconsin remained virtually untouched by migration.
7. Westward flows greatly overshadowed eastward flows; north-south flows were very weak or nonexistent.

Net immigration caused some of the Baha'i concentration in California, but other states that grew to importance in the Baha'i ecumene relied on conversions. Table 10 confirms this statement. Even California relied on conversions for most of its Baha'i growth.

The situation, therefore, is paradoxical. On the one hand, Figure 18 indicates that the migratory trends within the Baha'i community paralleled the movement patterns of all people in the United States. On the other hand, the statistics on actual numbers of adoptions vs. numbers of residents in 1936 for the eight states that experienced rapid Baha'i

growth suggest that in most cases net migration was not sufficient to account for the rise in membership.

TABLE 10

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVERSIONS AS A SOURCE OF GROWTH IN U.S. STATES
WHERE BAHAI GROWTH WAS RAPID BEFORE 1936:
RESPONSES TO THE 1936 SURVEY OF BAHAI'S

State	Number of Respondents to the 1936 Survey Who:	
	Were Living in the State	Converted in the State
California	194	138
Arizona	12	14
Florida	28	24
Washington	38	42
Oregon	22	22
New Jersey	53	49
Colorado	28	29
Maine	24	21

Although migration played a part in the redistribution of the Baha'i population which occurred between 1900 and 1936,⁸ most of the growth in new areas was a consequence of extreme differences in rates of conversion. The higher conversion rates may have been a result of the strong religious fervor and the action oriented behavior which probably characterized immigrant Baha'is. Thus the vacated states lost key diffusion agents whereas the recipient states inherited people who greatly increased the

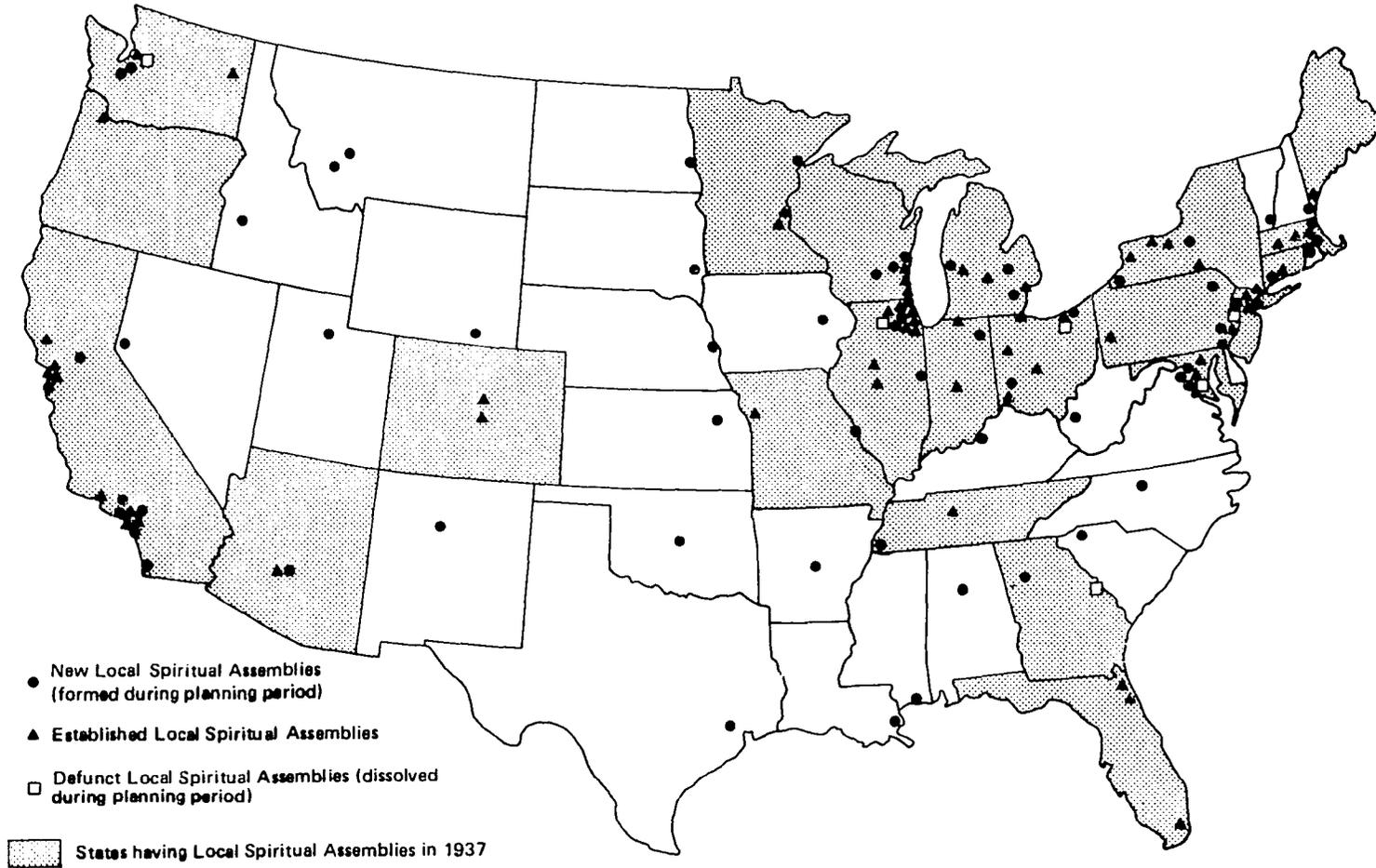
⁸ Actually, immigration probably was most important to redistribution in the way that it weakened old Baha'i centers rather than in the way it enlarged the populations of the newly emerging Baha'i states. Illinois, for example, was the home of 170 survey respondents in 1936, but was the state of declaration for 188. New York was more spectacular as a source region: Although only 122 respondents designated it as their home state, 154 admitted to having become Baha'i there.

capacity to expand local Baha'i membership. The high growth states which the survey tabulations indicated did not experience net immigration (e.g., Washington, Arizona, Colorado, and Oregon) most likely did have key immigration flows in the very early years--a phenomenon that the survey would fail to detect because a large number of the early Baha'is would have died by 1936.

Explanation of Change: 1936-1964

Turning now to the period of rapid transition between 1936 and 1944, it is clear from Figure 17 that the redistribution of Baha'i strength favored the West while leaving the rest of the country virtually unchanged. This regional ascendancy was caused by the peculiar character of the First Seven Year Plan. The major domestic goal of that plan, it will be remembered, was to insure that each state have at least one local Spiritual Assembly by 1944. As Figure 19 shows, 26 states had none at the beginning of the planning period, and so much of the Baha'i activity during the plan was devoted to dispersing the religion to those states in particular. The important point is that the First Seven Year Plan goal was interested only in geographic dispersion and did not concern itself with the fact that the total United States population was (and is) distributed very unevenly. Thus the plan made it equally important to establish one local Spiritual Assembly in Nevada with only 110,000 inhabitants as to form an Assembly in Texas with its much larger population of 6,400,000. This disregard for the variations in the population sizes of the states meant that execution of the plan was likely to generate a situation in which proportionate representation of Baha'is would be highest in those states with small population bases. Since

FIGURE 19 Distribution of Baha'i Local Spiritual Assemblies in the United States Before and After the First Seven Year Plan: 1937–1944



western states, though large in territory, typically contain small populations, this region benefited most from the objective of the Seven Year Plan. In contrast, the plan called for no specific activity in most of the northeast states since they already had local Spiritual Assemblies. Throughout the South the requirement of one Assembly per state was not sufficient to stimulate a high proportionate representation of Baha'is because most of the states in that region had substantial population bases. It is for this reason that the West rose to preeminence as the area most successfully penetrated by the Faith.

Although Figure 19 has been used to help visualize the impact of the Seven Year Plan on Baha'i proportionate distribution among states, its content merits additional comment. It shows how a Baha'i plan encouraged an extremely dispersed pattern of diffusion. The nationwide distribution of new Spiritual Assemblies was remarkably uniform considering the initial concentration of Assemblies in the Northeast and California. The pattern makes it evident that diffusion of administrative units was not strongly influenced by distance from original source areas. On the other hand, hierarchical diffusion does appear to have been typical since within states new Assemblies arose most frequently in the largest urban centers.

Migration may not have been as important as conversions in redistributing the Baha'i population before 1936, but thereafter it was the principal mechanism whereby local Spiritual Assemblies were established in states not having any. Figure 19 shows that during the planning period 28 new Spiritual Assemblies were formed in such states. All but one of the cities where these Assemblies developed appear to have been targeted by the American Baha'i community for upgrading to Assembly status. Between the years 1936 and 1944, 153 Baha'is moved from states having Spiritual

Assemblies to one of those localities.⁹ Thus, an average of six Baha'is moved into each one during the planning period. Considering that an Assembly is composed of only nine adults, and that some of those goal cities probably already had a few Baha'i residents, it is obvious that the plan objective was achieved through migration, not conversions.

An additional 29 Baha'is are known to have made moves to ten other similarly targeted localities, but in these cases the local Baha'i communities failed to achieve the necessary threshold size of nine members before the end of the plan. Also, 42 Baha'is responded to the spirit of the Seven Year Plan by moving to cities in Canada and Alaska. A further 24 believers migrated to cities whose Assemblies lost numbers and became jeopardized during the plan. All together, therefore, 248 American Baha'is (10% of the total American Baha'i population in 1936) moved on behalf of the Faith to achieve the domestic goals alone. One will recall that the First Seven Year Plan also called for the establishment of at least one Baha'i community in every country in the Western Hemisphere, an international objective that was substantially exceeded and must have siphoned off a significant number of Baha'is from the larger American communities. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that the goals of the First Seven Year Plan detonated a migratory explosion

⁹An unpublished National Teaching Committee report contained a description and analysis of Baha'i activities during the First Seven Year Plan. That report included a listing by name of all Baha'is who migrated within the United States and Canada for the purpose of fulfilling the plan objectives. Also included were data on year of migration and place of residence before and after the move. This was the source of information for the statements made about internal migration during the 1936-1944 period. It was also the data source for Figure 23.

that redistributed the American Baha'i population largely through relocation rather than adoption.

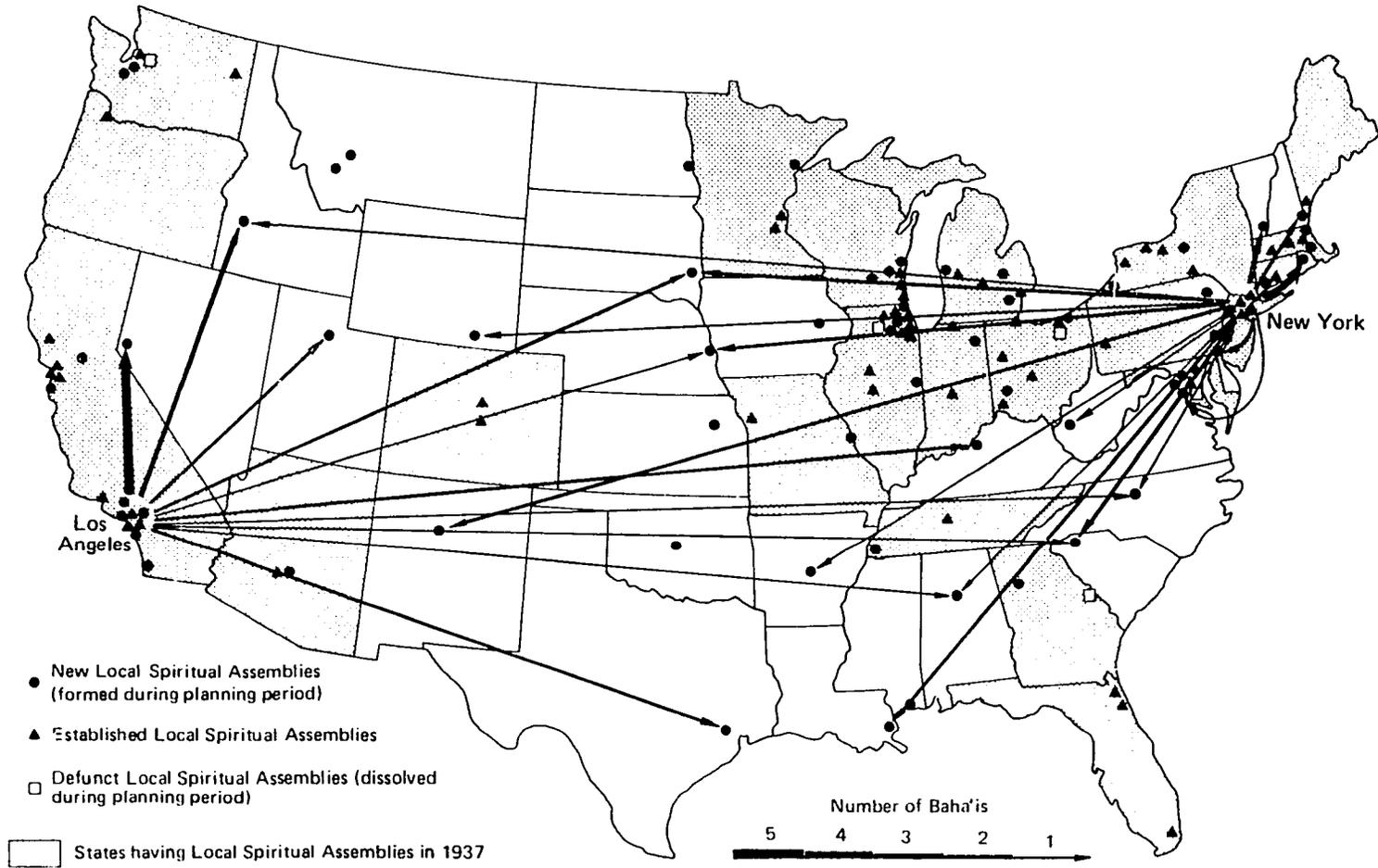
Incidentally, many of the 153 Baha'is who moved into the 27 targeted cities during the Seven Year Plan showed a willingness to select distant destinations. Figure 20 shows the patterns of out-migration from the two most separated Baha'i communities of any size--the New York and Los Angeles metropolitan areas. There was a distinct tendency for Baha'i homefront pioneers to settle in target communities located relatively near their previous homes, but many of the migrants travelled long distances, bypassing numerous intervening opportunities.

After 1944, Western dominance persisted and even increased for another twenty years. The Second Seven Year Plan (1946-1953) and the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963) established domestic goals that simply reinforced the prevailing geographic distribution of Baha'is. The Second Seven Year Plan called for an increase in the number of local Spiritual Assemblies from 131 (in 1944) to 175, while the Ten Year Crusade visualized an expansion from 169 Assemblies to 300. Neither plan formulated a geographic scheme for directing regional growth, however, so the distribution of Baha'is showed little change.

Explanation of Change: 1964-1976

The erosion of Western supremacy and the concurrent rise of the South that materialized after 1964 was not a consequence of the goals of the Nine Year Plan (1964-1973) since, like its two predecessors, it failed to call for regional differentials in Baha'i growth. As was discussed earlier, however, growth in the South was initiated by a fortuitous

FIGURE 20 Baha'is Who Migrated from New York and Los Angeles Metropolitan Areas to Fulfill the Goals of the First Seven Year Plan in the United States



Source: Unpublished list of home front pioneers, 1944, National Teaching Committee Office, Wilmette, Illinois

combination of national receptivity to non-traditional spiritual movements and a particularly intense Baha'i teaching effort that happened to be launched in that region. The changing distribution of Baha'i proportionate strength which occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s had to have been caused by differential adoption rates rather than relocation of existing believers. A 650 percent increase in the size of the Baha'i population during those years eliminates the possibility that migration could have been a relevant factor in the geographic redistribution of Baha'i strength from the Northeast and West to the South.

Summary

It can be concluded that the dramatic shifts in the regional distribution of Baha'i strength which have occurred in twentieth century America were caused by the way in which changing economic and societal conditions interacted with the Baha'i policy of dispersion--a policy which did not find consistent expression but rather achieved varying levels of articulation from one era to the next. The unpredictability of both forces in this equation has necessitated the use of an historical approach that explains distributional changes in terms of the prevailing conditions of a given period. Even the changing mechanics of the redistribution process testify to the suitability of this approach. In some periods the Faith redistributed itself through regional differences in rates of conversion while at other times migration was the key mechanism. Even attrition through disaffection was, for a while, the most important way in which the distribution of the Baha'i population was altered.

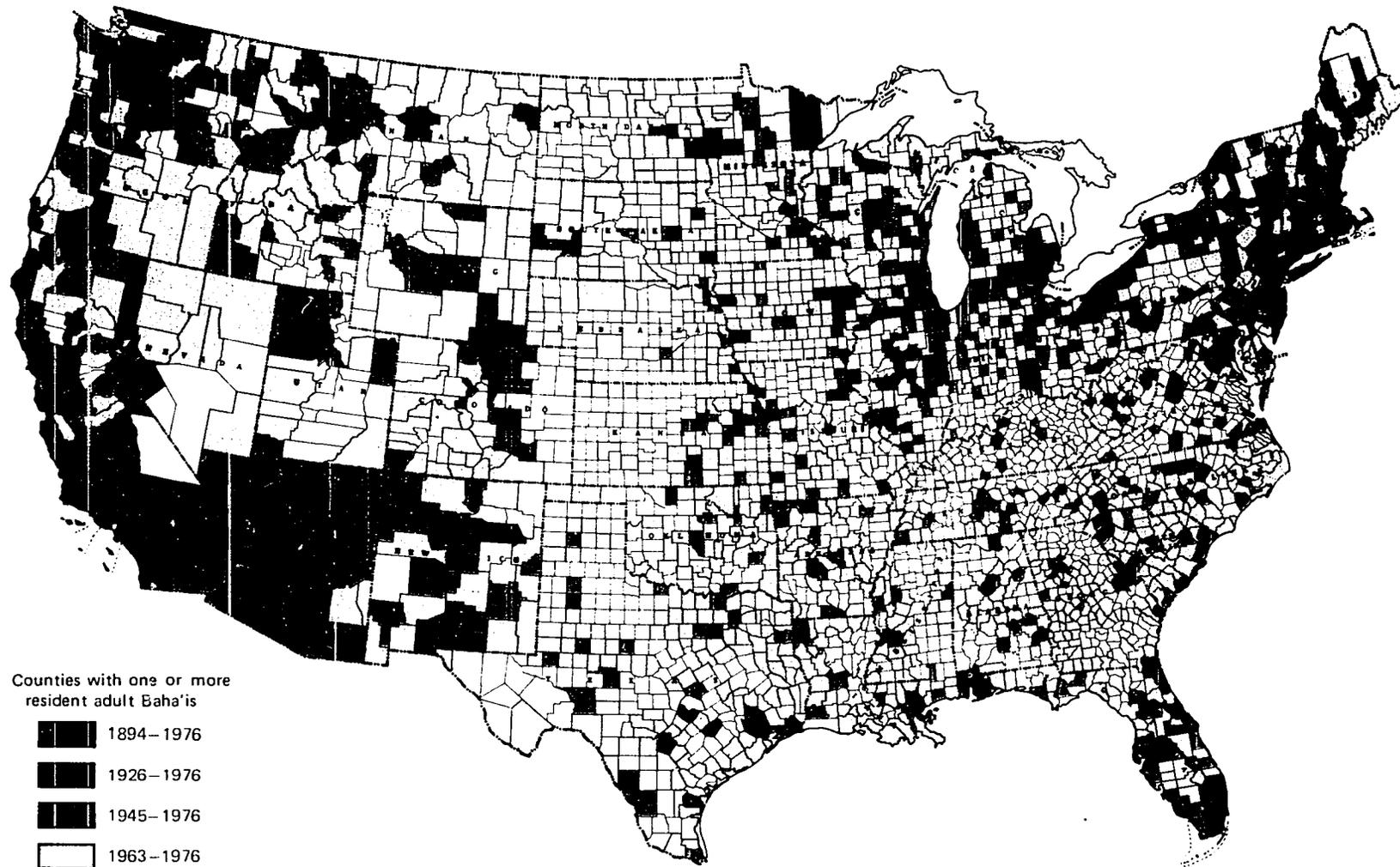
EVIDENCE OF CONTAGIOUS DIFFUSION

It is astonishing how much the interpretation of events depends on the character of available information and the method by which it is processed and analyzed. The preceding discussion emphasized a number of different points regarding the nature of Baha'i diffusion in the United States, but the one consistent trend seemed to have been a lack of contagious diffusion. However, the shift to a new data source and the use of a different analytical technique reveals a pronounced pattern of contagious expansion.

All of the early volumes of The Baha'i World (vols. I-XIII) contain directories that list, by name, every locality in the world that had either a local Spiritual Assembly, a group, or an isolated believer. By extracting from certain of these volumes the places listed for the United States, it was possible to recreate a picture of which counties had one or more resident Baha'is in 1925, 1943, and 1962. Similar information for 1976 was obtained from a census of Baha'is on file in the National Teaching Committee Office of the United States National Baha'i Center. The final data base for this analysis, therefore, consists of an identification of those counties which had been opened to the Faith by each of the four years mentioned. Figure 21 combines the data base in a single map that shows the early Baha'i frontier and how its boundaries changed with the passing decades.

If a county had a Baha'i resident in one of the earlier years but then failed to remain open, the map does not depict it. This has the potential to weaken the analysis which will follow, but in fact it happened infrequently and can therefore be viewed as an acceptable failing.

FIGURE 21 Diffusion of the Baha'i Faith in Counties of the United States: 1894 – 1976



Another weakness in the map is that the lengths of time between the represented years are not entirely satisfactory. The amount of change between 1925 and 1962 was sufficiently small that the two intervals of about two decades each give a clear picture of the diffusion process. Between 1962 and 1976, however, the rate of change was so rapid that even 14 years was too long a time span to clearly reveal the way in which the frontier expanded. The situation could not be avoided, however, since no equivalent data were available for any of the years between 1962 and 1976.

A further characteristic of the map which, although not a weakness, can easily spawn misinterpretation is the way in which it more accurately conveys information about where Baha'is were not than where they were. An opened county, it should be remembered, may contain one believer or hundreds. An unopened county, though, has no resident Baha'is. For this reason, the map shows the frontier of the Baha'i ecumene, not the areas of Baha'i population concentration.

An analysis of Figure 21 reveals that in the earlier years the Baha'i frontier was highly fragmented. By 1925 only about 50 counties--less than 2 percent of all the counties in the nation--had resident Baha'is, and almost without exception they contained major urban centers. Furthermore, almost all were located in the Northeast and on the West Coast. Only a handful of exceptions can be found: Denver, Omaha, Atlanta, August (Georgia), Miami, and St. Augustine.

The geographic distribution of Baha'is in 1925 was as much the consequence of contraction as expansion. The confinement of the religion to Northeast and West Coast urban centers was a product of numerical

decline. The very early cores of Baha'i strength established between 1894 and 1906 appear to have been the only localities able to weather the crises of decline that was precipitated by leadership struggles and the contingent threat of internal schism. Previous to 1925 the Faith managed to penetrate some rural and quasi-rural areas, but the confinement to cities in 1925 indicates that it was in urban centers that the Faith established its initial footholds and from which later expansion was orchestrated.

Between 1925 and 1943 two distinct patterns of growth prevailed. On the one hand, the Northeast and the West experienced substantial infilling and coalescence, suggesting at least some amount of contagious diffusion, while on the other hand, hierarchical diffusion proceeded at a rapid pace in the remaining regions of the country. Without the national dispersion engendered by the First Seven Year Plan the religion would have become firmly entrenched in the Northeast and the West, thereby giving the impression of a regionally biased movement.

The goals of the First Seven Year Plan were filled by opening the main urban centers in those states previously unoccupied by Baha'is. Just as the religion found its first footholds on the continent in major cities in the Northeast and on the West Coast, so too the process of opening 26 states during the 1937-1944 planning period involved the initial penetration of their major metropolitan centers.

By 1944, however, the forces of hierarchical diffusion had spent themselves and the religion was spreading outward from established urban cores to surrounding rural areas. Between 1944 and 1962 most of the expansion of the Baha'i frontier involved this sort of contagious spread,

especially in the West, but in most other areas of the country as well. Throughout the Great Plains and in a few areas in the South, isolated counties were opened to the Faith, but even in those regions existing Baha'i concentrations in urban cores expanded to nearby areas. Notice, for example, the linear expansion westward from Kansas City, the thrust southward from Nashville, and the general infilling between Tampa and Miami along Florida's south and west coasts.

The opening of large areas of the West initially might be judged an illusion since most of the western counties are so large that they perhaps fail to behave as adequate detectors of geographic expansion. However, as the preceding analysis of Baha'i concentrations in individual states has shown, the West was in fact an area of extremely rapid growth during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Expansion there during the period 1943-1962 probably reflects a real development and is not an exaggeration arising out of inappropriately large territorial units of analysis.

By 1962, the extreme fragmentation of the Baha'i frontier had begun to diminish as coalescence in the West, Northeast, and Florida had resulted in recognizable zones of relatively thorough penetration. Even so, fragmentation was still the rule rather than the exception.

The period 1962-1976 was one of remarkably rapid growth in total numbers, and this numerical expansion was paralleled by a dramatic enlargement of the geographic limits of the religion. More counties were opened during this 14-year period than had been occupied during all the preceding 68 years of Baha'i existence in the United States. By 1976 the Baha'is had become so dispersed that the only remaining area of recognizable resistance to penetration was the High Plains, and even this

region was riddled with pockets of Baha'i presence. The policy of dispersion, formulated and implemented so early in the process of North American diffusion, had had a powerful impact; by 1976 virtually all areas of the country lying anywhere near a major urban center had been opened to the Faith. Generally speaking, the remaining unopened counties were isolated, rural areas with small population bases.

It is valuable to compare the process of dissemination inferred from Figure 21 with the process of growth suggested by the preceding review of Baha'i strength using states as the units of analysis. The county based analysis uncovered significant contagious diffusion, especially in more recent decades. This trend remained totally hidden when the states were the units of study. In other words, finer scale of analysis has revealed that contagious diffusion, although not recognizable at the regional level, does tend to operate locally.

In all other respects, the conclusions derived from the county based data tend to confirm the inferences drawn from the state based data: (1) the Faith has shown a distinct tendency to become more dispersed with the passage of time, (2) the First Seven Year Plan was instrumental in facilitating that shift, (3) the early dominance of the Baha'i ecumene in the Northeast was rapidly challenged by the West while the South has shown a much more recent rise in importance, (4) the Great Plains have traditionally resisted Baha'i penetration and continue to do so, (5) early diffusion relied on infiltration of the network of urban centers while rural areas were drawn into the Baha'i ecumene only at the later stage, and (6) the process of diffusion has accelerated sharply in recent years.

The fact that the two analyses do in these respects arrive at parallel conclusions improves the credibility of each.

THE BAHAI ECUMENE IN 1976

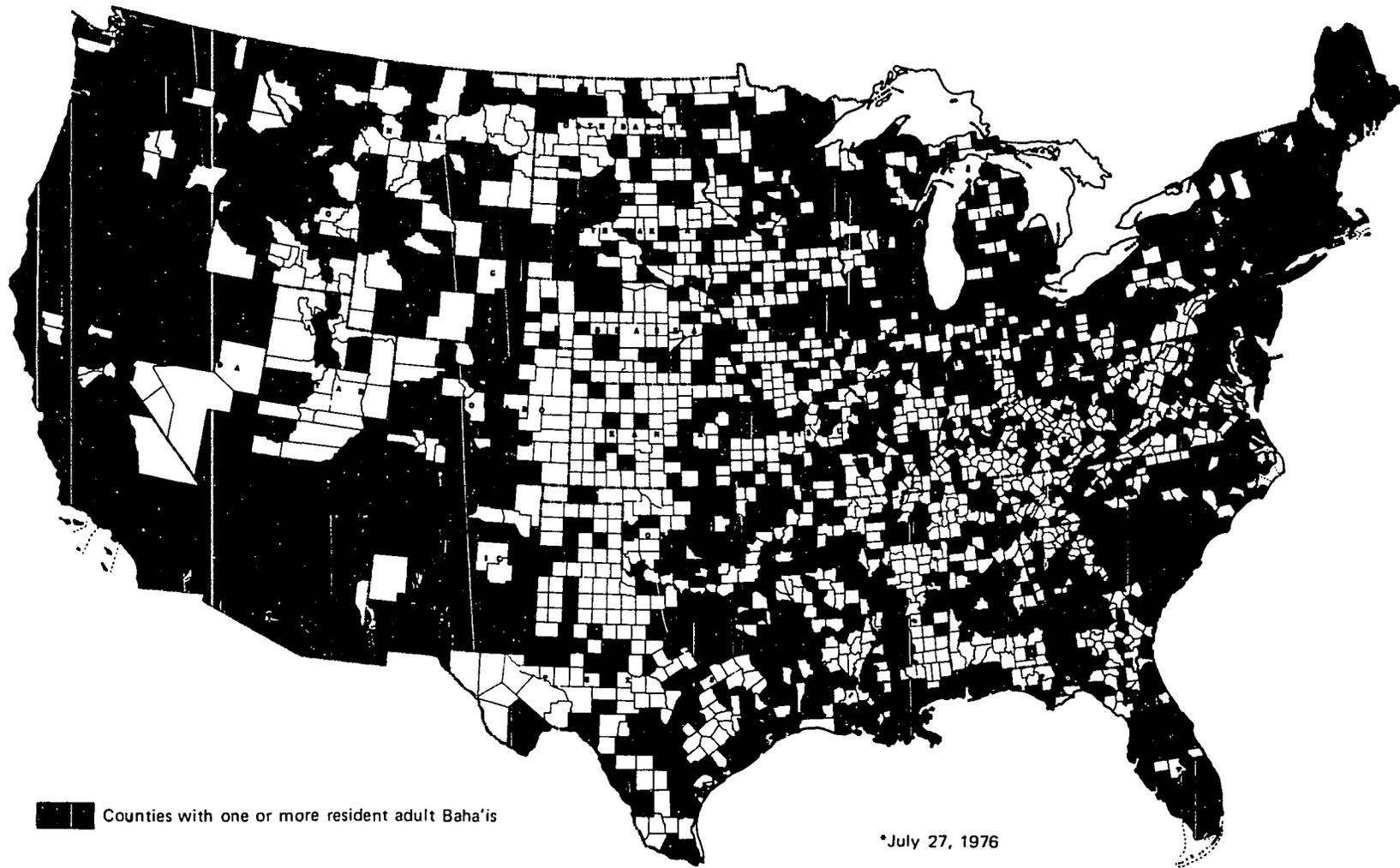
Identifying Explanatory Variables

By 1976, 56 percent of all counties in the United States contained Baha'is. Figure 22 summarizes the distribution and portrays the geographical limits of the Baha'i ecumene as of July 27th of that year. The pattern of opened counties depicted in Figure 22 is precisely the same as that shown in Figure 21, but in this case the cartographic emphasis is on recent distribution rather than long-term diffusion.

The distribution of unopened countries suggests that the frontiers of the Faith have been molded by demographic and economic factors lying outside the control of the religion. In particular, simple visual comparison of Figure 22 with a number of other United States maps depicting a variety of national patterns suggests a fairly strong correlation between Baha'i absence and (1) small population size, (2) low levels of urbanization, (3) population decline, and (4) inaccessibility. The strength and character of these relationships will be evaluated by quantifying the independent variables, mapping them, and cartographically comparing them with Figure 22. First, however, it is proper to construct a theoretical rationale for hypothesizing relationships between these independent variables and the Baha'i ecumene.

There is good reason to expect an absence of Baha'is in counties with few people. The adult Baha'i population is so small that there is an approximate average of only one Baha'i among every 5,000 Americans.

FIGURE 22 Presence of Baha'is in Counties of the United States: 1976*



This being the case, even if the proportionate representation of Baha'is in the population were perfectly uniform from one territorial unit to the next, most counties with population sizes less than 5,000 could be expected to lack Baha'i residents. Even counties with populations in the 5,000-9,999 range theoretically would have only one or two Baha'is. Since diffusion involves geographic dispersion from areas where the innovation is present to regions where it is absent, it is logical to expect that, unless the diffusion process has completely run its course, counties with small population bases (e.g., less than 10,000 people) are unlikely to have resident Baha'is.

It has already been noted that, especially in the early stages, the Baha'i Faith concentrated in large urban centers and gradually trickled down through the remainder of the urban hierarchy. By logical extrapolation, it is reasonable to expect that in 1976 the less urbanized counties were not as likely to have Baha'i residents as the more urbanized counties.

Since a principal mechanism for Baha'i diffusion has been the relocation of existing believers from areas within the Baha'i ecumene to areas lying outside, it is logical to assume that social and economic conditions have influenced the way in which the ecumene expands its geographic boundaries. With the exception of those corresponding to city centers, counties in which population growth is negligible are likely to be counties in which the economy is static, small, and incapable of absorbing outsiders--conditions which should militate against Baha'i penetration. We can assume that population decline during the 1960-1970 intercensal period is indicative of such inimical socio-economic conditions.

One other means of spreading the Baha'i Faith to new areas is travel teaching. This may involve trips lasting for weeks but it is equally common for believers to make short one- or two-day sorties from their homes. In either instance, but especially in the latter, accessibility to unopened areas is bound to be important. Distance is one indicator of accessibility, but in this case the availability of high quality highways is probably a better measure. Most travel teachers journey by car, and so it can be presumed that unopened areas lying athwart major highways are likely to experience Baha'i dissemination. It can be hypothesized, therefore, that the Baha'i ecumene tends to coincide with the distribution of counties having divided highways passing through them.

A Procedure for Statistical Comparison

The problems of quantification and cartographic representation can be dealt with by using a binary scale for both the dependent and independent variables. Data are available which would allow interval scaling of the dependent variable, but Baha'i expansionist policy has systematically discouraged the concentration of Baha'is and so an analysis of diffusion that relies on a measure of Baha'i concentration would fail to capture the essence of the process. The religion's preoccupation with expansion of its own territorial ecumene renders more appropriate the use of a conceptual scheme that simply recognizes the presence or absence of Baha'is.

The independent variables are in some instances amenable to interval scaling also, but by treating them as binary variables the unfortunate loss in information is compensated for by (1) the easy and rapid amassing and manipulation of data for more than 3,000 counties, (2) the

simplification and improved clarity of maps used in the analysis, and (3) the development of cartographically based statistical techniques.

The conceptual form and cartographic representation of the dependent variable already has been presented (as in Figure 22). The Baha'i ecumene consists of those counties having resident adult Baha'is in 1976.

The first independent variable--population size--is measured by identifying all counties having 10,000 or more residents in 1970 and by contrasting them with the remaining counties having smaller populations.¹⁰ This variable shows a very similar spatial pattern to that created by a dichotomization of counties according to whether they are or are not urbanized with population concentrations of 2,500 or greater, and for that reason this population size variable can also stand as a surrogate variable for urbanization.

The second independent variable is socio-economic dynamism, and is defined by dividing the U.S. counties according to whether they experienced population increase or decline during the period 1960-1970.¹¹

Accessibility, the third independent variable, is measured by contrasting the counties with and without direct access to divided highways in 1976.¹²

¹⁰Data source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, County and City Data Book, 1972, a Statistical Abstract Supplement (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), Table 2, pp. 30-545.

¹¹Data source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Trends by Counties of the United States: 1940-1970, United States Maps, GE-50, #42.

¹²Data source: Rand-McNally Road Atlas: United States, Canada, Mexico (53rd ed., Chicago: Rand-McNally and Company, 1977).

Baha'i presence, the dependent variable, is related to each of the three independent variables separately. The first procedural step is to prepare peel coat negatives for all the variables. In the same way that Figure 22 represents data on Baha'i and non-Baha'i counties, these maps will identify the positive and negative counties for each independent variable. The advantage of peel coats is that a photographic process can be used to print maps that overlay any combination of variables.

Next, maps are printed which compare the pattern of the dependent variable with that of each of the independent variables. Each map shows the geographic distribution of the four different kinds of areas: (1) counties registering positively for both variables, (2) counties registering negatively for both variables, (3) counties registering positively for the dependent variable but negatively for the independent variable (these will be referred to as positive residuals), and (4) counties registering negatively for the dependent variable but positively for the independent variable (these will be referred to as negative residuals).

After this, for each map, a contingency table is constructed that tabulates the number of counties falling into each of the four categories and compares these numbers with (1) the numbers one would expect under conditions of random occurrence, and (2) the numbers one would expect if a perfect positive relationship existed between the two variables.

A hypothetical example can be used to explain this method of statistical analysis. Assume that an area contains 100 counties, and that the following contingency table describes the actual interaction of dependent variable A and independent variable B:

OBSERVED FREQUENCIES

		Independent Variable (B)		
		+	-	total
Dependent Variable (A)	+	40	20	60
	-	10	30	40
total		50	50	100

Given conditions of random occurrence, however, one would expect the following cell frequencies:

EXPECTED FREQUENCIES

		Independent Variable (B)		
		+	-	total
Dependent Variable (A)	+	30	30	60
	-	20	20	40
total		50	50	100

If, on the other hand, a perfect spatial relationship existed between the two variables, then the cell frequencies would be:

IDEAL FREQUENCIES

		Independent Variable (B)		
		+	-	total
Dependent Variable (A)	+	50	10	60
	-	0	40	40
total		50	50	50

The first question to be answered is: To what extent does the observed pattern of cell frequencies account for the difference between the expected frequencies given random chance (no correlation) and the expected frequencies given a perfect spatial relationship (perfect correlation)? This can be simply measured by looking at the same cell in each of the three tables and observing what percent of the difference between the random and ideal expectations is accounted for by the observed frequency. In the upper left cell (which records the number of counties which score positively for both A and B) the random expectation

is 30 while the perfect relationship expectation is 50. The actual observed frequency is 40, and that accounts for 50 percent of the distance between 30 and 50. No matter what cell is considered, the same percentage figure emerges: 50 percent. It can be concluded that the observed relationship between A and B is 50 percent complete. The variables interact neither in a perfectly random fashion nor in a perfectly correlated fashion; rather, they achieve a correlation which is 50 percent of their potential.

However, the comparison of A and B is slightly complicated by the fact that the variables do not have the same proportionate split of positive and negative values. Whereas the independent variable records 50 positive and 50 negative values, the dependent variable records a split of 60 and 40. The result is that even in a situation where perfect correlation is achieved there must, by necessity, be some cases falling in one of the residual cells. In the example used, 10 positive residuals are to be expected. What this means is that unless the positive/negative split is exactly the same for the dependent and independent variables, it will be physically impossible for the independent variable to act as a perfect predictor of the dependent variable, even when the relationship between A and B achieves perfection (100%). The greater the quantitative difference in the positive/negative splits of the two variables, the weaker the potential of the independent variable to predict the dependent one. This diminishing of potential predictive power must be considered when calculating the correlation between the two variables. The easiest way to account for this is by answering the following question: For what percentage of all counties can the independent variable correctly predict

the dependent variable? In the example given, the ideal frequencies table indicates that B has the potential to predict 50 positive values for A and 40 negative values for A. This totals 90 and represents 90 percent of all the counties. It can be concluded, therefore, that the predictive power of the ideal frequency table is 90 percent. If the percentage figure for observed correlation between A and B (50 percent) is multiplied by the predictive power of the ideal frequencies table (90 percent), a measure of actual correlation is obtained: 45 percent. Thus, assuming A is indeed a dependent variable and B is truly dependent, B explains 45 percent of the variation in A.

This is the basic statistical procedure that will be used to relate the Baha'i ecumene to each of the three designated independent variables. Although this procedure resembles that used to calculate Guttman's coefficient, it offers two advantages. First, it evaluates the total predictive power of the independent variable rather than only the additional predictive power exercised by the independent variable after having already made a best guess based on the modal category of the dependent variable. Second, it clearly differentiates between the amount of correlation which does occur between the two variables, and the amount of correlation which could occur given the distribution of values for each of the two variables.

Results

Baha'i Ecumene vs. Population Size:--Table 11 summarizes the observed, expected, and ideal contingency tables for this pair of variables. It further shows the predictive power of the independent variable, the within table correlation, and the actual correlation between the Baha'i ecumene

TABLE 11. OBSERVED, EXPECTED, AND IDEAL CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR COUNTIES IN THE UNITED STATES:
 BAHA'IS RESIDENT (1976) VS. TOTAL POPULATION SIZE

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED			IDEAL				
		County Population of 10,000+			County Population of 10,000+			County Population of 10,000+				
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Resident	Yes	1518	231	1749	Resident	Yes	1275	474	Resident	Yes	1749	--
Baha'i	No	718	600	1318	Baha'i	No	961	357	Baha'i	No	487	831
TOTAL		2236	831	3067								

Within Table Correlation = 51.3%
 Predictive Power of Independent Variable = 63.1%
 Actual Correlation = 32.3%

and county population size. The within table correlation is high, but the predictive power of the independent variable is rather low, so the actual correlation is 32.3 percent, indicating a strong relationship between the two variables. It can be concluded that diffusion of the religion has occurred more readily in counties having reasonably large population bases and some amount of urbanization.

The low predictive power of the independent variable results from an uneven split in the frequency of its positive and negative values (73 percent positive; 27 percent negative) whereas the dependent variable has a more even division (57 percent positive; 43 percent negative). Thus, when a map comparing the two variables is considered, a large number of negative residuals and a small number of positive residuals can be expected. Ordinarily, this would be the appropriate place to consider such a map, but since the spatial patterns arising out of a comparison of the Baha'i ecumene and population size resemble, to a remarkable degree, the spatial patterns that emerge when the Baha'i ecumene is compared with economic dynamism and accessibility--the other two independent variables--map analysis will be deferred so that all three cartographic comparisons can be discussed together.

Baha'i Ecumene vs. Socio-Economic Dynamism:--As Table 12 shows, the surrogate variable for socio-economic dynamism also exhibits a reasonably high ability to discriminate between counties that are and are not part of the Baha'i ecumene. In this case, the within table correlation is lower, indicating a weaker relationship between the two variables, but the predictive power of the table is higher, permitting an actual correlation that is nearly as strong. Once again, a positive conclusion

TABLE 12. OBSERVED, EXPECTED, AND IDEAL CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR COUNTIES IN THE UNITED STATES:
 BAHAI'S RESIDENT (1976) VS. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DYNAMISM

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED				IDEAL			
		Population Growth in County: 1960-70			Population Growth in County: 1960-70				Population Growth in County: 1960-70			
		Yes	No	Total			Yes	No			Yes	No
Resident	Yes	1185	563	1748	Resident	Yes	963	785	Resident	Yes	1690	58
Baha'i	No	505	814	1319	Baha'i	No	727	592	Baha'i	No	--	1319
TOTAL		1690	1377	3067								

Within Table Correlation = 30.5%
 Predictive Power of Independent Variable = 96.7%
 Actual Correlation = 29.5%

regarding the hypothesis is warranted: insofar as population growth and decline acts as an adequate surrogate variable, it can be concluded that the Baha'i Faith has diffused more rapidly in those counties which have recently exhibited a dynamic socio-economic structure.

Baha'i Ecumene vs. Accessibility:--Accessibility also shows a capacity to predict which counties will be found to have been opened to the Faith. As Table 13 indicates, the within table correlation is virtually the same as that for socio-economic dynamism; the slightly lower actual correlation is due to the slightly lower predictive power of the independent variable. The conclusion that can be drawn is that accessibility is as important as socio-economic dynamism in explaining the way in which the Baha'i Faith has spread. The religion has diffused more rapidly to those counties which are accessible than to those counties which are not.

A Cartographic Analysis of the Correlates of Baha'i Diffusion:--All three independent variables are endowed with a high level of explanatory power. Figures 23, 24, and 25 describe the geographical character of the relationship between the Baha'i ecumene and each of the independent variables. Comparison of the three figures shows that their broad spatial patterns are remarkably similar. The major similarities are enumerated below.

1. The West Coast littoral, Arizona, and large parts of Nevada and New Mexico contain in all three instances a high incidence of counties in which positive values are present for both the independent and dependent variable.

TABLE 13. OBSERVED, EXPECTED, AND IDEAL CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR COUNTIES IN THE UNITED STATES:
 BAHAI'S RESIDENT (1976) VS. ACCESSIBILITY

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED				IDEAL			
		County Has Access to Divided Highway			County Has Access to Divided Highway				County Has Access to Divided Highway			
		Yes	No	Total			Yes	No			Yes	No
Resident	Yes	1046	693	1739	Resident	Yes	849	890	Resident	Yes	1492	242
Baha'i	No	451	877	1328	Baha'i	No	648	680	Baha'i	No	---	1328
TOTAL		1497	1570	3067								

Within Table Correlation = 30.4%
 Predictive Power of Independent Variable = 86.1%
 Actual Correlation = 26.2%

FIGURE 23 Presence of Baha'is and Population Size in Counties of the United States

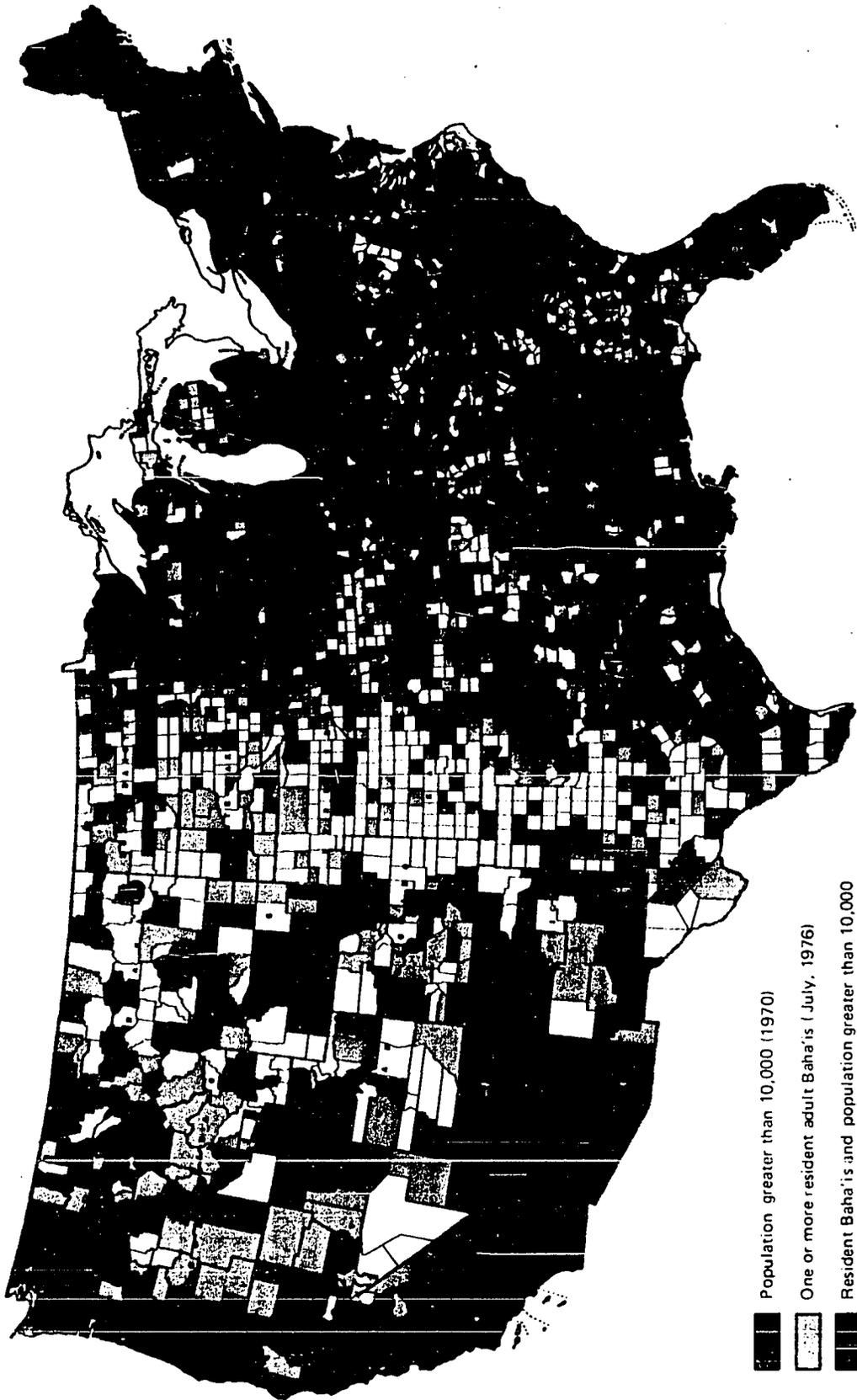


FIGURE 24 Presence of Baha'is and Socio-Economic Dynamism in Counties of the United States

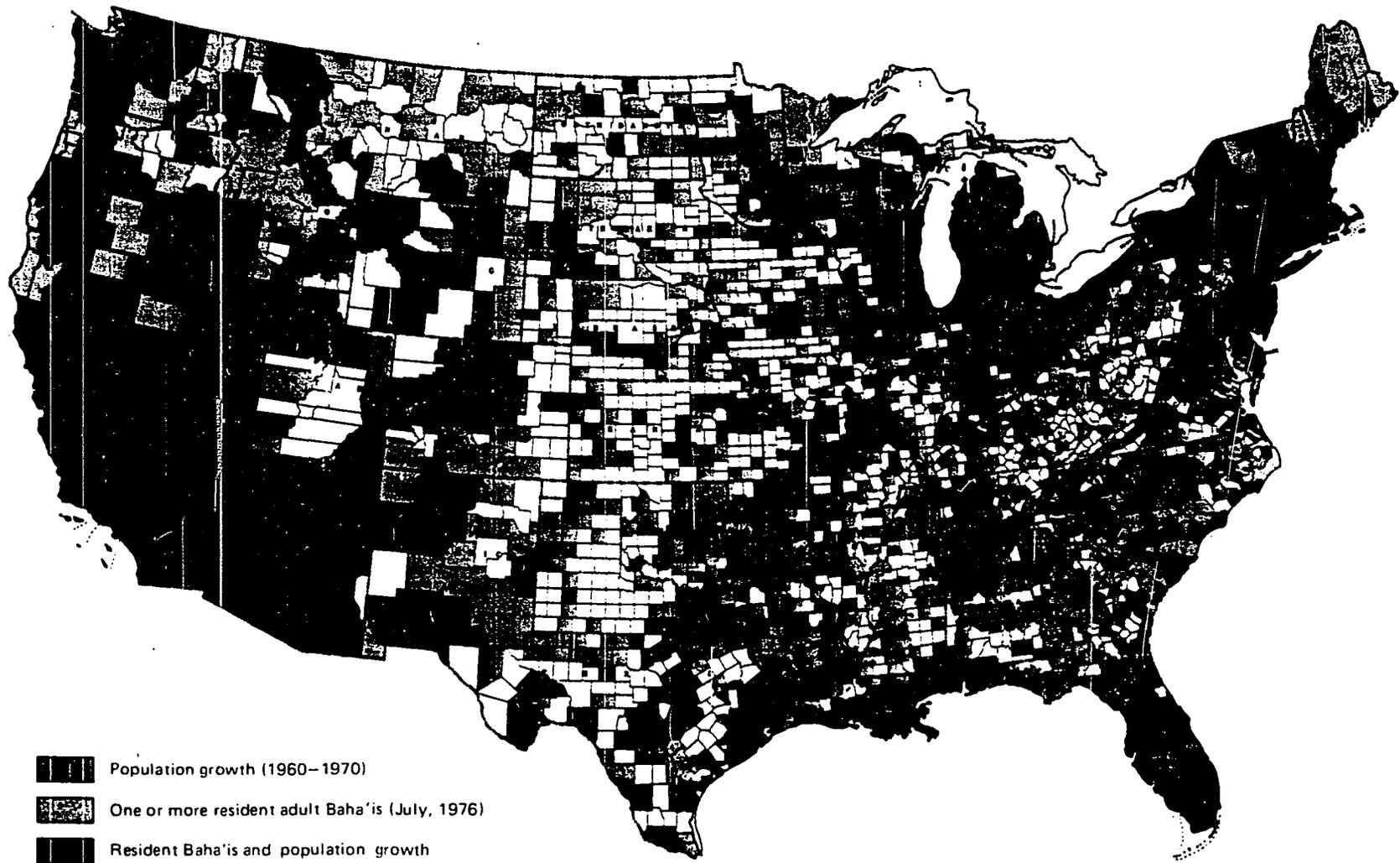
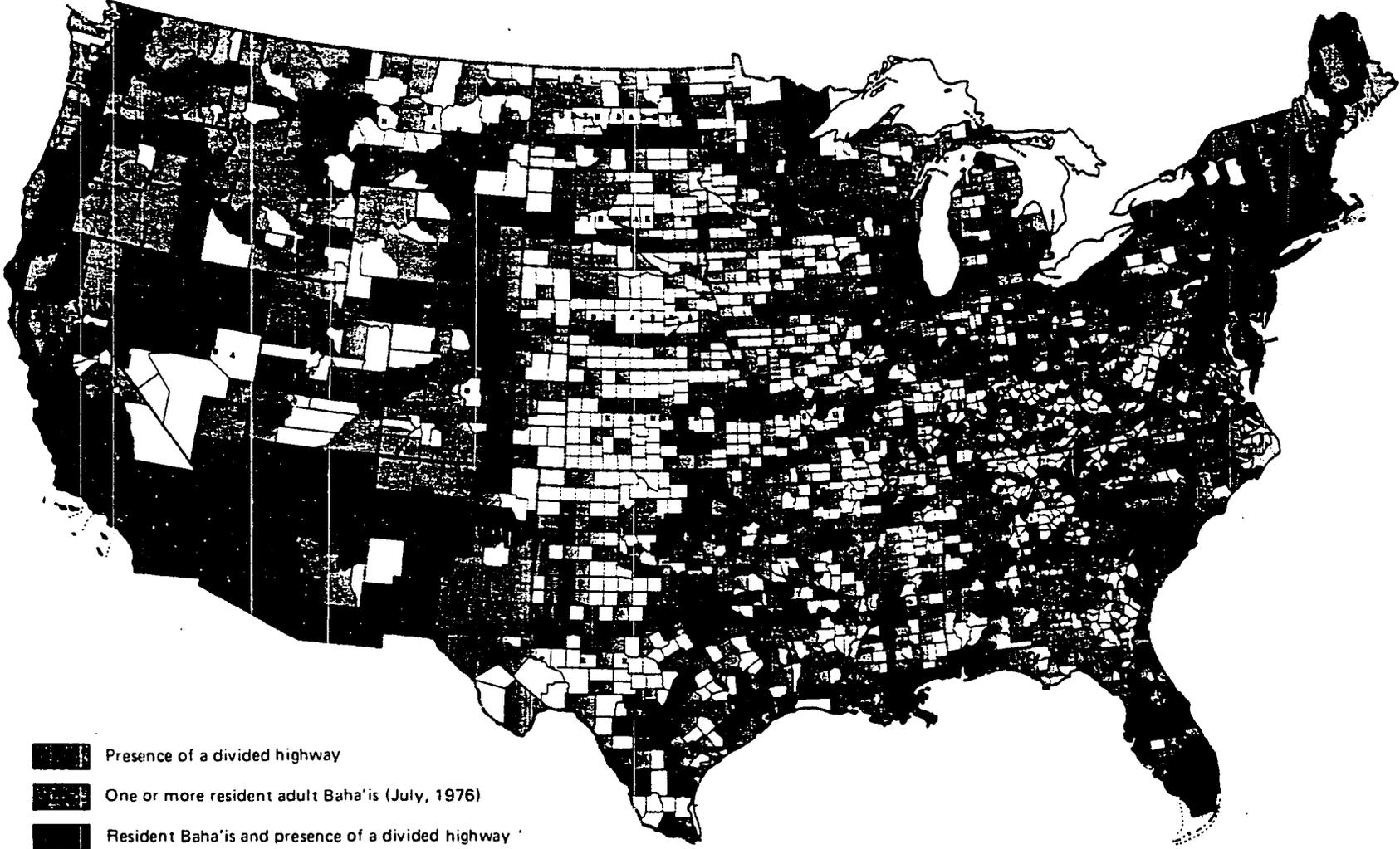


FIGURE 25 Presence of Baha'is and Accessibility in Counties of the United States



2. In a similar fashion, southern and central New England, most of New York state, the Northeast littoral as far south as Virginia, and a ragged strip of territory running through the industrial heartland of middle America exhibit a high level of correlation between Baha'i presence and positive scores on the independent variables.

3. The correlation of positive scores also occurs frequently in the Carolinas, and peninsular Florida.

4. Elsewhere, the coincidence of positive scores shows a fragmented pattern that usually focuses in and around major urban centers (note, for example, Salt Lake City, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio, Houston, New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, Nashville, Memphis, and St. Louis) or extends along key national arterials (especially visible are: the old Route 66 between Illinois and Texas; Interstate 80 between Chicago and Denver; Interstate 94 running from Chicago to St. Paul/Minneapolis, Fargo, and points west; Interstate 25, flanking the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains between Wyoming and New Mexico).

5. Counties unopened to the Baha'i Faith correlate highly with negative scores on the independent variables throughout most of the High Plains running from North Dakota and Montana to Texas. This relationship of negative values is visible throughout the whole area with the exception of a spearhead in eastern Wyoming and western South Dakota.

6. Negative scores also correlate in parts of the rural domain surrounding the Mormon core at Salt Lake City.

7. When socio-economic dynamism and accessibility are considered, negative scores for these variables frequently anticipate an absence of

Baha'is in a number of widely scattered counties in southern Appalachia and throughout a broad arc of territory that encircles the southern end of that mountainous core. Vague hints of this pattern are also visible in Figure 23 which relates Baha'i presence to population size, but for this independent variable the area being discussed generally contains counties with population sizes of 10,000 or more.

8. Positive residuals persistently crop up throughout large areas of the Rocky Mountains and the intermountain west as well as in the previously mentioned wedge of eastern Wyoming and western South Dakota.

9. Baha'i presence also tends to defy the control of the independent variables in parts of central and southwestern Georgia.

10. Positive residuals occupy a scattering of locations throughout a broad zone in the south-central part of the country and along the northern fringe of the eastern half of the nation. This pattern, however, is confirmed by only two of the three independent variables, population size once again being the exception.

11. Negative residuals occur with moderate frequency in the Mormon culture region.

12. Baha'is fail to be present where one might expect in a number of widely scattered counties in the High Plains and throughout a very large wedge that extends eastward and gradually curls around the southern portions of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, terminating in a point that pierces the southern flank of Pennsylvania. A second tiny prong branches off and reaches the Atlantic via southern Virginia.

The patterns outlined above are numerous and complex, and they show a tendency to vary widely in intensity and geographic scale. They

are notable, however, in that they are confirmed by each of the three maps relating one of the independent variables to the Baha'i ecumene.

It can be concluded that a large population base, high urbanization, socio-economic dynamism, and high accessibility facilitate Baha'i diffusion. The Baha'i Faith has more completely penetrated regions with these characteristics. One could argue that these characteristics do little more than define urban America. Insofar as this is true, it can be said that Baha'i diffusion has proceeded rapidly in urban America but has been inhibited in rural areas. This means that the heavy concentrations of Baha'i counties in such areas as the West Coast, the Northeast, and parts of the South is to be expected considering the largely urban character of most of these counties. Conversely, absence of Baha'is in the High Plains is a predictable result of the strongly rural nature of the region.

At this point, the distribution of residual counties becomes most interesting. In considering these locations and the reasons for their occurrence, it will be remembered that positive residuals, indicating inordinately rapid Baha'i diffusion, are to be found (1) throughout the Rockies and the intermountain west, (2) in parts of Georgia, and (3) to a lesser extent in the South Central states and along the eastern half of the Canadian border. The advanced stage of the diffusion process in the West may be the consequence of two conditions: (1) the unusually large counties in that region are more likely to have Baha'i residents than the much smaller counties in the East, and (2) the heavier concentration of Baha'is in the West that was documented and discussed earlier in this chapter (see Figure 17) has given that region a relative surplus of

diffusion agents who, due to their numbers, have been in a position to expand the geographical limits of the ecumene at a rapid pace. The surprising geographical success of the religion in Georgia--and indeed in a scattering of counties throughout the South--may be a result of the American Baha'i policy of attempting to reach southern Blacks.¹³ Many of the counties in the South which score negatively on two or three of the independent variables probably have been opened to the Faith due to the fact that their high concentrations of Blacks have attracted Baha'i attention. The positive residuals lying near the Canadian border in the Northeast may have been caused by the proximity of this zone to the original core area of the religion.

The negative residuals, it will be remembered, indicate that the Faith has failed to diffuse as rapidly as might be expected (1) in certain parts of the Mormon culture realm, (2) in a smattering of locations in the High Plains, and (3) in scattered places throughout a giant wedge penetrating much of the interior of the eastern half of the country. The retardation of diffusion in the Mormon heartland probably can be attributed to that region's inherent resistance to outside religious influences. In the East, however, the residuals are so widely scattered that their distribution is nearly random.

Combining Independent Variables:--Population size, socio-economic dynamism, and accessibility proved to be roughly equal in their capacity to predict which counties belonged to the Baha'i ecumene in 1976. The most explanatory variable--population size--was able to account for

¹³The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV, p. 226.

32.3 percent of all variation in the dependent variable while the equivalent value for accessibility, the least explanatory of the independent variables, was 26.2 percent. The fact that the three variables show a similar capacity to explain the distribution of the Baha'i ecumene means that for cartographical purposes, they can be treated with equal weight. As a result, it is simple to construct a map that combines them in a single presentation. Figure 26 has three evenly spaced grey tones to indicate those counties having a positive score on one, two, or all three of the independent variables. White, of course, shows counties which failed to record positive scores for any. Without indulging in a detailed comparative analysis, it is interesting to notice the structural similarity between this figure and the three-way classification of counties according to when they were opened to the Baha'i Faith (Figure 27).

Table 14 presents the observed, expected, and ideal contingency tables for this three by four cross-tabulation of cell frequencies. It is obvious that the discriminatory power of the observed table of frequencies is superior at the corners, very good for five of the other six perimeter cells, and poor only for the two interior and one of the perimeter cells. The latter part of Table 14 shows the percentage of the difference between the expected and the ideal frequencies which is accounted for by the observed frequency for each cell in the table. In the final analysis, Table 14 indicates that a total of 1,540 counties would have to be shifted from one cell to another in order to convert from the expected to the ideal contingency table. The table of observed frequencies shows that 579 counties are so moved, thereby accounting for

FIGURE 26 Conditions Conducive to Baha'i Diffusion in Counties of the United States

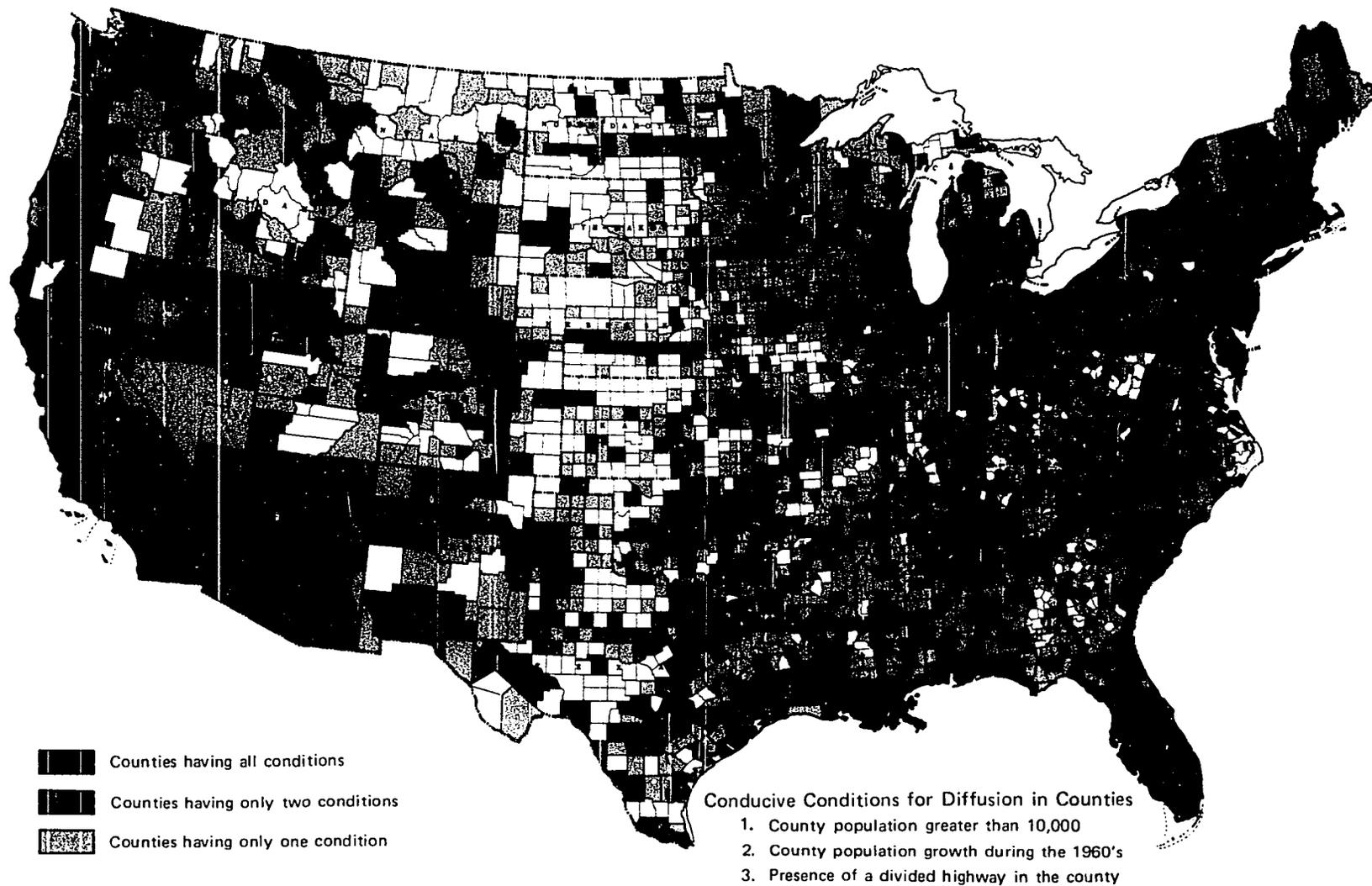


FIGURE 27 Diffusion of the Baha'i Faith in Counties of the United States: 1894 – 1976

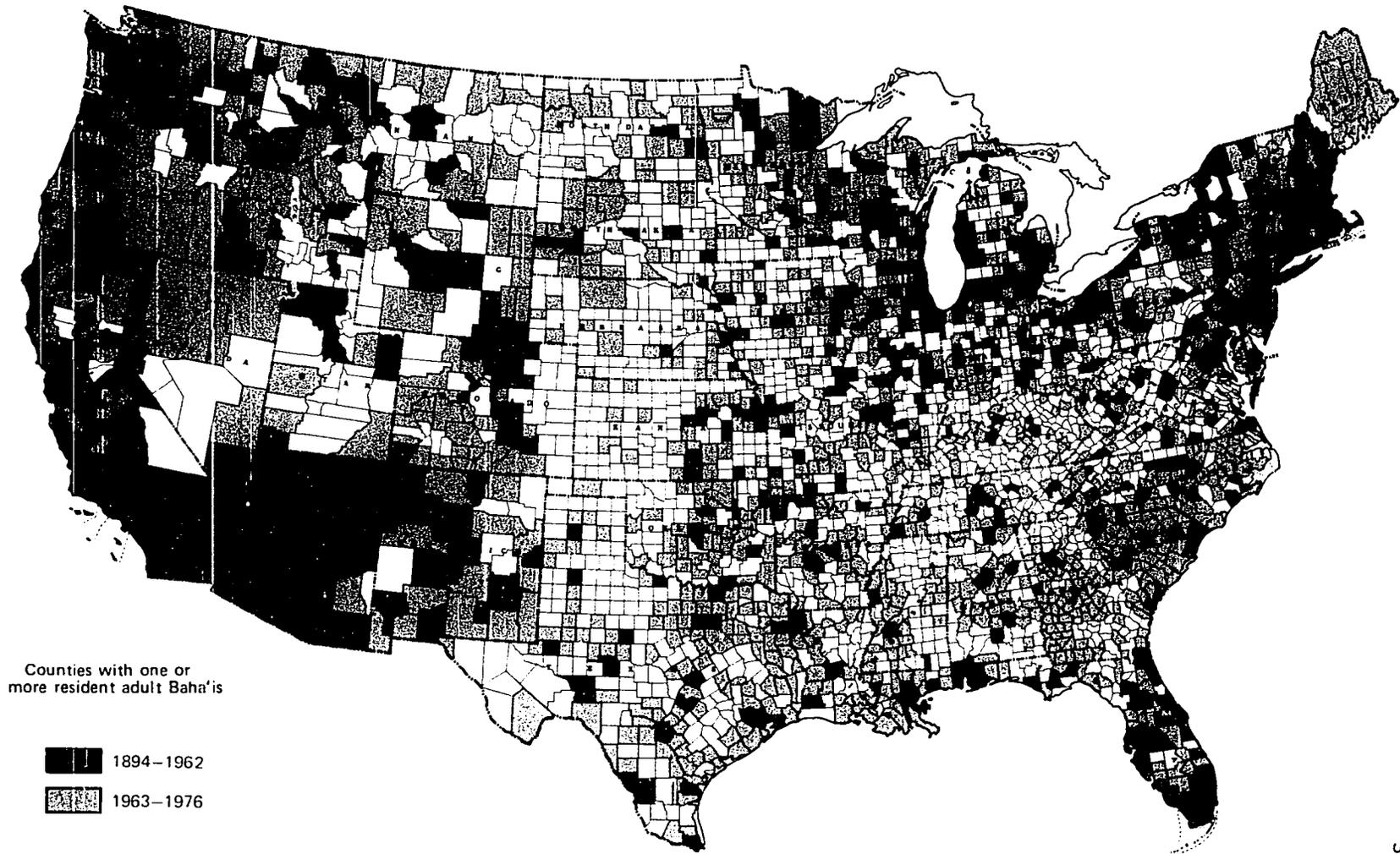


TABLE 14

OBSERVED, EXPECTED, AND IDEAL CROSS-TABULATIONS FOR COUNTIES IN THE UNITED STATES:
BAHA'IS RESIDENT (1976) VS. A COMBINATION OF POPULATION GROWTH, ECONOMIC
DYNAMISM AND ACCESSIBILITY

OBSERVED						EXPECTED					IDEAL					
Year by Which County Had a Resident Baha'i	Counties Having Plus Scores in the Follow- ing No. of Ind. Variables					Total	Year by Which County Had a Resident Baha'i	Counties Having Plus Scores on the Follow- ing No. of Ind. Variables				Year by Which County had a Resident Baha'i	Counties Having Plus Scores on the Follow- ing No. of Ind. Variables			
	3	2	1	0	3			2	1	0	3		2	1	0	
1962	430	113	51	4	598	1962	493	171	142	93	1962	598	---	---	---	
1976	378	402	258	111	1149	1976	370	329	273	176	1976	391	758	---	---	
Never	181	362	419	359	1321	Never	426	378	313	204	Never	---	119	728	474	
Total	989	877	728	474	3068											

PERCENTAGE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE EXPECTED AND THE IDEAL NUMBERS OF
CASES IN EACH CELL THAT IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE CONTINGENCY TABLE SHOWING
OBSERVED NUMBERS OF CASES

CELL BY CELL PERCENTAGE EXPLANATION					
Year by Which County Had a Resident Baha'i	Counties Having Plus Scores on the Follow- ing Nos. of Ind. Variables				
	3	2	1	0	
1962	58.5	33.9	64.1	95.7	
1976	38.1	17.0	5.5	36.9	
Never	57.5	6.2	25.5	57.4	

Within Table Correlation - Whole Table: 37.6%
Within Table Correlation - Corners Only: 60.8%

37.6 percent of the difference between the expected and ideal patterns. Furthermore, there is no instance in which the observed frequency of a cell fails to diminish the distance between the expected and ideal frequencies. All this reconfirms that the Baha'i ecumene has been profoundly shaped by population size, socio-economic dynamism, and accessibility. Furthermore, by treating the independent variables as elements of a single dimension arrayed along a scale from one to four, and by allowing the dependent variable to take on any one of three values indicative of stage of adoption (as opposed to a dichotomous structure indicative only of distribution), it is possible to improve the explanatory power. This is particularly so when the dependent and independent variables have extreme values.

HOW URBAN IS THE BAHAI FAITH?

Until now, all presented evidence has intimated that in the United States the Baha'i Faith is primarily an urban phenomenon. The preceding analysis has shown that Baha'is are more likely to be found in urban counties than in rural ones. Membership data are available, however, which make it possible to measure the proportionate strength of Baha'is in urban as opposed to rural areas and with this material in hand it is possible to offer a definitive answer to the question of whether American Baha'is tend to congregate in urban places.

At present, the Office of Membership and Records at the National Baha'i Center in Wilmette, Illinois, keeps all its membership data on computer file, adding enrollments and subtracting withdrawals as they occur. With this as a data base, that office is able to obtain regular printouts tabulating the numbers of Baha'is residing in different

localities throughout the United States. One of these printouts, dated June 15, 1976, is the source of membership data for this analysis.

In order to relate the absolute number of Baha'is to the size of the total population it is necessary to have figures that indicate the size of the total population for the various urban and rural localities. Ideally, such figures would be representative of the demographic situation in June, 1976. Unfortunately, since this kind of information is not readily available, I have been obliged to rely on the 1970 census enumeration.¹⁴ The aim is to measure the ratio of Baha'is per million in the total population of the United States and in a number of urban and rural localities around the country. The fact that the calculation of these proportionate figures uses a Baha'i enumeration which is six years later than the population census means that the calculations will not yield accurate results. In particular, a few places which have experienced especially rapid growth or decline during the early 1970s will have estimated numbers of Baha'is per million which are very inaccurate. Since the analysis does not focus on individual cases, however, the unavoidable inaccuracies usually will be within tolerable limits.

Because the United States population has been growing during the 1970s, the data used to calculate the number of Baha'is per million population will yield inflated values. This is of no real concern since

¹⁴Data sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Final Report PC(1)-A1, Number of Inhabitants: United States Summary (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), Table A, p. vii; Rand-McNally Green Guide (Chicago: Rand-McNally & Company, 1974, pp. 8-10.)

the objective is to learn the relative size of the values in rural and urban areas, not the actual size of the values. The absolute values are rather misleading anyway since the calculations relate Baha'i adults to total population of all ages.

In 1970, there were in the United States 472 cities with populations of 45,00 or more. Many were actually suburbs of some larger city; they have been classified separately. If a city belonged to a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area and yet was not the largest city in the SMSA in 1970, it has been considered as a suburban community. The only exception to this arbitrary definition involved cities which were not the largest in their SMSA's in 1970 and had populations of 300,000 or more. These were considered as second cities rather than as suburbs. Within these definitional constraints, the following classes of localities have been defined for this analysis:

1. Cities having 750,000 or more people (10 cities)
2. Cities having 300,000 - 749,999 people (37 cities)
3. Cities having 100,000 - 299,999 people (72 cities)
4. Cities having 45,000 - 99,999 people (109 cities)
5. Suburban communities having 45,000 - 299,999 people (244 suburbs)
6. State areas after having excluded urban places with more than 44,999 people (48 states)

The number of Baha'is per million population has been calculated for each locality in each of the five categories of urban places and for each of the 48 remaining state areas. Table 15 aggregates these figures according to the classification outlined above. Eventually, the individual locality calculations will be used to construct a map showing

the concentration of Baha'is in individual cities and in remaining state areas.

TABLE 15

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BAHA'IS PER MILLION POPULATION
IN CITIES OF DIFFERENT SIZES: UNITED STATES, 1976

City Size	Baha'is Per Million Population
750,000 +	110
300,000 - 749,999	137
100,000 - 299,000	216
45,000 - 99,000	228
Suburbs (45,000 - 299,999)	159
Remaining State Areas	245
United States Average	211

Contrary to expectations, the Faith is least well represented in large urban centers, is more likely to be strong in smaller cities, and is most concentrated in the rural areas and those small urban places with populations less than 45,000. Furthermore, the religion is not a suburban one. The number of Baha'is per million in suburban areas is well below the national average and even more dramatically beneath the average for equivalently-sized independent urban centers.

On the one hand, the Faith is not a rural, agrarian movement. On the other, it does not concentrate in the major urban centers which, it will be remembered, were the dominant repositories of Baha'i strength in the very earliest years and which one would expect to be the major sources for diffusion throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, the Baha'is are not in the suburbs where their presence would intimate

a white middle-class bias. If the Baha'is are not in the cities and are not in the country, where are they? If the big cities were home for most of the early Baha'is and yet contain relatively small Baha'i populations today, what has happened?

In answer to the first question, it seems that today Bahai's concentrate in small urban places. Cities of 100,000 or more generally contain a less than average number of Baha'is per million population while cities in the 45,000-99,000 range possess a significantly higher than average number. Furthermore, in the remaining state areas, where the number of Baha'is per million population is well above the national average, we know from the previous analysis that most of the very rural counties have not yet been opened to the Faith. The logical conclusion is that the religion must be strongly represented in the small urban places--cities and towns ranging in size from 2,500 to 44,999.

The explanation of why the Faith has come to concentrate in small urban places is to be found in the dissemination policies of the religion and in the typical Baha'i attitude toward large cities. A brief explanation of policy and attitude regarding appropriate place of residence for believers will answer the question of what happened to the early Baha'i concentration in the big cities.

In July, 1954, Shoghi Effendi directed a message to the Baha'is of America in which he stated that the United States was passing through a crisis precipitated by rampant materialism and a sharp deterioration in moral, social, and political standards. The Guardian perceived the American Baha'i community as being threatened by dark forces--forces which could sap the spiritual vitality of the movement in America and

undermine the ability of that national community to fulfill the responsibilities for global dissemination of the Faith assigned to it by the recently inaugurated Ten Year Plan. Imbedded in the text of his message was a notable directive regarding Baha'i residence in big cities:

. . . A veritable exodus from the large cities where a considerable number of believers have, over a period of years congregated, both on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, as well as in the heart of the country, and where, owing to the tempo and the distractions of city life, the progress of the Faith has been retarded, must signalize the inauguration of their most intensive and challenging phase of the Crusade [Ten Year Plan] on the home front. Most certainly and emphatically must the lead be given by the two focal centers of Baha'i activity, which rank among the oldest of and occupy the most honored position among, the cities throughout the American Union, the one as the mother city of the North American continent [Chicago]. The other named by 'Abdu'l-Baha the City of the Covenant [New York]. Indeed, so grave are the exigencies of the present hour, and so critical the political position of the country, that were a bare fifteen adult Baha'is to be left in each of these cities, over which unsuspected dangers are hanging, it would still be regarded as adequate for the maintenance of their local Spiritual Assemblies.¹⁵

Shoghi Effendi was clearly urging the American Baha'is to abandon the large cities, and in doing so, he intimated that cities are unhealthy places to live because they corrode spirituality and religiosity. In other words, the Guardian did not merely stipulate a pattern of behavior which earnest Baha'is were obliged to follow; he actually projected an official Baha'i attitude regarding the evils of urban life. His message was designed to encourage and direct the American believers in their efforts to achieve the goals of the Ten Year Plan. Because of the authority and immutability of the Guardian's statements, however, his words precipitated an anti-urban outlook which exists even today and is

¹⁵Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith (Wilmette, Illinois: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), p. 128.

likely to persist well into the future unless the Universal House of Justice specifically projects a contrary view.

As a result, many Baha'is have left the large urban centers. To a great extent this has been necessitated by the planning goals contained not only in the Ten Year Plan but also in the Nine Year and the Five Year Plans. These have consistently called for the formation of large numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies, an objective that can only be achieved outside the cities and towns where Assemblies already exist. Thus there developed a strong and steady stream of migration from the large urban centers, which Shoghi Effendi himself recognized as the reservoirs of Baha'i manpower, to the many smaller places needing Baha'is to form Assemblies. Even today, when Baha'is are least well represented in the large cities, it is still those cities which supply the manpower needed to fulfill plan objectives; they are the only places where significant numbers of Baha'is can be removed without endangering the local Assembly. With only one Baha'i for every 5,000 inhabitants it takes a city of 45,000 to maintain a local Spiritual Assembly without an above average number of Baha'is per million population, and even a city of 100,000 might only be expected to contain 20 Baha'is, almost half of whom would be required simply to maintain the local Assembly and well over half of whom would be necessary to insure that the Assembly is not jeopardized by mortality or migration motivated by non-Baha'i considerations.

On the other hand, there is nothing inherent in Baha'i values and attitudes that binds the believers to rural, agrarian pursuits¹⁶ and so

¹⁶Baha'u'llah stipulated that mankind should develop a strong agricultural foundation that can support civilization, but His concern was

the Baha'i population in the United States has continued to have the non-agricultural orientation that characterized it early in its history. This fact, combined with the anti-metropolitan nature of recent Baha'i policy and the peculiarities of Baha'i planning, have gradually concentrated the Faith's population in small urban centers.

Recalling that the 1936 survey of Baha'is contained information regarding place of residence at time of adoption and place of residence in 1936, it is possible to compare the rural/urban distribution of Baha'is in 1976 with the approximate distribution existing some 40 years earlier. By tabulating those survey returns and comparing them with the figures for 1976, we obtain the results shown in Table 16. For purposes of comparison it should be noted that those 119 cities having 1970 populations of 100,000 or more accounted for 25 percent of the total United States population in 1970 and 30 percent in 1930.

These figures highlight the magnitude of the deurbanization process which the Baha'i Faith has been undergoing in the United States during the twentieth century. They also document that, even before Shoghi Effendi's statement in 1954 regarding the need to move out of large cities, the process had been precipitated by the dispersion policy which 'Abdu'l-Baha initiated early in American Baha'i history.

Figure 28 shows the spatial distribution of Baha'i representation in urban and rural places (suburban localities are not represented). The class intervals used to designate high, medium, and low concentrations of Baha'is were selected so as to divide the urban places into three groups

with insuring high productivity and not with drawing people into agriculture as an occupation. Baha'i World Faith, p. 176.

TABLE 16

PERCENTAGE OF ALL BAHAI'IS RESIDING IN CITIES OF 100,000
OR MORE^a: UNITED STATES IN 1976, 1936, AND EARLIER

Baha'is in 1976	17%
Baha'is in 1936	54%
Place of Adoption of Baha'is Alive in 1936	64%

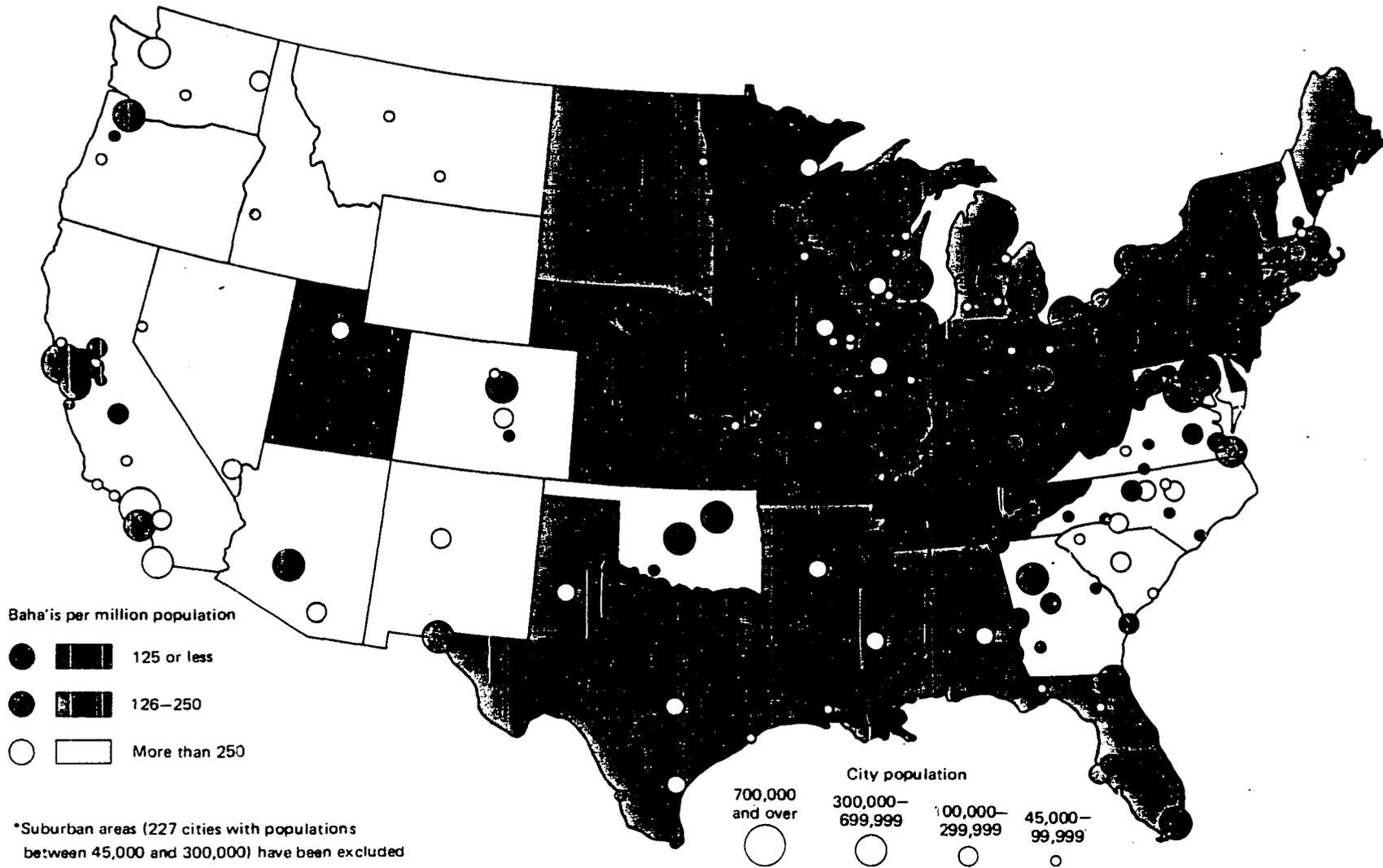
^aThose cities having populations of 100,000 or more in 1970 were used to calculate all three percentage values.

of roughly equal size. The figure makes it possible to evaluate the extent to which the spatial distribution of Baha'i concentrations is the same for urban and rural places.

For most areas of the United States it is apparent that the numbers of Baha'is per million population in the urban centers are generally about the same as in the surrounding rural zones. In the West, for example, the high concentration of Baha'is in rural areas is matched by consistently high values for the urban centers. Also, in the extensive areas of the South which show a moderate level of Baha'i concentration (Texas to Florida), the cities of the region, although variable, show a distribution of values that is biased toward the same moderate range of values (10 cities high, 23 cities moderate, 15 cities low). In a similar fashion, the cluster of eastern states having low concentrations of Baha'is in rural areas (New York to Tennessee) generally contains urban centers exhibiting the same pattern.

Two areas stand out as having rather different values for the urban and rural sectors of the population. Radiating westward from Chicago

FIGURE 28 Concentration of Baha'is in Urban and Rural Places in the United States: 1976*



there are a number of cities containing high concentrations of Baha'is although the parent states show low to moderate levels of Baha'i concentration in rural areas. The five states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri contain 34 cities which, in terms of Baha'is per million, distribute as follows: 15 cities high, 11 cities moderate, and 8 cities low. The Faith is more firmly entrenched in the urban centers of this region than in its rural areas. Conversely, the five Southeastern states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia contain many cities with low and moderate concentrations of Baha'is (8 cities high, 12 cities moderate, 6 cities low) even though the rural setting is a bastion of Baha'i strength.

The peculiar bias toward urban residence west of Chicago and toward rural locations in the Southeast probably arises out of the difference in when the Faith appeared in these regions. The religion first established itself in Chicago, and cities of Wisconsin and Illinois were very early centers of Baha'i activity. Diffusion of the Faith into the tier of states immediately to the west proceeded slowly and fitfully, but still occurred in the earlier parts of the century when the emphasis on abandonment of large urban places was not yet very marked. In the Southeast, however, Baha'i diffusion occurred very late--postdating the articulation of Shoghi Effendi's 1954 policy of avoiding cities and coinciding with the rising Baha'i concern with recruitment of Blacks who in that section of the country concentrate in rural areas.

CHAPTER IX

DIFFUSION IN THE UNITED STATES: POPULATION COMPOSITION

POPULATION COMPOSITION: ITS MEANING AND RELFVANCE FOR THE STUDY OF DIFFUSION

When a geographer studies diffusion he tends to concentrate on the geographical spread of a phenomenon. However, this is only one of several possible perspectives on the process. The sociologist, or the demographer, evaluates diffusion in terms of how successfully and how rapidly an innovation penetrates different segments of society. It might be asked, for example, whether the Baha'i Faith has appealed equally to people of all backgrounds or whether the religion has been more acceptable to certain societal strata--the young or the old, the rich or the poor, the Black or the White. In other words, What kinds of people are Baha'i?

Baha'i policy stresses the importance of recruiting all kinds of people, but in fact it is extremely rare for any subgroup of a total population not to contain social, economic, or demographic biases. When people from a certain demographic or socio-economic stratum dominate a group's membership this often indicates that the values or beliefs upon which the group is founded have a greater appeal to some parts of society than to others. Once the biases are known, it is possible to hypothesize about why they exist. In the case of the Baha'i Faith, however, so little reliable data on membership characteristics is available that it first must be established whether such biases exist. It will be hypothesized that for the Baha'i religion in America the null hypothesis will prove to be unrealistic; by hypothesizing that the Baha'is are a representative

sample of the United States population, however, the assumption will be that the planning ideal has been achieved. Thus, the degree to which the Baha'i population deviates from the national norms will be a measure of the extent to which Baha'i policy has not--or has not yet--succeeded in its goals. This will be a subjective evaluation. Perfect conformity between the subgroup and the total population is a virtual impossibility when diffusion has encompassed less than one-tenth of one percent of all people. The magnitude of Baha'i biases will have to be judged in light of what would be typical for a movement of such numerical insignificance.

Unfortunately, good contemporary data describing the Baha'i population are almost entirely lacking. Two surveys of American Baha'is have been conducted in the past ten years. One contained a sampling bias of such severity as to render it useless, while the other, although extremely valuable for some of the data it amassed, also was plagued by sampling problems. This second survey, conducted in December of 1968, resulted in some information regarding composition of the Baha'i population, but only aggregated tables and a very brief statement of methodology are available. Without access to the original questionnaire responses it is impossible to evaluate the clarity of the questions and accuracy of the responses. The further fact that the survey was conducted before the period of explosive Baha'i growth (Spring, 1969 to Spring, 1972) means that its findings are not very recent and may not be representative of the present situation. As a result, no truly current sources of information describe the characteristics of the believers today.

A 1936 SURVEY: DATA FROM THE PAST

The Significance of the Survey

In 1936 the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada sponsored a survey of believers that yielded basic demographic and social information about the character of the Baha'i community at that time. The procedure underlying this survey is unknown, but it would appear that the National Assembly arranged for the design and printing of questionnaires which were distributed to all existing local Spiritual Assemblies. The Assemblies were instructed to have each Baha'i in their respective localities fill out one of the forms. Eventually, the completed questionnaires were returned to the National Center in Wilmette, where, it seems, they were stored in the Archives without ever having been used.

The questionnaires were nothing more than 9" x 5" cards containing about a dozen simply worded questions. This was sufficient, though, to provide accurate information about the age, sex, racial stock, religious background, and length of Baha'i affiliation of the respondents. All these characteristics will be analyzed in the upcoming discussion. Questions on the form also solicited information regarding place of residence in 1936 and at the time of adoption of the religion, and regarding marital status and family size. The place of residence information already has been discussed; the marital status and family size data were not transcribed from the original questionnaires because there seemed to be no meaningful way of analyzing them.

The 1936 survey is a useful source of data because the responses offer information about demographic and social characteristics of the

United States Baha'i population 40 years ago. At first glance, it may seem that the passage of four decades will have impaired its value, but that is not so. By definition, the study of diffusion is concerned with the process of change. A picture of the Baha'i population in 1936 is an excellent source of comparative information against which results of the 1968 survey can be appraised. When the Baha'i National Center completes the comprehensive survey that it is now planning, the 1936 questionnaires will become even more precious. In particular, it will be possible to evaluate how much the Faith has moved toward its objective of representative membership during the last 40 years of planned growth.

It is fortunate that the survey was conducted in 1936 since that was a watershed year marking the beginning of highly articulated planning in the United States. Previously, American believers were guided in their recruitment efforts by general Baha'i policies and by the rather nebulous objectives of the Tablets of the Divine Plan. In 1937, however, one year after the survey, serious Baha'i planning was initiated. The first two Baha'i growth plans did not show much concern for the need to achieve compositional representativeness, but even so, 1937 marked the beginning of the era in which the Faith had at its disposal the planning tools necessary for consciously affecting changes in the composition of its population. The fact that compositional diversity was not stressed in the first two plans only indicates that in the beginning it was not accorded as high a priority as were the other two key policies--numerical increase and geographical dispersion. Since both the Ten Year Plan and the Nine Year Plan emphasized composition goals, the 1936 survey should show whether the Baha'i population has undergone compositional change

indicative of planning success. Furthermore, the compositional picture in 1936 should be a fair indicator of the way in which the Faith was developing before the effective implementation of planning.

The 1936 Survey: Representativeness,
Reliability, and Accuracy

Excluding residents of Canada, 1,729 Baha'is filled out the questionnaire forms. The 1936 Census of Religions identified a total United States Baha'i population of 2,584. Assuming that the census figures are accurate, one can conclude that the 1936 survey obtained responses from almost 70 percent of all Baha'is. Even if there were substantial error in the 1936 census it is likely that a majority of all Baha'is completed the questionnaire. The sample size is ample. There is no way to know whether the sample is representative in all respects, but the large sample size greatly diminishes the likelihood of severe bias.

At least it is possible to verify the geographical representativeness of the survey responses. Table 17 shows the distribution of respondents and compares it to that of the total Baha'i population (as portrayed by the 1936 Census of Religions). With the exception of New York, Baha'is responded to the survey in roughly equal proportions from all parts of the country. Even New York, with its low rate of response, was not very deviant (almost 70 percent of the national average). One can conclude that the survey is geographically representative.

Most of the survey questions were clear. Those regarding age, sex, length of Baha'i affiliation and places of residence were so straightforward that inaccurate answers would almost certainly arise out of faulty recall or intentional deception and not through misinterpretation of questions.

TABLE 17

A COMPARISON OF BAHAI MEMBERSHIP AND SURVEY RESPONDENTS:
REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1936

Region ^a	No. of Baha'is	No. of Survey Respondents	Percent of All Baha'is Who Responded to Survey
New England	183	132	72
New York	354	164	46
Atlantic	276	201	73
Indiana, Michigan, Ohio	320	240	75
Illinois	427	254	59
Wisconsin	282	180	64
South	103	71	69
Great Plains	86	64	74
Northwest	122	96	79
Southwest	78	60	77
California	353	266	75
TOTAL	2,584	1,728 ^b	67

^aAtlantic includes New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.; South includes Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas; Great Plains includes Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas; Northwest includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming; Southwest includes Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico.

^bOne of the respondents failed to indicate her place of residence.

Two of the survey questions were ambiguous, however. The question regarding race failed to establish a clear classification scheme into which people could fit themselves, and so some merely responded "human," others apparently selected one of the three traditionally recognized major racial groups (White, Negro, or Oriental), while many differentiated themselves on ethnic or nationalistic grounds (e.g., Jewish, Gypsy, German). When, for statistical purposes, I tabulated and coded the

information regarding racial stock, I adopted an arbitrary classificatory scheme. The nature of the data was such that the scheme had to designate categories which in some instances were racial but in others were ethnic or national.

The second inadequate question was that soliciting information regarding previous religious experience. It was not so much that the wording was ambiguous; rather it was a problem of being able to evaluate the meaning of a response. Being a simple request for an indication of which religious group the respondent belonged to before becoming a Baha'i, the question failed to identify such things as the duration and intensity of the respondent's previous religious attachment, the length of time (if any) intervening between that previous affiliation and the present Baha'i one, and the number and types of other religious movements to which he may have belonged. These kinds of difficulties arise because religious orientation is a personal characteristic, the form of which is both mutable and elusive. Unlike age or sex, in other words, a simple answer to a simple question is unlikely to embody the essence of a person's religious orientation. Nonetheless, responses to this question were amenable to classification and tabulation and could, therefore, be compared to the relative strength of similarly classified religious groups in the total United States population.

On the whole, the 1936 survey can be expected to furnish reliable data. There is one potential bias, however. Since a substantial amount of prestige is associated with having been a Baha'i for a long time, it is reasonable to expect that some respondents may have exaggerated the length of their affiliation. One of the respondents actually claimed

to have belonged to the religion for 44 years, which is rather unlikely since she would have had to join the movement one year before it was introduced to North America. In spite of this obvious inconsistency, however, most respondents would have avoided grotesque exaggeration, if for no other reason than to avoid being caught lying. A few believers, especially the elderly, might have been tempted to add one or two years, but this should have a negligible impact on any quantitative analysis of the information.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BAHAI POPULATION IN 1936

Sex Ratio

The survey had a total of 1,784 respondents,¹ 1,223 females and 561 males. Female domination of the Baha'i sex ratio was not an ephemeral condition. In Mary Lesch's tabulation of believers for the period 1893-1899, female names appeared almost twice as frequently as male names; the exact sex ratio was 55. Furthermore, the early Censuses of Religions indicate that in 1906 and 1916 the ratio was 52 and 49 respectively. Females greatly outnumbered males throughout at least the first 43 years of the Faith's history in North America. Furthermore, there was a general decline in the proportion of males during that period; the sex ratio dropped from a level of 55 in 1900 to 31 in 1936.

Until the 1940s, the religion's membership was very small (probably never exceeding 3,000) and was subject to large fluctuations. Increases

¹This includes 55 respondents who were residing in Canada. In subsequent analyses, whenever the total number is 1,784 instead of 1,729, the 55 Canadian residents have been included.

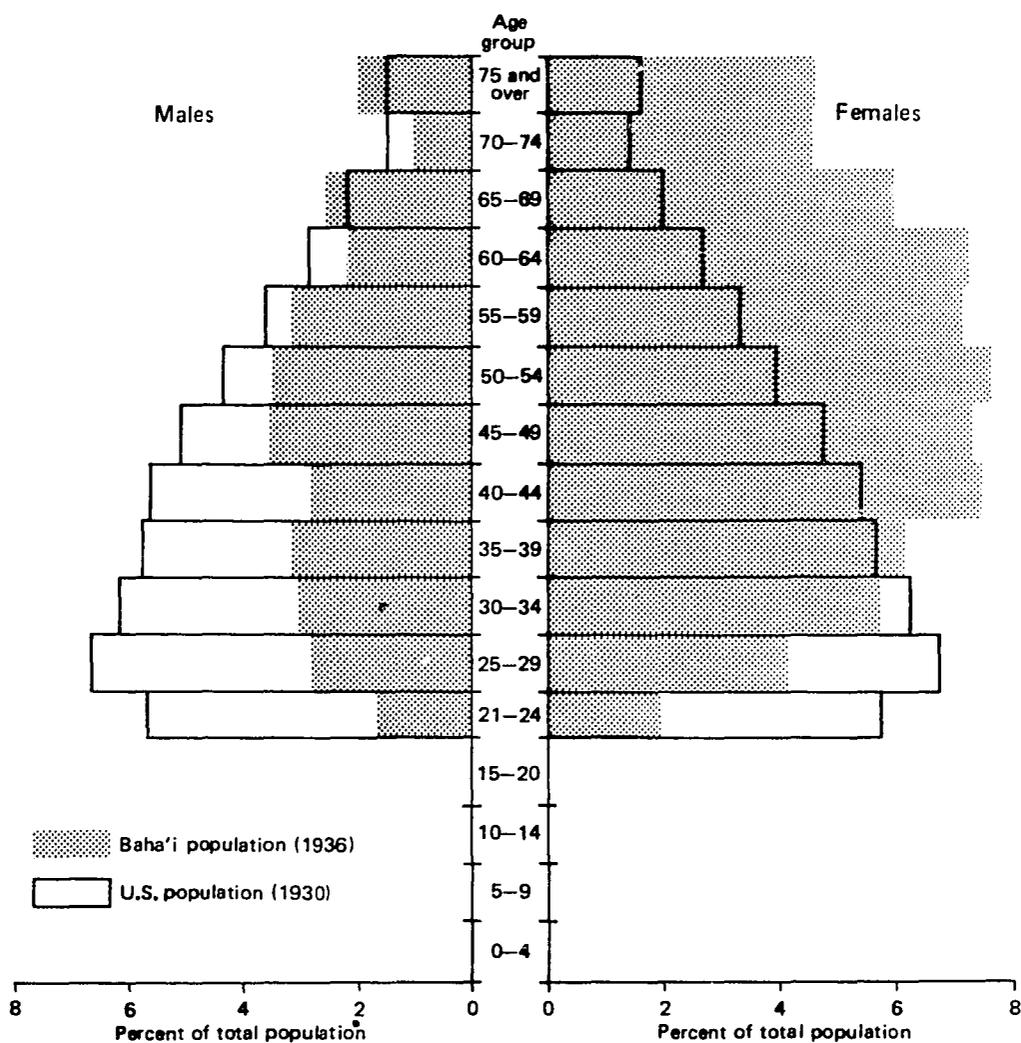
in membership were indicative of new declarations whereas declines must have been caused by disaffections. It would be interesting to know how much the sex composition of the Faith was governed by higher incidence of male disaffections as opposed to more frequent occurrence of female adoptions. It may have been a combination of both processes that caused the very low sex ratios in those early years.

Age/Sex Structure

Figure 29 shows the age/sex structure of the Baha'i population in 1936 and compares it to that of the United States as a whole. It is obvious that, in addition to being mostly women, the Baha'is were elderly. The differences in the two age structures clearly document that Baha'is were underrepresented in the population aged less than 35 and overrepresented in all the older age groups. This was true for both males and females, although the Baha'i female population was even more heavily concentrated in the older age groups.

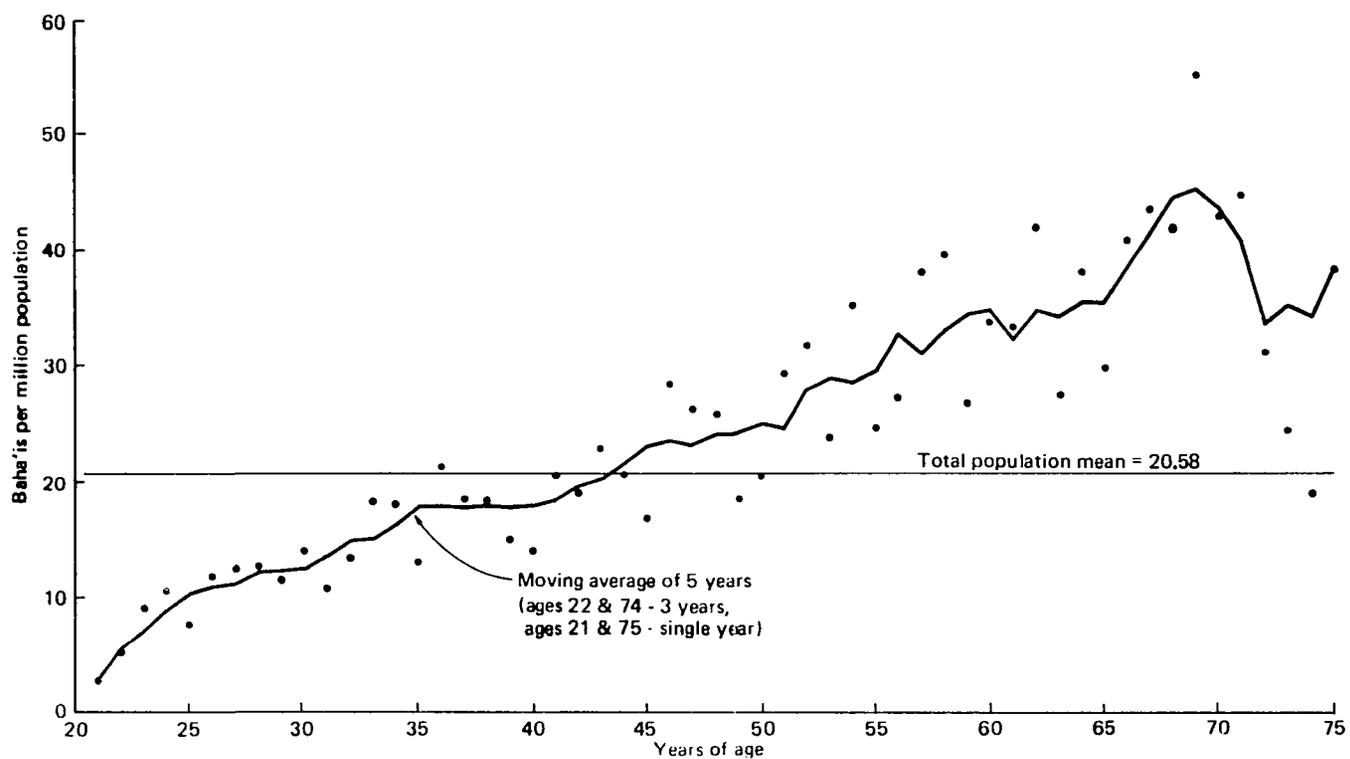
By disregarding the sex variable, it is possible to thoroughly explore the degree to which proportionate Baha'i membership varied with age. Figure 30 aggregates males and females and shows the age specific number of Baha'is per million population. It provides evidence that there is a strong positive relationship between age and number of Baha'is per million population. The relationship disintegrates after age 70 but until then the correlation is very powerful and apparently linear. The number of Baha'is per million population tends to fluctuate more widely in the later years, but a line showing the trend of a five year moving average validates the notion of a positive, linear relationship.

FIGURE 29 Age and Sex Distribution of the U.S. Baha'i Population Over 20 Years of Age, 1936



Source: Historical Records Cards (1936), National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois

FIGURE 30 Number of Baha'is per Million Population by Single Years of Age: United States Survey of Baha'is, 1936



Note: Data reflects 1936 Baha'i survey results; all American Baha'is are not included. Graph represents about 67% of Baha'i population

Source: Historical Records Cards (1936), National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois

One might react to the age bias of the Baha'i population by assuming that the Faith is more attractive to older people. That would be incorrect, however, because the population structure of Baha'i membership in 1936 does not show age at the time of adoption. If one assumes that the religion is equally attractive to people of all ages, then one can conclude that the religion's membership will inevitably show an older age structure than the national norm.

Much of the disproportionate elderliness of the Baha'i population was a consequence of this inescapable aging process which overtakes all declarants and accumulates believers in the higher age groups. But to what extent is this the only explanation? Perhaps in reality the Baha'i bias towards old age was a combination of this cumulative effect and differential age specific rates of adoption. This proposition is addressed by (1) assuming that the age specific rates of adoption were in fact the same, (2) developing a simple model of the adoption process designed to predict the 1936 age structure of the Baha'i population under that assumption, and (3) evaluating whether the observed and predicted age structures show significant differences.

The age structure of the United States population did not change much during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Table 18 shows the proportionate distribution of people in each age group for three different years: 1900, 1918, and 1936. The values deviate only slightly from the mean and so it was possible to make the simplifying assumption that the United States age structure, as described by the mean values, remain unchanged during the four decades preceding 1936.

TABLE 18
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED STATES POPULATION BY AGE:
 1900, 1918, 1936

Age	Percentage in 1900	Percentage in 1918	Percentage in 1936	Mean Percentage
75+	2.20	2.45	3.04	2.6
70-74	2.17	3.23	2.83	2.3
65-69	3.21	3.45	4.18	3.6
60-64	4.41	4.94	5.55	5.0
55-59	5.44	5.89	6.91	6.1
50-54	7.25	7.95	8.31	7.8
45-49	8.50	9.59	9.85	9.3
40-44	10.46	10.62	10.94	10.7
35-39	12.22	13.04	11.34	12.2
30-34	13.67	13.42	12.33	13.1
25-29	16.08	14.61	13.35	14.7
21-24	14.39	11.71	11.36	12.5
Total	100.00	99.99	99.99	100.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 311, "Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Single Years of Age, Color, and Sex: 1900 to 1959" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1965), pp. 50-51, 86-87, 122-123.

Other assumptions in the model are:

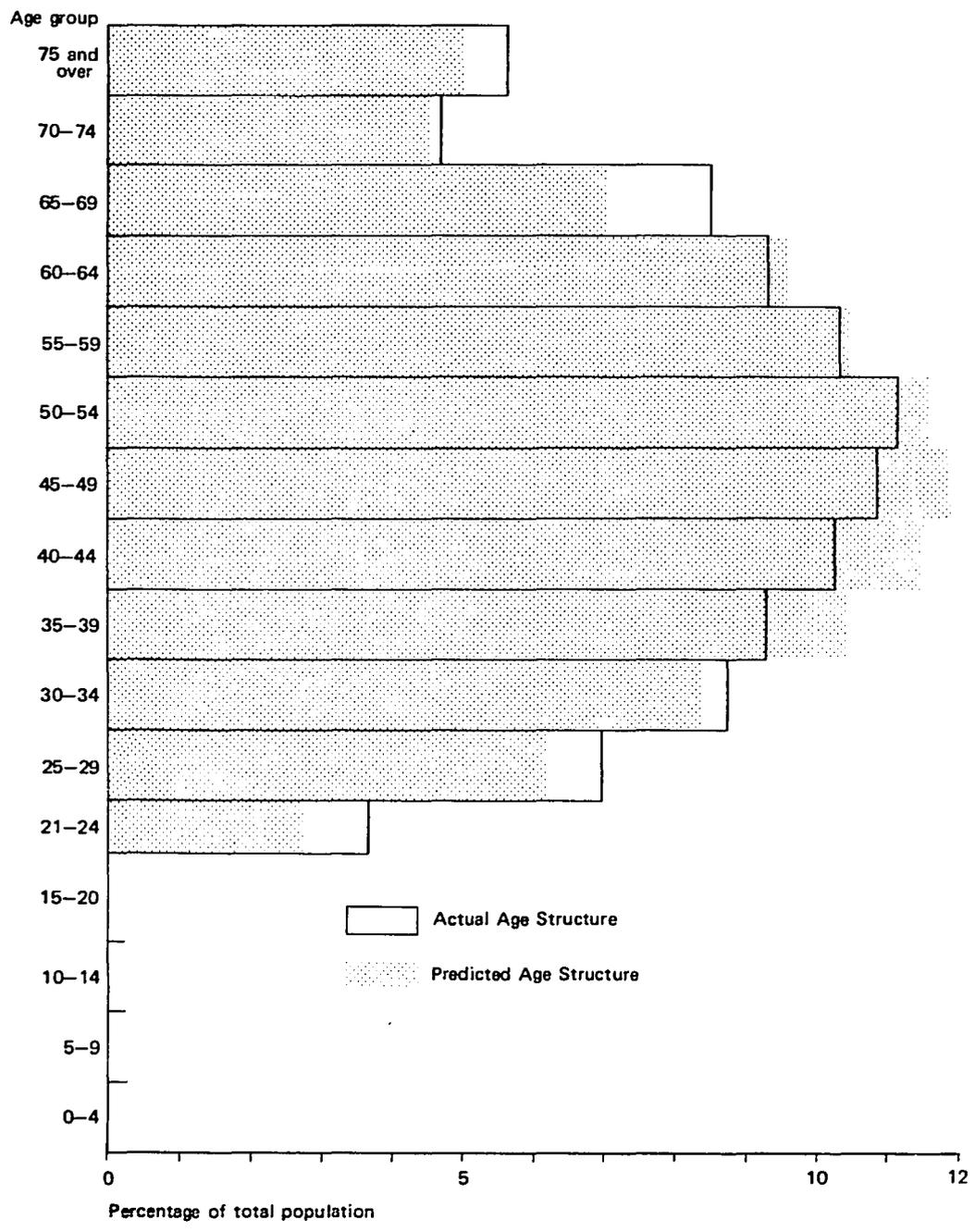
1. There was no adoption of the Baha'i Faith before 1892.
2. Between 1892 and 1936 the rate of adoption remained constant.
3. The rate of adoption was always the same for all age groups.
4. The Baha'i population experienced age specific rates of attrition equal to those of the entire United States population (regardless of whether the attrition was due to mortality or disaffection).
5. The Baha'i population experienced age specific rates of immigration or emigration equal to those of the entire United States population.

6. The entire population of any given age category was eligible to adopt the religion (even those who had already been converted).

Given this set of assumptions, the following procedure was used to predict the 1936 age distribution of the Baha'i population. First, the mean proportion of the total United States population in any given age group was multiplied by one more than the number of younger age groups up to a maximum of nine. If more than eight age groups were younger than the one under consideration (which is the case for the 65-69, 70-74, and 75+ categories) then the multiplicand was nine. The result was a series of cumulative values, one for each age group, which when summed gave what can be called a total cumulative value. The next step was to calculate what proportion of the total cumulative value was represented by each age specific cumulative value. These two steps determined the proportion of the 1936 Baha'i population that was to be expected in each age group. The multiplication of age group proportions described in the first step accommodated the cumulative effect of Baha'i declaration in the younger years inflating the proportions of the 1936 Baha'i population in the older age groups. Multiplying the proportions by a maximum of nine (45 years) insured that nobody joined the religion before 1892.

Figure 31 presents the predicted age structure and compares it with the observed. There is a marked similarity between the two; they are so close to being the same that when subjected to a Kolmogorov-Smirnov one-sample test they do not show a significant difference at the .20 level. Considering the large sample size (1,643), the two distributions have to be very similar not to have incurred a statistically significant

FIGURE 31 Predicted and Actual Baha'i Population Age Structures in the United States: 1936



difference at that level. It is probably safe to conclude that the 1936 age structure of the Baha'i population did not differ from the structure of the United States population as a consequence of greater appeal and higher rates of adoption among older people. Rather, the age specific rates of adoption probably were fairly comparable. The faint tendency of the predictive model to underestimate for the youngest and oldest age groups (21-34 and 60-75+) and to overestimate for the middle ages (35-59) may be the result of unrealistic assumptions. The model could be refined by relaxing some of those assumptions, but the effort would be fruitless because lack of data precludes relaxation of all and any one might be a critical factor in the formulation of the predicted age structure.

One of the most satisfactory aspects of the predictive model is the way in which it explains why the number of Baha'is per million should show a steady, linear increase through all ages up to the late sixties and then drop rapidly thereafter. Up to age 65, each age group would include Baha'is who declared themselves over successively longer time periods. After age 65, however, all age groups were equal in their capacity to draw from the past and the governing factor became the increasing rates of mortality.

Baha'i Affiliation

Even in the years preceding 1936 the flow of people into and out of the Baha'i Faith was sufficient to maintain a situation where most believers were relatively recent adopters. Table 19 shows what proportion of the population had been Baha'i for different lengths of time.

TABLE 19

DURATION OF BAHAI AFFILIATION: UNITED STATES, 1936

No. of Years as a Baha'i	Percentage of Baha'i Population
0-4	36
5-9	17
10-14	11
15-19	10
20-24	8
25-29	7
30-34	5
35-39	5
40-44	1

Source: 1936 Survey of Baha'is, Historical Records Cards, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

Over half of all Baha'is had been associated with the Faith for less than ten years and over a third had only belonged to the movement for under five years. The recent adoption of the religion by such a large proportion of the believers suggests that the rate of adoption may have taken a sharp turn upward during the decade preceding 1936; either that, or the rate of abandonment declined.

However, fluctuating rates of adoption and abandonment do not explain the slow decline in percentage of Baha'is who had been affiliated with the Faith for more than ten years. The gradualness with which the percentage figures diminish for succeeding longer periods of affiliation suggests that the only forces at work were (1) growth of the American population and (2) attrition through mortality.

Race

In 1936 most of the Baha'is in the United States were White. Table 20 shows that over 94 percent of all survey respondents were Caucasian while only about 6 percent were Negro. The preponderance of Whites over Blacks was even greater for Baha'is than for the total United States population, with the result that the estimated number of White Baha'is per million was almost twice that of Blacks. These figures tend to confirm the prevailing Baha'i belief that until the late 1960s and early 1970s the religion was predominantly White.

In those early years the Faith was geographically confined to a small part of the United States. In effect, the religion was limited to the Northeast--extending as far west as Illinois and Wisconsin--and California. Within this area, the racial composition of the total population was much more heavily White than for the country as a whole. The states of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and California, plus the District of Columbia, contained over 80 percent of all the Baha'is in the country. If these states are considered as the heartland of the religion in 1936, then it is possible to make a more refined comparison of the Baha'i and total populations insofar as racial composition is concerned. Racial composition of Baha'i membership in the heartland was much more representative than for the country as a whole. In fact, as Table 20 shows, the number of Baha'is per million population was even higher for Blacks than for Whites in the heartland. However, just as reinfement using the heartland concept has inverted the original analysis by displacing a White bias with a Black

TABLE 20
 RACIAL COMPOSITION OF BAHAI'S (1936) AND THE
 ENTIRE UNITED STATES POPULATION (1940)

	Baha'is Who Responded to 1936 Survey	Percentage Distribution of Respondents	Est. No. of Baha'is in 1936 ^a	United States Population in in 1936	Baha'is Per Million Population
White	1,586	94.18	2,433	118,213,870	21
Black	97	5.76	149	12,865,518	12
Other	1	.06	2	588,887	3
Total	1,684	100.00	2,584	131,669,275	20

RACIAL COMPOSITION OF BAHAI'S (1936) AND THE ENTIRE POPULATION (1940)
 IN THOSE REGIONS OF THE U.S. WHERE THE RELIGION HAD ESTABLISHED
 ITSELF: MAINE, N.H., MASS., CONN., N.Y., N.J., PENN., MD.,
 OHIO, INDIANA, MICH., ILL., WISC., CAL., AND WASH., D.C.

	Baha'is Who Responded to 1936 Survey	Percentage Distribution of Respondents	Est. No. of Baha'is in 1936 ^a	Regional Population in 1940	Baha'is per Million Population
White	1,354	94.55	1,967	67,624,178	29
Black	77	5.38	112	3,041,296	37
Other	1	0.07	1	256,790	4
Total	1,432	100.0	2,080	70,922,264	29

Sources: 1936 Survey of Baha'is, National Records Cards, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1936, Vol. II, Part I, Denominations A to J, Statistics, History Doctrine, Organization, and Work, p. 76.

^aThese estimates were made by distributing the Baha'i population, as indicated in the 1936 Census of Religions, according to the percentage values shown for the three racial categories.

bias, so too a further refinement using urban vs. rural populations might reverse the balance. Both Baha'is and Blacks tended to concentrate in urban areas; control for this might show that the numbers of Baha'is per million were similar for Blacks and Whites. Be that as it may, it is clear that in 1936 the Baha'i Faith was not overly concentrated in the White sector of the total population.

No mention has been made of the racial category labeled "Other" in Table 20. This category includes people of Asian and Native American extract. The 1936 survey captured only one Baha'i who was classified as "other," and so the Faith was not very representative of this portion of the total population. However, the United States contained so few people who were neither Black nor White that the expected number of such Baha'is would be very small: twelve for the entire United States and only eight for the heartland. Given the smallness of these figures, Baha'i underrepresentation is not significant.

The White Baha'i population, comprising such a vast majority of the religion's 1936 membership, can be broken down into a number of ethnic subdivisions. For the United States as a whole, the 1936 survey tabulated 1,679 respondents who classified themselves as White. Of these, 607, or 36 percent simply called themselves "White." The remaining 1,072, however, indicated that they were of a specific ethnic stock. Relying on the specificity of their responses it is possible to reconstruct a crude picture of what categories of Whites entered the Faith in the early years. The breakdown in Table 21 tabulates how those 1,072 respondents classified themselves.

TABLE 21

ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF BAHA'IS: UNITED STATES, 1936

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percent
British (incl. Irish)	610	57
German	241	22
Scandinavian	103	10
French	16	2
Italian	8	1
Eastern European	37	3
Other European	35	3
Persian	10	1
Other White	12	1

Source: 1936 Survey of Baha'is, National Records Cards, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois.

These figures show that Baha'is were predominantly Anglo-Saxons. Those who traced their ancestors to continental Europe almost invariably claimed northern or eastern Europe as their area of origin. Virtually no southern European immigrants became Baha'i.

One must keep this ethnic bias in perspective, however. That the bias existed is irrefutable; that it was of such an overwhelming magnitude is an impression that must be tempered by an awareness of the overall ethnic composition of the White American population. It is impossible to determine the ethnic mix of the 1936 White population in the United States, but one can get a vague idea of the relative importance of various ethnic groups in the current American population. The Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1977 contains a table that indicates numbers of people in the United States who claimed to be associated with certain ethnic roots. Part of that information is presented in Table 22.

TABLE 22

ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF THE UNITED STATES POPULATION: 1973

Ethnic Origin	Millions of People
British and Irish	38.2
German	20.5
Spanish (incl. Mexican & P.R.)	10.6
Italian	7.1
French	3.9
Polish	3.7
Russian	1.7
Other	97.6
Not reported	22.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1977, p. 30.

These figures are crude and are based not on a census but a sample survey. Furthermore, they refer to the composition of the American population in the 1970s, not in the 1930s. Even so, they give a rough indication of the ethnic composition during the interwar period. All the large scale migratory flows from various European countries to the United States were completed by 1936, and the only significant recent change that the above figures would detect is the growth of the Spanish population as a consequence of Mexican and Puerto Rican immigration.

In 1936, therefore, the White population must have contained a heavy preponderance of British and Irish, a large minority of Germans, and a substantial but relatively small number of Italians. The French would have been a small part of the White ethnic mix. This picture meshes well with the ethnic composition of the 1936 Baha'i population. The overwhelming dominance of the Baha'i Faith by British and Irish

adherents, as well as by the very large German contingent, is to be expected given the ethnic structure of the United States population. Conversely, the virtual absence of Italian-American Baha'is has to be considered in light of the relative smallness of this ethnic group in the American population. There is little doubt that the 1936 Baha'i population was overrepresentative of the Anglo-Saxons and underrepresentative of the Italians, but the magnitude of this bias probably was not as large as one might initially assume.

The general impression which remains is that the White Baha'is of 1936 were heavily drawn from people of northern and eastern European extract. This suggests that the significant variable was not race but religion.

Religion

One of the questions asked on the 1936 Survey sought information regarding previous religious affiliation. Almost all the respondents answered the question, but the specificity of the answers varied widely. In particular, some respondents merely designated themselves as ex-Christians while others took care to mention whether they were Catholic or Protestant. Similarly, the Protestants were inconsistent about defining their denominational attachment. In addition to the variation in specificity of the survey answers, there is the problem of non-uniform geographic distribution of religious groups in the United States, a difficulty which was handled in precisely the same way as with race. The heartland concept was used and statistics for both Baha'is and total populations were refined accordingly.

Table 23 presents information that is intended to show which religious groups were supplying the Baha'i Faith with converts. The figures in columns 4 and 8 tabulate the most relevant data for conducting such an analysis. However, both these sets of figures had to be estimated using a number of techniques that rely on the validity of certain assumptions. For that reason, Table 23 presents sets of values used in, and derived from, the estimating process; this allows the reader to judge whether the estimating procedures are appropriate.

Column 2 tabulates the total number of responses to the 1936 survey for each category of religious belief. The numbers show the magnitude of the problem mentioned earlier. Only 827 of the 1,149 Christians indicated whether they were Catholic or Protestant; only 753 of the 827 Protestants revealed their denominational origins. In order to improve the comparability of the numbers for the various religious groups, it was assumed that the 74 Protestant respondents who did not indicate a denominational origin were drawn from the different Protestant groups in the same proportions as the 753 who did. That assumption allows an estimate of the number of Protestant denominations; the results are shown in column 3. A similar assumption permits an estimate of the specific religious background for the 249 respondents who only indicated that they had been Christians. They were distributed between the Catholic and Protestant categories, and among the various subcategories of Protestantism according to the proportionate distribution suggested by column 2. The resulting estimates are tabulated in column 3 which, in turn, provides the values used to calculate the percentages in column 5.

TABLE 23

PREVIOUS RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF BAHAI'S VS. NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF THOSE OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS: AREAS OF ESTABLISHED BAHAI PRESENCE IN THE UNITED STATES (MAINE, N.H., MASS., CONN., N.Y., N.J., PENN., MD., OHIO, IND., MICH., ILL., WISC., CAL., AND WASH., D.C.), 1936

1 Religious Groups	2 Baha'is Who Responded to 1936 Survey	3 ^d	4 ^e	5 ^f Percentage Distribution of Respondents	6 Estimated No. of Baha'is in 1936	7 U.S. Population in 1940	8 Baha'is per million
Jewish	28			2.25	47	4,200,269	11
Christians	1149 ^a			92.14	1916		
Catholic	73	73	93	(7.46)	155	15,114,335	10
Protestant	827 ^b	827	1056	(84.68)	1761		
Episcopalian	145	159	203	(16.28)	339	1,243,092	273
Lutheran	126	138	177	(14.19)	295	2,597,352	114
Methodist	126	138	177	(14.19)	295	2,758,006	107
Baptist	85	93	119	(9.54)	198	1,747,376	113
Presbyterian	78	86	110	(8.82)	183	1,447,934	126
Congregational	65	72	91	(7.30)	152	690,853	220
Unitarian	30	33	42	(3.37)	70	46,907	1492
Mormon	5	6	7	(0.56)	12	78,842	152
Other Prot.	93	102	130	(10.43)	217		
Muslim	4			0.32	7		
Other	4			0.32	7		
None	62			4.97	103		
TOTAL	1247 ^c			100.00	2080		

Sources: 1936 Survey of Baha'is, Historical Record Cards, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1936, Vol. II, Part I, Denominations A to J, Statistics, History, Doctrine, Organization, and Work, p. 76.

^aThis figure includes 249 respondents who designated their previous religious affiliation as Christian but failed to specify a sect or denomination.

^bThis figure includes 74 respondents who designated their previous religious affiliation as Protestant but failed to specify a sect or denomination.

^cThis figure excludes 36 respondents who failed to answer the question and 153 respondents who claimed to have been Baha'is before becoming Baha'is.

^dThis column takes the 74 respondents who designated themselves as Protestant and allocates them to the various Protestant denominations according to the proportionate distribution suggested by column 2.

^eThis column takes the 249 respondents who designated themselves as Christian and allocates them to Catholic and Protestant, and to the various Protestant denominations, according to the proportionate distribution suggested by column 3.

^fThe percentage values for the various subdivisions of Christian in this column are computed so that: 1) Catholic and Protestant will sum to 94.14%, and 2) Protestant denominations will sum to 84.68%.

The 1936 Census of Religions enumerated 2,584 Baha'is in the United States, 2,080 of whom were living in the region which has been defined as the Baha'i heartland. Within that same region, the 1936 survey only solicited 1,247 responses containing information about religious origins, and so in order to estimate the number of Baha'is in the total Baha'i population who traced their roots back to each religious category the estimated percentages in column 5 were used to apportion the 2,080 Baha'is among the different religions (column 6).

The figures in columns 6 and 7 provide the data necessary for calculating the Baha'is per million for different religious groups (column 8). The underenumeration of church membership in the 1936 Census of Religions would inflate the calculations for Baha'is per million, but this would be more than offset by the fact that membership figures for all the other religions include children whereas the figures for Baha'i membership do not. Therefore, the values indicating Baha'is per million in column 8 should not be taken as accurate in an absolute sense. Rather, they are simply a convenient way to show the relative capacity of the Baha'i Faith to draw its members from different religious traditions. Even as relative values they are no more than crude estimates. One can see that calculation is based on a number of assumptions, only some of which have been made explicit. One assumption which, for example, may be unwarranted and may sharply decrease accuracy is that all religious bodies in 1936 had the same proportion of adults and children.

The estimates of numbers of Baha'is per million population for different religious groups vary over a large range. Even allowing for the crudity of the estimates, it is evident that some religions were

more likely than others to contribute converts to the Baha'i Faith. At one extreme, Unitarians stood alone as that religion donating the largest proportion of its manpower to the Baha'i cause. At the other extreme, Judaism and Catholicism showed strong resistance to Baha'i conversion. Between these two extremes lay all the large Protestant denominations. Assuming that this class of religions was the norm, the task is to explain the extremes; why should so many Baha'is have been drawn from the ranks of the Unitarians and so few from the ranks of the Catholics and the Jews?

The Unitarians, stressing as they do a rejection of the concept of the trinity, adhere to a view of Christ and God which is less distant from the Baha'i position² than from the position of most other Christian groups. In this respect, therefore, the Unitarians find more in common with Baha'is than with Christians. Even more important than this theological point of convergence is the emphasis which Unitarians place on a rational approach to faith. This leads to a generally liberal and open-minded attitude toward other religions which in turn suggests that the Unitarian is more likely than most Christians to (1) hear about other religious movements, and (2) exercise a critical objectivity when evaluating other religious messages. In other words, by adopting a rational and dispassionate approach to religion, the Unitarian may be more amenable to conversion than the member of a Christian group that

²Abdu'l-Baha has clarified the Baha'i position regarding the trinity. He emphasized the indivisibility of God. 'Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, trans. and ed. by Laura Clifford Barney (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), pp. 129-131.

stresses dogma, creed, and submission to church authority. Can it not be said that, at least in the 1930s, Roman Catholicism was somewhere near the opposite extreme from Unitarianism, requiring faith in spite of reason and stressing internal unity of the church over independent thought? The Catholic morality has maintained church solidarity and in doing so has strongly inhibited defectors. In other words, regardless of who is courting their attention, relative vulnerability to conversion is likely to be high for Unitarians and low for Catholics. Furthermore, the emphasis in the Baha'i Faith on a rational approach to religion³ dovetails nicely with the Unitarian view and therefore exacerbates the difference in relative susceptibility to conversion that associates with Unitarianism and Catholicism. Of course in more recent times revolutionary changes have swept Catholicism, and its monolithic structure no longer appears as such an impregnable fortress against outside forces; in 1936, however, the Catholic Church was still unassailable.

Judaism has interacted with the Baha'i Faith under a different set of circumstances than those surrounding either Catholicism or Unitarianism. The long history of persecution and intolerance that has been a part of Jewish-Christian relations has generally tended to insure that

³Consider, for example, 'Abdu'l-Baha's unequivocal statement: ". . . If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science they are mere superstitions and imaginations; for the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is superstition. Unquestionably there must be agreement between true religion and science. If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation. . . ." Baha'i World Faith, p. 240.

Jews would not convert to Christianity in any great numbers. For whatever the reason, Jews did not respond positively to Christ's message in the early years of Christian history, and subsequent events have only served to intensify that negative Jewish reaction. But the Baha'i Faith requires acceptance of Christ (as well as Moses, Mohammed, and many others) as a Prophet of God and in doing so aligns itself with Christianity in the eyes of Judaism. The following argument by 'Abdu'l-Baha clearly shows that Jews cannot bypass Christ in gaining access to Baha'u'llah.

Today the Christians are believers in Moses, accept Him as a prophet of God and praise Him most highly. The Muhammadans are likewise believers in Moses, accept the validity of His prophethood, at the same time believing in Christ. Could it be said that the acceptance of Moses by the Christians and Muhammadans has been harmful and detrimental to these people? On the contrary, it has been beneficial to them, proving that they have been fair-minded and just. What harm could result to the Jewish people then if they in return should accept His Holiness Christ and acknowledge the validity of the prophethood of His Holiness Muhammad? By this acceptance and praiseworthy attitude the enmity and hatred which have afflicted mankind so many centuries would be dispelled, fanaticism and bloodshed pass away and the world be blessed by unity and agreement. . . .⁴

A Jew, therefore, cannot become a Baha'i without first accepting the divine origins of a religion that has, for many centuries, isolated, persecuted, and threatened the very existence of Judaism. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that conversion to the Baha'i Faith should have been a relatively rare event.

THE 1968 SURVEY

In 1936 the American Baha'i population possessed a number of characteristics which differentiated it from its host population. The

⁴Ibid., p. 278.

typical Baha'i of that time was elderly, female, Anglo-Saxon, and had been Protestant. Some attempt has been made to explain why that should have been so, but there has been no mention of whether those compositional observations have persisted to the present. It is not possible to answer this question conclusively, but the shreds of evidence contained in the 1968 survey strongly suggest that substantial changes have taken place. It is important to remember that the 1968 survey was designed to assess the population composition of new declarants, and not of the entire Baha'i membership. Even so, the enormous numbers of converts which the Faith attracted in the months immediately following the 1968 survey would rapidly saturate the Baha'i population. That being so, one can assume that the 1968 survey is at least crudely representative of how the Faith must have appeared by the mid-seventies and can, therefore, be compared with the 1936 survey.

The 1968 survey exposed an extremely young age structure among new declarants, but certain characteristics which associated with that youthfulness were little more than byproducts. For example, Table 24 shows that respondents to the 1968 survey were drawn in excessive numbers from the unmarried, student, and educated sectors of the United States population, and yet these biases probably resulted from attracting youth and do not mean the Faith appealed more to single people with an academic orientation.

The 1968 survey also examined the ethnic and religious background of the respondents. That information is summarized by the data presented in Table 25. It is evident that by 1968 the Protestant bias of the 1930s was giving way to a more representative mix of religious backgrounds.

TABLE 24

THE EDUCATIONAL AND MARITAL STATUS OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO BECAME
BAHA'IS DURING DECEMBER, 1968^a

STUDENT STATUS		
Current Student Status	New Baha'i Enrollees	U.S. Population
High School Student	23%	10%
College Student	30	5
Non-Student (Age 15+)	47	55

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT OF NON-STUDENTS		
Educational Attainment	New Baha'i Enrollees Who were not Students	U.S. Population Aged 25+
Completed Elementary School	100%	83%
Graduated from High School	82	50
Completed Two Years College	30	19
Completed Four Years College	42	10

MARITAL STATUS		
Marital Status	New Baha'i Enrollees	U.S. Population Aged 14+
Single	65%	24%
Married	26	66
Widowed	4	7
Divorced	5	3

Source: "A Statistical Comparison of the Background of Newly Enrolled Baha'is with the U.S. Population," unpublished statistical compilation prepared by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Services, Wilmette, Illinois, National Baha'i Center, 1969.

^aThe percentage breakdowns of Baha'i enrollees are based on a survey of all people who joined the Faith in December, 1968. During that month there were 193 enrollments; 160 of them (88%) responded to the survey.

TABLE 25

THE RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THOSE PEOPLE
WHO BECAME BAHAI'S DURING DECEMBER, 1968^a

RACIAL BACKGROUND		
Race	New Baha'i Enrollees	U.S. Population
White	87%	87.77%
Black	13%	10.55%
Other	--	1.68%

RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND		
Religion	New Baha'i Enrollees	U.S. Population Aged 14+
Protestant	65%	67%
Catholic	15%	26%
Jewish	4%	3%
Baha'i (Family)	7%	--
Mixed	3%	--
Other	--	1%
None	7%	3%

Source: "A Statistical Comparison of the Background of Newly Enrolled Baha'is with the U.S. Population," unpublished statistical compilation prepared by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Services, Wilmette, Illinois, National Baha'i Center, 1969.

^aThe percentage of breakdowns of Baha'i enrollees are based on a survey of all people who joined the Faith in December, 1968. During that month there were 193 enrollments: 160 of them (88%) responded to the survey.

Catholics still were not being recruited into the Baha'i population in proportion to their numbers, but the gap between the expected and observed appears to have narrowed substantially. Also, people of Jewish background were becoming Baha'is at a rate proportionate to their numerical significance, a situation markedly different from that which prevailed in 1936. The revolutionary social climate of the late 1960s must have weakened the capacity of these two religious groups to resist external influence.

Non-religious people were becoming Baha'is with greater frequency than their numbers warranted. No one knows why people do or do not belong to a religion, but if one assumes that there is some validity to the notion that atheists and agnostics choose to be so because they find most religions irrational, then it may be that the logical approach of the Baha'i Faith appeals to them.

Seven percent of all new Baha'i enrollees responded to the 1968 survey by indicating that their religious background was Baha'i. This is a very small part of the sample and confirms the conclusion previously reached that the Baha'i Faith still relies on conversions for its numerical growth.

The racial composition of the new enrollees aligned very well with the national pattern, thereby maintaining the balance which characterized the 1936 Baha'i population; the proportionate split between Whites and Blacks continued to be representative of the country. As of 1968, the Faith still was not assimilating significant numbers of people from other racial groups--especially the American Indians and the Orientals--but these elements remain numerically insignificant in the United States

population. Even so, during the latter stages of the Nine Year Plan the American Baha'is began to place increasing emphasis on reaching them. This was in response to the specific objective of the plan which called for the enrollment of larger numbers of Chinese, Japanese, American Indians, Negroes, and Spanish speakers.⁵ By the time of the survey in 1968, the American Baha'i community was successfully appealing to the Blacks, but no great strides had yet been made in reaching the other racial and ethnic groups. Although specific figures are not available, a survey of Baha'i activities during the 1968-1973 period attests to substantial progress in penetrating the American Indian and Spanish speaking minorities, but--through its silence--implies a lack of success with Japanese and Chinese Americans.⁶

In summary, it can be said that since 1936 the complexion of the Baha'i population has undergone substantial change. In terms of religious and racial characteristics, it has become more representative of the parent society; insofar as age structure is concerned, it has shifted toward the recruitment of new members who are much younger than average. The scantiness of recent data makes penetrative analysis difficult, but at least it can be said that the Baha'i population in America has been changing, that the changes have in part been stimulated by policy and planning, and that the immediate prospects are for a religion whose membership is not confined to a single racial group or religious tradition.

⁵The Baha'i World: 1963-1968, XIV, p. 113.

⁶The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XV, p. 228.

At present it is impossible to know whether Baha'is occupy a specific socio-economic niche; no data have yet been collected that would allow satisfactory analysis of such variables as occupation, education, and income. What can be said with reasonable certainty is that if the Baha'is are confronted with evidence suggesting a strong socio-economic bias then the reaction will be to seek ways of recruiting converts who will broaden the religion's socio-economic base.

CHAPTER X

PLANNED GLOBAL DIFFUSION: 1937-1964

THE BAHAI ECUMENE IN 1937

When in 1937 Shoghi Effendi initiated the First Seven Year Plan, global conditions were not propitious. The lingering effects of the Great Depression coexisted with a rising awareness that the world was poised on the brink of war. It is hard to imagine how those times could have done anything but hinder the execution of a plan for Baha'i expansion. Worldly conditions, however, did not figure significantly in Shoghi Effendi's decision about when to initiate planned diffusion. His first concern was to establish an administrative system that could efficiently govern Baha'i affairs and guide Baha'i growth. His second concern was to insure the completion of the Temple in Wilmette, Illinois. Only when the Guardian perceived that these two tasks were nearly done did he divert the attention of the American Baha'i community to the goals of the Seven Year Plan. That was in the spring of 1937. The plan was designed to last for seven years so that its conclusion would coincide with the centenary of the birth of the Faith.

When the First Seven Year Plan was launched, the Baha'i Faith already had managed to achieve substantial international dispersion. All continents had been touched by the religion and adherents could be found in such antipodal locations as Hawaii and Rhodesia, England and New Zealand, Japan and Brazil, Egypt and Tahiti. Even so, this dispersion was tenuous because in most locations the Faith could count only

one or two residents. The vast majority of all Baha'is still lived in Persia while the majority of the rest were in North America. The remaining few were widely scattered, but even they were mostly confined to the other eight existing National areas.

Table 26 shows the numbers of localities having Baha'is in different parts of the world. The dominant position of Persia is obvious as is the subsidiary importance of North America. These figures, which count localities rather than people, actually tend to understate the degree to which the Faith was concentrated in a few key areas. This arises out of the fact that those National areas having relatively large numbers of localities with resident Baha'is also tended to have larger average community sizes. Even assuming that understatement does not exist and that the number of opened localities is an accurate indicator of population size, the fact that there were only about 2,700 Baha'is in the United States in 1936 draws one to the tentative conclusion that there must have been fewer than 5,500 Baha'is in the world outside Persia. If this estimate is low it would be because of unusually large community sizes in Turkestan and the Caucasus where the Faith established an early foothold. Both these areas are close to Persia, however, and could be considered as a geographic extension of the religion's heartland. The point is that outside the original homeland of the Faith the number of Baha'is was very small, they concentrated in North America, and only an infinitesimal share resided outside the ten organized National Spiritual Assembly areas.

In spite of their fewness, the widely scattered band of believers living in those regions of the world not yet part of the organized

TABLE 26

LOCALITIES HAVING RESIDENT BAHAI'S IN APRIL, 1937

Region ^a	Number of Localities with Resident Baha'is		
	Local Spiritual Assemblies	Groups and Isolated Believers	Total
Persia (Iran)	(?)	(?)	560
U.S.A./Canada ^b	69	177	246
Germany	7	12	19
Great Britain/Ireland	2	21	23
India/Burma	8	22	30
Egypt	4	14	18
Caucasus	6	11	17
Turkestan	8	10	18
Iraq	3	4	7
Australia/New Zealand	4	10	14
Rest of World	10	69	79
World Total			1,028

Source: The Baha'i World: 1936-1938, Vol. VII (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1939), pp. 555-560, 565-575.

^aThe regions listed were the National Spiritual Assemblies existing at the time.

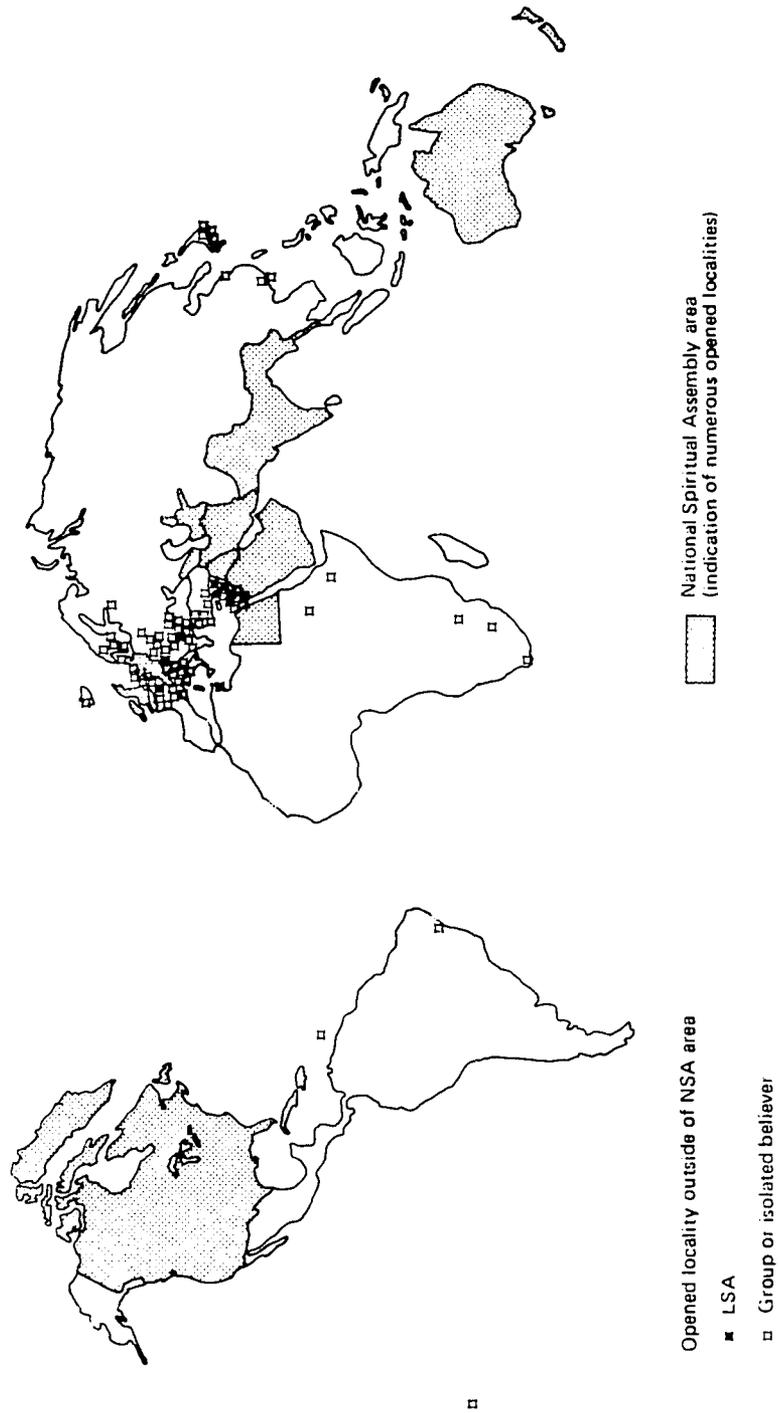
^bThe figures for the United States/Canada may be very slightly off because I lost one of the Xeroxed pages of the 1937-1938 Baha'i Directory, thereby necessitating the use of figures from the 1935-1936 Baha'i Directory which is contained in Vol. VI of The Baha'i World.

Baha'i world had the potential to develop new nuclei for the Faith. For this reason, it is useful to look at their distribution in 1937. Figure 32 shows the distribution both of National Spiritual Assembly areas and of localities outside National areas having resident Baha'is. Although it is impossible for the map to depict the distribution of Baha'is within National areas, it does manage to give a reasonably concise impression of the global distribution of the religion.

The vast majority of all Baha'is living outside National Assembly areas were located in Europe and the Near East. Those living in Europe were quite evenly distributed throughout the continent, the only exceptional area being the Iberian peninsula. Eastern European countries contained a fair share of these adherents. Of course, the concentration in the Near East is understandable given the historical development of the Faith and the long-standing deposition of Baha'is leadership in 'Akka. Other regions of the world were notably lacking Baha'is. The whole of Latin America could claim but one believer. Outside of Egypt, Africa had only a handful of opened localities, most in South Africa. East Asia contained only a half dozen localities occupied by Baha'is. There were no believers in Southeast Asia, and except for Hawaii and one couple in Papeete, none in the Pacific Basin.

The overall global pattern of distribution in 1937 shows the effects of certain historical events on the geographic growth of the Faith. First, there is the fact that the Faith developed in the Shi'ah enclave of the Muslim world. That turn of events insured that Iran would emerge as the demographic core of the Baha'i ecumene.

FIGURE 32 The Baha'i Ecumene in 1937



Second, there was the exile of Baha'u'llah and His son to the areas outside Persia. That was responsible for the emergence of Baha'i communities beyond the borders of the mother country in various nearby regions of the Muslim world, many of them Sunni. In particular, this, either directly or indirectly, caused the formation of Baha'i communities in Turkey, in Palestine and its immediate surroundings, in Egypt, in the Caucasus, in Turkestan, and to a lesser extent even in the southwest sector of the Indian subcontinent. In other words, the establishment of the Faith in areas surrounding Persia was largely the result of the Baha'i persecution in its place of origin.

Third, there is the fact that 'Abdu'l-Baha targeted North America as the region in which the Faith must first grow Western roots and from which it must disseminate itself worldwide. That explicit policy, bolstered by affirmative action, led to the emergence of North America as a subsidiary center of Baha'i strength. The believers in that region, though small in number by Persian standards, used their national affluence and individual religious freedom to bring about the most widespread diffusion of the Faith yet known. In the process, they helped to erect an administrative system that would reflect the wishes of the founding figures and could handle the affairs of the religion. 'Abdu'l-Baha made North America such an important center of Baha'i activity that, in spite of the smallness of numbers, it threatened to eclipse Persia as the true heartland of the religion.

Fourth, the emergence of North America as a major center of Baha'i activity precipitated a two-way flow of Baha'i migrants between there and the established world center of the Faith near 'Akka. That flow

followed prevailing transportation channels and in the process brought Baha'is into frequent contact with Great Britain, France, Switzerland, and Italy. The result was the development of numerous small Baha'i communities in those countries.

Fifth, the activities of a handful of key Baha'i pioneers sowed the seeds for the eventual blossoming of a number of small and far-flung clusters of Baha'is. Remember that 'Abdu'l-Baha had directed certain individuals to migrate to new areas to take up permanent residence and promote the Faith. Remember also that his Tablets of the Divine Plan inspired certain other individuals to do likewise: May Bolles went to France (1900), Alma Knoblock to Germany and Austria (1903), Agnes Alexander to Japan (1914), Clara and Hyde Dunn to Australia and New Zealand (1920), Fanny Knoblock to South Africa (1920), and Leonora Holsapple to Brazil (1924). These individuals had a particularly strong influence on the 1937 distribution of Baha'is outside the Muslim and North American spheres. All except Leonora Holsapple were able to initiate measurable Baha'i growth; by 1937, Germany and Australia/New Zealand had their own National Spiritual Assemblies while France, Japan, and South Africa had small clusters of Baha'i communities. Where those pioneers settled is where the Faith grew.

Very little Baha'i growth occurred outside those areas. A major exception is Northern and Eastern Europe (especially Bulgaria) while a minor exception is the three localities in China which were opened primarily through the efforts of itinerant Baha'is--particularly Martha Root who visited them all. However, Bulgaria--the most exceptional of these exceptional areas--achieved its modest preeminence through the

efforts of a pioneering settler who arrived in Sofia in 1930 and remained until her death in 1954. She singlehandedly developed a Baha'i presence in that country, thereby reinforcing the conclusion that the Faith achieved real gains only in those areas where believers settled on a permanent basis and worked for its promulgation. The name of the woman is Marion Jack.¹

In summary, it can be seen that the role of individuals was paramount in determining where the Faith would have some representation by 1937. The banishment of Baha'u'llah from Persia, the preoccupation of 'Abdu'l-Baha with the potential of North America, the dedicated efforts of a handful of Baha'i pioneers under the direction of 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian--those are the episodes that explained the geography of the Baha'i world in 1937.

THE FIRST SEVEN YEAR PLAN: 1937-1944

The First Seven Year Plan had one main international goal: to establish a nucleus of Baha'i believers in every Latin American republic. The North American community was responsible for executing the plan. That arrangement was an attempt by Shoghi Effendi to recognize the preeminent role in the global diffusion process that 'Abdu'l-Baha assigned to North America. However, world conditions and their impingement on Baha'i activities in most places also motivated the Guardian to rely on the United States and Canada. In a 1938 message to the American Baha'is Shoghi Effendi portrayed the difficulties facing his religion

¹A brief synopsis of her work in Bulgaria is contained in Baha'i News, 541 (April, 1976):5.

throughout the world and stressed the fact that North America was the one remaining stronghold of the Faith from which dissemination to the Latin American republics could proceed.

These recurrent crises which, with ominous frequency and resistless force, are afflicting an ever-increasing portion of the human race must of necessity continue, however impermanently, to exercise in a certain measure, their baleful influence upon a world community which has spread its ramifications to the uttermost ends of the earth. How can the beginnings of a world upheaval, unleashing forces that are so gravely deranging the social, the religious, the political, and the economic equilibrium of organized society, throwing into chaos and confusion political systems, racial doctrines, social conceptions, cultural standards, religious associations, and trade relationships--how can such agitations, on a scale so vast, so unprecedented, fail to produce any repercussions on the institutions of the Faith of such tender age whose teaching have a direct and vital bearing on each of these spheres of human life and conduct?

Little wonder, therefore, if they who are holding aloft the banner of so pervasive a Faith, so challenging a Cause, find themselves affected by the impact of these world-shaking forces.

. . . .

In the heart of the European continent a community [Germany] which as predicted by 'Abdu'l-Baha, is destined, by virtue of its spiritual potentialities and geographical situation, to radiate the splendor of the light of the Faith on the countries that surround it, has been momentarily eclipsed through the restrictions which a regime that has sorely misapprehended its purpose and function has chosen to impose upon it. Its voice, alas, is now silenced, its institutions dissolved, its literature banned, its archives confiscated, and its meetings suspended.

In central Asia, in the city enjoying the unique distinction of having been chosen by 'Abdu'l-Baha as the home of the First Mashriqu'l-Adhkar [temple] of the Baha'i world, as well as in the towns and villages of the province to which it belongs [Turkestan], the sore-pressed Faith of Baha'u'llah, as a result of the extraordinary and unique vitality which, in the course of several decades, it has consistently manifested, finds itself at the mercy of foes which, alarmed at its rising power, are now bent on reducing it to utter impotence. . . .

In the land of its birth, wherein reside the immense majority of its followers . . . a civil authority, as yet undivorced officially from the paralyzing influences of an antiquated, fanatical, and outrageously corrupt clergy, pursues relentlessly its campaign of repression against the adherents of a Faith which it has for well-nigh a century striven unsuccessfully to suppress.

. . . .

And now recently in the Holy Land itself, the heart and nerve-center of a world-embracing Faith, the fires of racial animosity, of fratricidal strife, of unabashed terrorism, have lit a conflagration that gravely interferes, on the one hand with the flow of pilgrims that constitutes the life-blood of that center, and suspends, on the other, the various projects that had been initiated in connection with the preservation and extension of the areas surrounding the sacred spots it enshrines. . . .

The one chief remaining citadel, the mighty arm which still raises aloft the standard of an unconquerable Faith, is none other than the blessed community of followers of the Most Great Name in the North American continent. By its works and through the un-failing protection vouchsafed to it by an almighty Providence, this distinguished member of the body of the constantly interacting Baha'i communities of East and West, bids fair to be universally regarded as the cradle, as well as the stronghold, of that future New World Order, which is at once the promise and the glory of the Dispensation associated with the name of Baha'u'llah.²

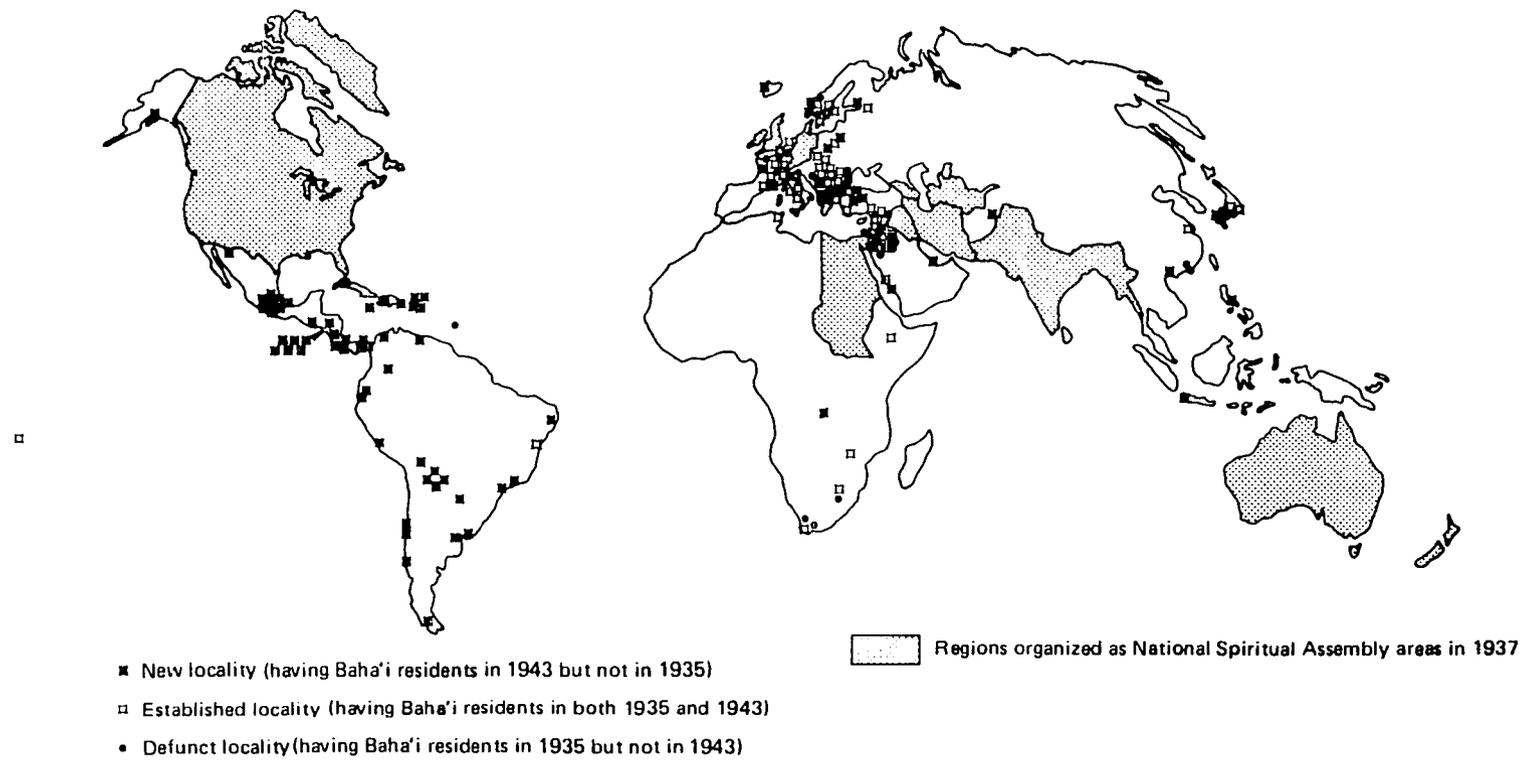
In addition to 'Abdu'l-Baha's directives, therefore, practical considerations exercised an influence on Shoghi Effendi's choice of North America as the executor of his First Seven Year Plan. No other Baha'i community had sufficient manpower and adequate freedom of action to undertake the task in 1937.

The best way to review Baha'i growth during the 1937-1944 period is to map the change in the geographical distribution of Baha'is during those years and assess the extent to which the change fulfilled the Latin American objectives. If growth was substantial throughout Latin America and was inconsequential elsewhere, then the First Seven Year Plan can be viewed as the principal force underlying Baha'i diffusion during that period.

Figure 33 shows the impact of the plan. Growth was obviously confined to two regions: (1) Latin America (the target area), and (2) Europe and the Near East.

² Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 2-5.

FIGURE 33 Distribution of Baha'is Residing Outside National Spiritual Assembly Areas Before and Near the End of the First Seven Year Plan (1937–1944)



Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1934–1936*: 505–511; *The Baha'i World: 1940–1944*: 651–658

First, it would be good to consider the nature of Baha'i change in Europe and the Near East and to dispel the notion that substantial growth was occurring there. Throughout the region there did appear a number of new localities with Baha'i residents while an almost equal number of localities lost the Baha'is that they had had at the start of the planning period. One would have to conclude that within the region the apparent growth was actually nothing more than forced relocation. Baha'is in that area were moving around, probably as a consequence of the chaotic wartime conditions.

In contrast, Latin America definitely experienced Baha'i growth. At the start of the planning period, there was one Baha'i in all of Latin America; by the end of the plan there were 40 localities with Baha'i residents. Those localities were widely distributed throughout the whole continent, and 23 of them were sufficiently well established to have local Spiritual Assemblies. The objective of the Seven Year Plan was achieved; in fact diffusion exceeded the goal. The impact of the plan was so predictable that those areas of Latin America which were not republics did not have Baha'is by 1944: The Guianas, British Honduras, and the various colonial islands of the lesser Antilles. The stated objective of the First Seven Year Plan--one Baha'i community in each Latin American republic--so focused the dissemination efforts of the North American Baha'is that the observed distribution of Baha'is in 1944 fit almost perfectly with the distribution one would have expected under the assumptions that (1) the plan objectives would be achieved, and (2) growth would only occur if planned.

Actually, as Figure 33 shows, the Faith experienced declines in some other parts of the world. The National Spiritual Assemblies in Germany, the Caucasus, and Turkestan, for example, were disbanded because of persecution. This contraction was real for the two national areas located in the U.S.S.R.; the Faith never recovered there and national organizations have not existed since. In Germany, however, the disbandment was temporary and the integrity of the national Baha'i community was reestablished at the end of the war in the West German sector.

To summarize, it is apparent that international Baha'i diffusion between 1937 and 1944 proceeded according to plan objectives and did not occur through any significant amount of random migration and information transfer. Even when one looks inside the national areas the same conclusion is merited. The only domestic objective of the First Seven Year Plan was the assurance of one local Spiritual Assembly in each state of the United States and each province of Canada. The effects of this one plan objective are obvious from a tabulation of local Spiritual Assemblies existing in each National Assembly area at the beginning and end of the plan period (see Table 27). Although India/Burma experienced substantial growth in its number of local Spiritual Assemblies, even by 1943 there were only 23 (the same as Latin America). A marginal increase in the number of local Assemblies probably took place in Iran; elsewhere (except in North America) significant growth did not occur. But North America, where a planning objective was in effect, showed large and unmistakable expansion.

TABLE 27

NUMBER OF LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES IN EACH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AREA
BEFORE AND AFTER THE FIRST SEVEN YEAR PLAN

National Spiritual Assembly Area ^a	No. of LSA's in 1937	No. of LSA's in 1945
North America	69	134
India/Burma	8	23
Turkestan	8	--
Caucasus	6	--
Germany	7	--
Egypt	4	7
Australia/New Zealand	4	5
Iraq	3	6
Great Britain/Ireland	2	5
Iran ^b	(560 occupied localities)	(560 occupied localities)

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1936-1938, Vol. VII, pp. 555-575;
The Baha'i World: 1944-1946, Vol. X (Wilmette, Ill.:
Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1949), pp. 551-582.

^aThis column contains all the National Assemblies existing in 1937. By 1945, Turkestan, the Caucasus, and Germany had been dissolved, but shortly thereafter Germany was reformed.

^bThere are no available statistics on the number of local Assemblies in Iran, but the figures shown indicate the number of opened localities.

Of course the question arises as to how the First Seven Year Plan was implemented, and the answer is the same as for preceding and subsequent periods in the development of the Faith. The most effective method of implementation was through disbursement of settlers from North America to the goal areas. From 1940 onwards, the use of pioneers became the fundamental means of achieving plan objectives. The administration of the Faith has taken responsibility for identifying goal localities, exhorting believers to pioneer in those places, and maintaining an

up-to-date accounting of which ones have been occupied. The decision to pioneer has always remained personal, however, as has the choice of a destination.

In the years preceding 1940, travel teaching was a more typical form of Baha'i activity than pioneering. In most countries, however, the development of Baha'i groups and Assemblies did not occur until after a pioneer had entered the area. As early as 1921, Martha Root visited most of the important cities in South America, and over the two ensuing decades various Baha'is passed through parts of Latin America proclaiming the Faith. Despite this, by 1937 no visible headway had been made in the region. However, once a pioneer arrived in a country it was usually only a matter of two or three years before a local Spiritual Assembly would spring into existence. This does not mean that travel teachers were ineffective; they generated awareness of the religion and were an important source of encouragement to the isolated pioneers who could look forward to their brief visits and could count on their assistance. Pioneers, however, were indispensable to the expansion process because (1) their decision to settle permanently and find local employment was a sign of commitment to the surrounding population, and (2) their continual presence insured a constant source of knowledge about the Faith upon which new converts could draw. Furthermore, the longer a pioneer stayed, the more complete became her knowledge of language, culture, and people. This would increase her effectiveness in bringing about conversions.

Figure 34 shows the precise distribution of localities opened to the Faith in Latin America during the planning period and indicates for

FIGURE 34 The Distribution of Baha'is in Latin America: 1943



Source: *The Baha'i World: 1940-1944*: 995-1002

each country the year of arrival of the first pioneer and year of formation of the first local Spiritual Assembly. Obviously, the Seven Year Plan was responsible for insuring that Baha'i development in South America would be highly dispersed and well balanced. By 1944 every republic had at least one opened locality and yet only Mexico had more than six. Local Spiritual Assemblies were so well distributed that the 21 existing by 1944 were located in 18 different countries.

It is evident from the map that Latin American republics usually were penetrated via a major city. After that, diffusion might proceed in either a contagious or a hierarchical fashion. In Brazil, only large cities were touched by the Faith while in El Salvador it spread from the capital only to nearby localities. In Mexico both trends can be discerned. Whether or not subsequent diffusion was contagious or hierarchical depended partly on the numbers, destinations, and mobility of arriving pioneers and partly on the country's territorial size and the maturity of its network of urban places.

THE SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN: 1946-1953

Conditions for Diffusion in the Post-War World

A two year hiatus followed the successful completion of the First Seven Year Plan so that when in the spring of 1946 Shoghi Effendi launched the Second Seven Year Plan world conditions were more settled than they would have been if planning had proceeded without interruption. During the interval, World War II ended in both the European and Asian Theaters. The end of hostilities greatly improved the potential mobility of Baha'is bent on international dissemination of their religion, and the

post-war economic boom combined with cheap, rapid air travel to realize that potential.

At the same time, however, the beginnings of two different processes foreshadowed increasing difficulties for Baha'i pioneer activity. The first of these had an immediate and pronounced impact; the other was a gradual development which only in recent years has become a significant hindrance to Baha'i diffusion. The dramatic development was the global polarization of the communist and non-communist regions that was precipitated by the Cold War. The more gradual process was the decline of political colonialism and the appearance of numerous independent nations.

The confrontation between communism and capitalism curtailed the flow of people and ideas between the two regions in which these ideologies held sway. The anti-religious stance of communism combined with its political isolationism to virtually exclude the Baha'i Faith. Early on, communist persecution terminated organized Baha'i activity in the Caucasus and Turkestan. When, at the end of World War II, Eastern Europe became part of the communist realm, the scattering of Baha'i communities there rapidly disappeared, presumably because of isolation and persecution. Since then, the Baha'i Faith has been systematically excluded from communist countries. There are, perhaps, Baha'is remaining in those countries, but their problems of communication, their inability to organize, and their incapacity to openly proclaim their Faith have thoroughly stalemated any dissemination efforts. More recent Baha'i growth plans have accepted this political reality by placing most emphasis on expansion in areas outside the communist realm.

The end of colonialism was gradual and thus had little effect on the execution of the Second Seven Year Plan. In more recent years, however, the xenophobic protectionism of many newly independent states has made it very difficult for expatriots to obtain permanent resident status--particularly if it is known that their intent is to convert the local population to their religion. The strategies adopted by the Faith to combat this problem include: recruitment of third world nationals who are temporarily residing overseas; encouragement of pioneers whose ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traits are compatible with the character of a goal area; accelerated placement of pioneers in areas where anti-foreign attitudes are increasing; and strong encouragement to pioneers already in the field not to leave their posts.

Problems of Analysis

It is hard to relate Baha'i expansion during the years 1946-1953 with the plan objectives which were then in force. Even though the American Baha'i community was executing a well defined plan that spanned precisely this period, eight other National Assembly areas were motivated to develop and implement growth plans of their own. Those plans were independent efforts undertaken by National Assembly areas that varied widely in size of membership, amount of administrative experience, degree of personal freedom, and availability of non-human resources. In addition, these National plans did not span exactly the same time period as the American Second Seven Year Plan; all ran for less than seven years, the shortest being nineteen months and the longest six years. All terminated before the end of the Second Seven Year Plan, but two started before 1946 when the Second Seven Year Plan was launched.

Shoghi Effendi coordinated all these planning efforts and insured that there were no conflicting goals or duplicate efforts. Consequently, global expansion proceeded in a geographically balanced fashion. In order to evaluate the extent to which growth conformed to plan objectives during the period 1944-1953, however, it is obviously not enough to consider only the Second Seven Year Plan. It is necessary to consider all the other plans and determine the extent to which they too were responsible for Baha'i growth. This is difficult because plans began and ended at different times and data on distribution of Baha'is are not so complete as to permit a perfect re-creation of Baha'i presence immediately before and after each plan. There are directories indicating localities with Baha'i residents in 1945, 1949, and 1953--and this information can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of each of the many plans independently--but unfortunately the data usually do not conform perfectly to the starting and ending points of a plan. Furthermore, the directory for April, 1953, is defective in that it tabulates opened localities only in those areas which belonged to a National Spiritual Assembly. It is necessary to work around this problem and to accept as unavoidable the occasional gaps in information.

Plans and Achievements

Types of Territories

The time horizons and objectives of the numerous plans in force during the years 1944-1953 were summarized earlier in Table 4. However, in order to address the more general issue of how planning affected Baha'i growth, all information regarding duration of plan, methods of

implementation, and responsibility for execution will be ignored. Instead, only dissemination objectives set for different countries and regions will be considered in an attempt to answer the following two questions: Were those objectives achieved? Was dissemination more rapid in areas designated for Baha'i growth?

The second of these questions recognizes two types of territories-- those where Baha'i growth was planned and those where it was not. In fact, it is valuable to expand this classification by distinguishing between those areas of planned growth which were an integrated part of an existing National Assembly region and those which were not. There is a reason for this distinction. Within National Spiritual Assembly regions planned growth was intended to consolidate the existing power base by increasing the size of membership and the number of administrative units. Outside National Assembly areas, however, plans for expansion were almost exclusively concerned with dispersing the Faith. If statistics for the two types of territory were aggregated, the much greater numerical weight of the Faith within National Spiritual Assembly regions would obscure the extent to which goals were achieved in the numerically modest, but strategically important, "international" goal areas. This would be unfortunate because it is these dispersion goals which have generated the global distribution of Baha'is. In order to avoid this problem, each of the three kinds of territory will be analyzed separately.

Some confusion arises out of the fact that plans frequently specified dispersion goals specifically designed to open areas in National Assembly regions where Baha'is were either absent or scarce in 1945. In these

instances, even though they belonged to National Assembly regions, the areas were considered as "international" goal areas.

National Spiritual Assembly Areas

When the Second Seven Year Plan began in the spring of 1946 there were eight National Spiritual Assemblies: (1) the United States and Canada, (2) the British Isles, (3) Germany and Austria, (4) Egypt and the Sudan, (5) Iraq, (6) Iran, (7) India and Burma, and (8) Australia and New Zealand. The Second Seven Year Plan called for the creation of three new National Assemblies, all in the Western Hemisphere. Canada was to become independent in 1948; in 1951 the whole of Latin America was to be organized into two National regions (Central America and South America). Furthermore, the successful dissemination of the Faith in Europe permitted the creation of a fourth new National Assembly in 1952: Italy and Switzerland. Thus, by 1953 the number of National Spiritual Assemblies had been increased from eight to twelve. Of the four new ones, however, only Canada was formed early enough to develop and execute its own plan. Nine National areas, therefore, participated in the planned diffusion efforts pursued during the period 1944-1953.

Table 28 summarizes the local Assembly goals and achievements for each National Assembly area during the period 1945-1953. One can see that in many instances plans called for very large increases in the numbers of Assemblies. The British Isles and Australia/New Zealand, for example, proposed to more than treble their numbers, while Canada, Iraq, and India, Pakistan, and Burma intended to at least double theirs. Only the United States, Iran, and Egypt had plans requiring relatively modest increases.

TABLE 28

BAHA'I DIFFUSION: PLANNED GROWTH AND ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENTS
DURING THE SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN (1946-1953)

Area of Planned Growth	LSA's Existing in 1945	LSA's <u>Goal</u> for 1953	LSA's <u>Achieved</u> by 1953
United States	125	175	169
Canada	11	30	26
Central America	10	"more"	21
South America	12	"more"	18
Great Britain	5	19	19
Germany/Austria	--	(28 localities)	17 (20 localities)
Egypt/Sudan	7	(42 localities)	10 (41 localities)
Iraq	6	16	6
Iran	291	353	307
India/Pakistan/Burma	25	63	51
Australia/New Zealand	4	11	15

Sources: See Tables 3 and 4.

The relative ambitiousness of different plans depended on many things. Any national area with few Assemblies (such as Australia/New Zealand) normally would be concerned with affecting a large increase in the number of Assemblies so as to insure the integrity, and broaden the electoral base, of the National Assembly.³ Countries with relatively large numbers of local Assemblies in 1945 would not be so concerned with this since their National bodies already had strong foundations. Furthermore, a country having numerous overseas goals (especially the United States) would not have such ambitious plans for domestic expansion since available resources were limited. Also, the capacity of a country

³See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 23.

to increase its number of local Assemblies would depend on the number of localities having groups. If there are many groups, then the creation of new Assemblies only requires the expansion of existing Baha'i communities. If, on the other hand, there are few opened localities, then the formation of a new Assembly may require the relocation of one or more Baha'is to a previously unopened locality and the increasing of membership until the size of the new community reaches nine. This was part of the reason why the British Isles was able to entertain the possibility of more than trebling its number of local Assemblies while Egypt and the Sudan could only propose a slight increase; Britain had 30 localities with groups in 1945 whereas Egypt and the Sudan only had 10.

As for the actual levels of achievement, it is apparent that in all but two instances National Spiritual Assemblies exceeded, matched, or nearly met their objectives. The two exceptions were Iraq and Iran where religious suppression prohibited substantial gains and caused those countries to fall short of their domestic goals. At the other extreme, Germany/Austria managed to achieve much greater expansion than planned. It may be that a demoralizing defeat in World War II made the German population more receptive to non-traditional religious influences such as the Baha'i Faith; a similar phenomenon occurred in the United States immediately following the Vietnam War.

Iraq, Iran, and Germany aside, National Spiritual Assemblies tended to increase their numbers of local Assemblies exactly as planned. Overachievement and underachievement were on a relatively minor scale, and in general the number of Assemblies specified as an objective for a given

country was a good predictor of the number that materialized by 1953. This suggests that Baha'i growth plans established the religion's rate of expansion and molded the geographic expression of its diffusion.

International Goal Areas

A number of widely distributed territories were targeted either for initial penetration or for expansion of their very small Baha'i populations. There were in all 44 such territories, 30 of which had no resident believers whatever and 14 of which contained Baha'i populations ranging in size from a minimum of one to a maximum of about 10-15 (most of these 14 territories, however, contained only one or two Baha'is).

Table 29 lists the 44 targeted territories and shows for each: (1) the numbers of localities having local Assemblies and groups in 1945, (2) the numbers of Assemblies and groups specified as objectives for 1953, and (3) the actual numbers of Assemblies and groups achieved by 1953. A cursory examination of the table will confirm that objectives were achieved in 41 of the 44 territories.

It should be remembered that the intention in these areas was not to enroll large numbers of believers. Rather, it was to establish Baha'i communities which could act as sources for later diffusion. Much has been made of the fact that the Faith has relied heavily on this diffusion strategy, but until now there has been no way of evaluating its effectiveness. Has the creation of small Baha'i communities strategically placed around the world actually been effective in dispersing the religion to any substantial degree? Historical experience permits a positive response. Whereas in 1937 there was only one Baha'i

TABLE 29
 BAHAI DIFFUSION, 1946-1953: PLANNED GROWTH AND ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE 44 AREAS
 THAT HAD FEW OR NO BAHAI'S IN 1946 AND THAT WERE TARGETED BY A PLAN
 DURING THE SUCCEEDING SEVEN YEARS

Targeted Area	LSA's and Groups Existing in 1945, Planned for 1953, and Achieved by 1953					
	Existing in 1945		Planned for 1953		Achieved by 1953	
	LSA's	Groups	LSA's	Groups	LSA's	Groups
Alaska	1	4	"increase"		2	24
Newfoundland	-	-		1	1	1
Greenland	-	-		1	1	-
Franklin Islands	-	-		1	1	1
Yukon	-	-		1	1	1
Mackenzie	-	-		1	1	1
Keewatin	-	-		1	1	1
Ungava	-	-		1	1	-
Wales	-	-		1	1	3
Scotland	-	-		1	2	3
Ireland	-	1		1	1	-
N. Ireland	-	-		1	1	1
Spain	-	-	1		2	6
Portugal	-	-	1		1	3
Holland	-	1	1		1	3
Belgium	-	1	1		1	2
Luxembourg	-	-	1		1	-
Sweden	-	1	1		1	5
Norway	-	2	1		1	5
Denmark	-	1	1		1	3
Italy	-	2	1		3	10
Switzerland	-	4	1		3	9
Algeria	-	-		1	-	2
Libya	-	-		1	-	1
Liberia	-	-		1	-	4
Tanganyika	-	-		1	1	6
Uganda	-	-		1	12	13
Kenya	-	1		1	1	9
Gold Coast	-	-		1	-	2
Somaliland	-	-		1	-	1
N. Rhodesia	-	-		1	-	1
Nyasaland	-	-		1	-	1
Zanzibar	-	-		1	-	1
Madagascar	-	-		1	-	2
Ceylon	-	-	2		1	2
Indonesia	-	1		1	1	1
Siam	-	-		1	-	1
Malaya	-	-		1	1	1
Sarawak	-	-		1	1	-
Nepal	-	-		1	-	1
Indochina	-	-		1	-	1
Arabian Peninsula (S. Arabia)	-	2	1	4	3	5
Afghanistan	-	2	1		1	1
Bahrein	-	1	1		1	-
Totals	1	26	15	33	46	142
(Rest of World)	7	41			12	81

Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1944-1946*, pp. 551-582; *The Baha'i World: 1950-1954*, Vol. XII (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 717-774. For sources regarding various plan objectives see Tables 3 and 4.

residing in all of Latin America, and North America contained 100 percent of the local Spiritual Assemblies in the Western Hemisphere, by 1953 the picture had changed. Despite rapid growth in Canada and the United States, Latin America had expanded its Baha'i membership to the point where it contained over 12 percent of all Western Hemisphere Assemblies. Furthermore, the redistribution process which the plan initiated has not lost momentum. By 1973, over 65 percent of all local Spiritual Assemblies in the Western Hemisphere were located in Latin America.

Therefore, the modest goals that were set for the 44 international areas identified in Table 29 were more significant than their numbers would suggest. Even though in most cases plans only called for the creation of one group or Assembly, this first step initiated an unprecedented redistribution of the Faith. In fact, the achievement of objectives in 41 out of 44 territories set the stage for later expansion; by 1973 those same 44 territories contained more than 4,000 local Spiritual Assemblies.

Planned vs. Unplanned Growth

One can conclude that the Baha'i Faith successfully executed its plans during the period 1944-1953. Furthermore, supplementary evidence has been presented which strongly supports the idea that planning has been an effective tool for stimulating both demographic and geographic growth of the Faith. Of course, it is impossible to be conclusive since there is no way of knowing what would have happened without planning. However, the numerous territories which were not targeted for expansion during the years 1944-1953 can be viewed as a control group against which

growth in the 44 goal areas can be compared. Table 30 summarizes this comparison.

TABLE 30
 PLANNED VS. UNPLANNED GROWTH: THE SECOND
 SEVEN YEAR PLAN (1946-1953)

	LSA's in 1945	Groups in 1945	LSA's in 1953	Groups in 1953
International Areas Targeted for Growth:	0	22	44	118
International Areas Not Targeted for Growth:	7	41	12	81

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1944-1946, X (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1949), pp. 551-581; The Baha'i World: 1946-1950, XI (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1952), pp. 519-574; The Baha'i World: 1950-1954, XII (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 707-714.

The figures speak for themselves. In spite of the obvious advantage enjoyed by areas not targeted for growth in 1945, the targeted areas experienced much more rapid expansion by 1953.

Europe and Africa

Of all the plans that were prosecuted between 1944 and 1953, two in particular were devoted primarily to international goals that would further the cause of dispersion. The Second Seven Year Plan was designed to initiate ". . . systematic teaching activity in war-torn, spiritually famished European continent, . . . aiming at establishment of Assemblies in the Iberian Peninsula, the Low Countries, the

Scandinavian states and Italy. . . .",⁴ while the two year African plan was concerned with establishing the Faith in a number of East, West, and Central African territories. Since Europe and Africa were the setting for the most serious dissemination efforts during the early post-war years, it makes sense to observe in detail the geographic expression of Baha'i growth in those two regions.

Figure 35 portrays the patterns of Baha'i growth in Europe between the years 1945 and 1953. The map understates the degree to which the Faith was concentrated in the two National Spiritual Assembly areas (British Isles and Germany/Austria). Outside those two areas all localities having Baha'is in either 1945 or 1953 are shown. Inside, however, lack of space required that only localities with local Spiritual Assemblies in either of the two years be plotted.

It is evident from Figure 35 that the Faith was making no headway in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. Baha'i communities managed to survive in Leningrad, Prague, Budapest, and Sofia, and one new outpost was established in Warsaw. This was the meager extent of Baha'i representation in the communist realm, however, as World War II and the ensuing decade eradicated most of the gains made during the interbellum period. During the war, the Faith experienced substantial contraction in a number of Eastern European countries.

In particular, Rumania, Bulgaria, and East Germany were affected. In the 1920s, Martha Root travelled extensively in Eastern Europe and

⁴Shoghi Effendi, "Message from the Guardian to the [1946] Convention," Baha'i News, 184 (June, 1946):1.

FIGURE 35 Baha'i Growth in Europe: 1945–1953



- Established LSA (existed in 1945 & 1953)
- New LSA (no resident Baha'i in 1945)
- ⊕ New LSA in an established locality (Baha'i group in 1945)
- Established group (1–8 believers)
- New group
- Defunct locality
- ▨ Existing NSA's 1945–1953
- ▧ Areas targeted for growth: 1945–1953
- ▩ Italy and Switzerland became a single NSA in 1952

Note: Groups are not shown in existing NSA's

Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1944–1946*: 551–582; *The Baha'i World: 1946–1950*: 519–574; *The Baha'i World: 1950–1954*: 717–774 and map on back cover

managed to form a number of Baha'i communities. She was most successful in Rumania where she was able to convert the dowager, Queen Marie, who became an outspoken advocate of the Faith, thereby stimulating local interest in the religion.⁵ Bulgaria, it will be remembered, was opened by a pioneer named Marion Jack; by 1939 she had succeeded in converting people in eight different localities. These early Baha'i outposts in Rumania and Bulgaria were gone by 1945 and one can only conclude that by the end of the war the early believers were either dead, deported, displaced, or disillusioned. At any rate, by 1945 only in Sofia, where Marion Jack continued to reside, did the Baha'i Faith still have representation. In East Germany, groups existing in a few localities before the war had disappeared by 1953. In summary, it is apparent that the political climate of the region made it impossible for the Baha'i Faith to survive.

A second observation about the patterns portrayed in Figure 35 is that they reinforce the conclusion that the religion grew rapidly in those areas targeted for expansion but made little headway elsewhere. The only exception is France where five groups came into existence. It is not surprising that France should be an exception. Except for European Turkey, the earliest European Baha'i community was there. A number of experienced, dependable Baha'is must have resided there at the end of World War II, some of whom would have responded to the challenge of the

⁵Actually, Queen Marie actively propounded Baha'i principles not only in her own country but also overseas. Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, pp. 107-117; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, pp. 389-393.

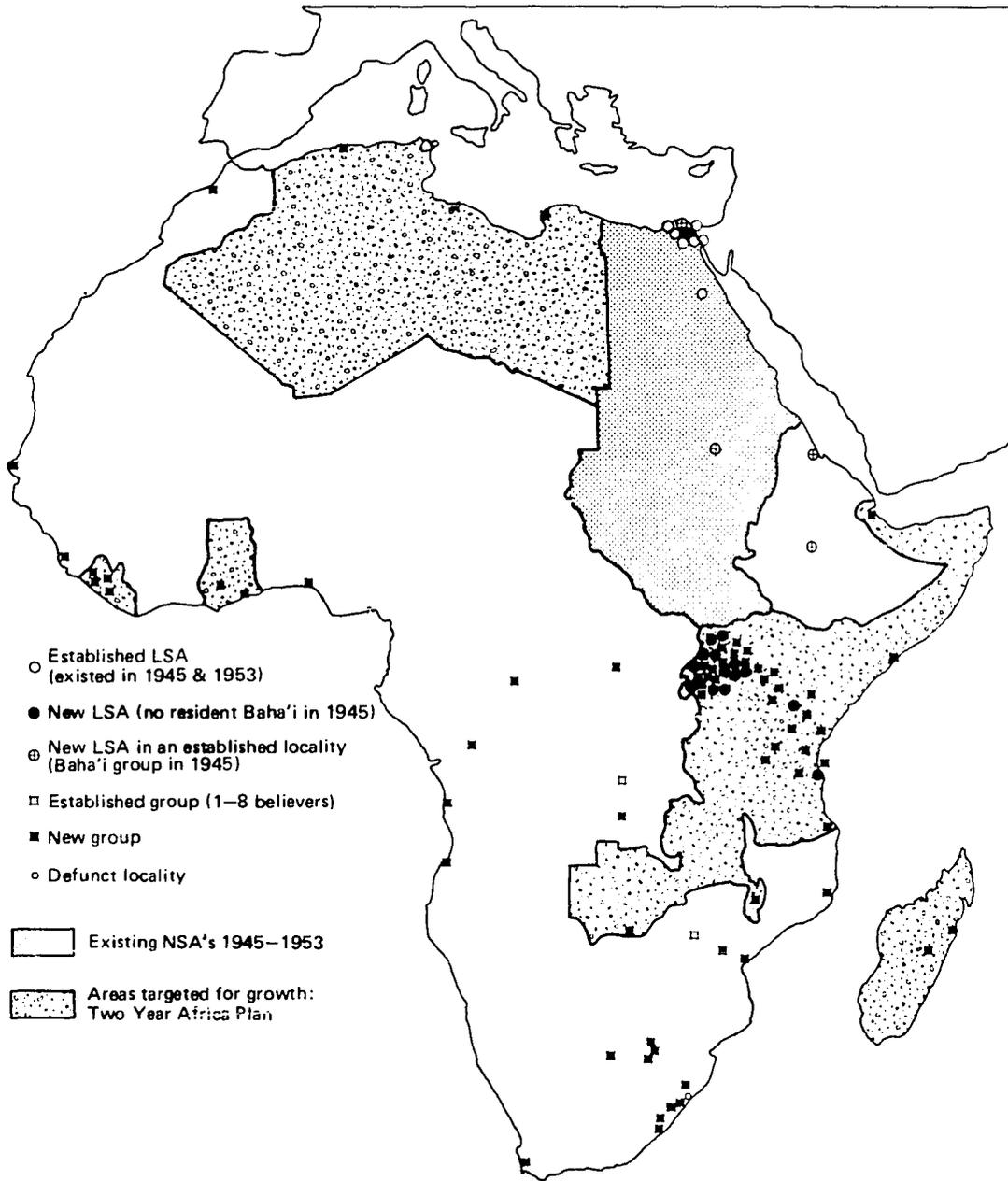
Second Seven Year Plan by trying to broaden the base of the religion in their homeland. It is interesting that Shoghi Effendi did not call for any specific activity there when he announced his Second Seven Year Plan. In 1946 France was the European territory with the greatest potential for organization as a National Spiritual area; it contained four groups and a local Spiritual Assembly. And yet the Guardian saw fit to specify goals that placed priority on stimulating growth in other areas of Europe--those areas with few or no Baha'is. This decision exemplifies the Baha'i preoccupation with dispersion in the early stages of the diffusion process.

Figure 36 presents information about Baha'i growth in Africa during the years 1945-1953. As with the map of Europe, concentration in a National Spiritual Assembly area--in this case Egypt and the Sudan--is understated because of the cartographic impossibility of accurately locating groups.

Africa is vast, and, as Figure 36 shows, most of it was untouched by the Baha'i Faith in 1945. Outside of Egypt and the Sudan, there was only one Assembly: Tunis. Ethiopia, Eritria, Kenya, the Belgian Congo, Rhodesia, and South Africa each had one group. This was the limit of Baha'i presence--about 25 Baha'is in seven centers in an area of about 11.5 million square miles. Eight years later the Faith was still a very minor presence on the continent, but at least by then many political units had some Baha'i residents and a dispersed network of localities were poised to stimulate the continent-wide explosion that would occur in the ensuing decades.

Africa differs from Europe in that expansion was not confined to goal areas. All goal areas were opened, but so were a number of other

FIGURE 36 Baha'i Growth in Africa: 1945-1953



Note: Groups are not shown in existing NSA's

Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1944-1946*:551-582; *The Baha'i World: 1946-1950*: 519-574; *The Baha'i World 1950-1954*:717-774 and map on back cover

territories which lay outside the purview of the Africa Plan. To some extent this can be explained by the fact that the Africa Plan was successfully ended in 1952, leaving Baha'is in the goal regions free to turn their attentions to other untouched areas of the continent. Furthermore, the dramatic success of the religion in Uganda and, to a lesser extent, in Kenya and Tanganyika, created a pool of new Baha'is whose racial and cultural background better fitted them for the task of spreading the religion on the continent. By 1954 Uganda was a significant source of manpower for work in the other parts of Africa.⁶ Even before 1953, some of those native pioneers may have opened parts of Africa not included in the Africa Plan.

Uganda experienced rapid growth. In 1950 it could not claim a single Baha'i resident, yet three years later it was a major center of the religion in Africa. It has been impossible to discern why the Faith should have been so successful in this one territory while expansion elsewhere on the continent proceeded sedately. Perhaps a separate study focusing on Baha'i development in Uganda would yield an explanation. The historical materials necessary for such an undertaking were not readily available.⁷ Whatever the explanation, Uganda is not a unique case. There has been a tendency for the Faith to grow in local spurts. It happened in Bolivia in the 1950s and 1960s; it happened in South Carolina in the early 1970s; it happened in the Philippines in the mid-1970s.

⁶Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 62.

⁷The Africa Plan made Britain responsible for developing Uganda, and so the Baha'i archives in the United States were not useful.

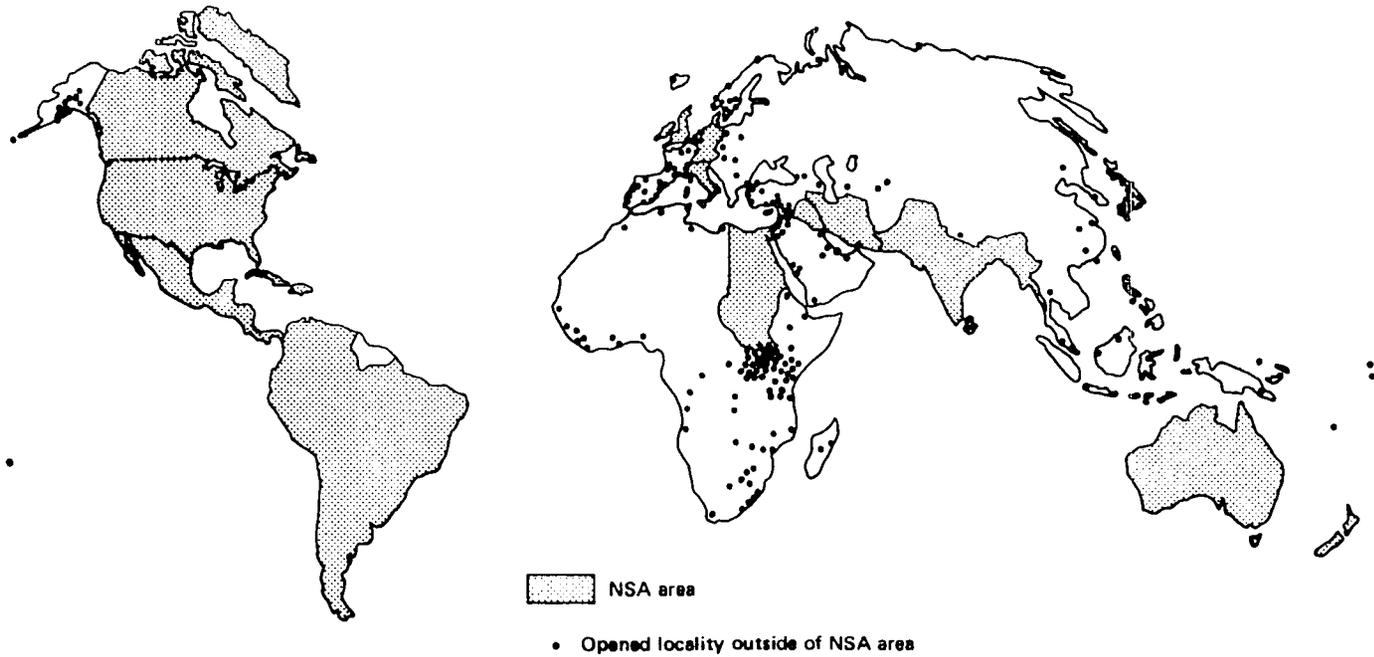
Outside Uganda, Baha'i growth was most noticeable in South Africa. This was not a goal area in the Africa Plan, and yet between 1950 and 1953 ten localities were opened. One suspects that there may have been a number of Baha'is already in the country who, although inactive in the years preceding the Africa Plan, were brought back into the mainstream of the Faith by the optimism, enthusiasm, and purposefulness of newly arrived Baha'is. South Africa, after all, was first opened by Fanny Knoblock before 1920, and throughout the quarter-century preceding the advent of the Second Seven Year Plan, Baha'i communities existed continuously in that country.

1953

In April, 1953, the Baha'i Faith stood at a critical point. Shoghi Effendi's two Seven Year Plans had been consummated and the geographical limits of the Baha'i ecumene had been extended to the outer reaches of the inhabited world. It is true that in communist countries the Baha'i outposts were few in number, widely scattered, and of questionable durability, but that was the situation in many other regions of the world too. In a sense, by 1953 the religion had achieved a global distribution (see Figure 37).

In many areas, however, the Baha'i footholds were so tenuous that their permanence was highly questionable. Outside its core areas, the Faith was spread so thin that stability was out of the question; either the religion would capitalize on its far-flung network of immature communities by using them as centers for more growth or else the centers would die out and the Baha'i ecumene would contract, probably retreating to its traditional core areas in Iran, North America, and India.

FIGURE 37 The Baha'i World in 1953



Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1946-1950*: 519-574; *The Baha'i World: 1950-1954*: 717-774
map on back cover; *The Baha'i World: 1954-1963*: 519-574

Contraction was the only alternative to growth because most of the Baha'i outposts were staffed by only one or two believers, many of whom suffered the additional disadvantage of being elderly foreigners. In such circumstances, the Baha'i presence could only be perpetuated by attracting new believers or by importing adherents from elsewhere; otherwise, mortality ultimately would eradicate the Baha'i presence.

By so thoroughly committing the Faith to global expansion, therefore, the Guardian had ordained that at least in the short run the religion would be pursuing an objective of such grand proportions that the outcome could only be overwhelming success or staggering failure. Either way, the psychological impact would be enormous and probably would have very important long-term implications for the development of the Faith. To the agnostic, the Guardian's decision might be seen as a gamble, pure and simple. To the businessman or social scientist, he might seem to be engaging in a calculated risk. To a Baha'i, however, Shoghi Effendi was merely performing an act of faith by giving expression to his grandfather's description of the religion's destiny.

At any rate, by 1953 the religion was approaching a vulnerable stage in its geographical development. The immediate future would bring either consolidation of its far-flung network or contraction of its ecumene. But Shoghi Effendi did more than precipitate this historical watershed in Baha'i affairs--he magnified it by formulating a Ten Year Plan that called for even greater dispersion. Consolidation through the process of converting new believers was to be realized, but only after pioneers had been dispatched to an unprecedented number of new localities. In 1953 the Baha'i world embarked on a new campaign that was truly global in scope and far more ambitious than the two preceding plans.

THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1963

Objectives of the Plan

In October, 1952, Shoghi Effendi forwarded a cablegram to the twelve existing National Spiritual Assemblies alerting the Baha'i world to the Ten Year Plan that soon would be guiding their activities:⁸

Feel hour propitious to proclaim to the entire Baha'i world the projected launching . . . fate-laden, soul-stirring, decade-long, world-embracing Spiritual Crusade involving the simultaneous initiation of twelve national Ten Year Plans and the concerted participation of all National Spiritual Assemblies of the Baha'i world aiming at the immediate extension of Baha'u'llah's Spiritual dominion as well as the eventual establishment of the structure of His administrative order in all remaining Sovereign States, Principal Dependencies comprising Principalities, Sultanates, Emirates, Shaykhdom's, Protectorates, Trust Territories, and Crown Colonies scattered over the surface of the entire planet. The entire body of the avowed supporters of Baha'u'llah's all-conquering Faith are now summoned to achieve in a single decade feats eclipsing in totality the achievements which in the course of the eleven preceding decades illuminated the annals of Baha'i pioneering.⁹

The Guardian then went on to explain that this global campaign would have four main objectives:

. . . First, development of the institutions of the World Center of the Faith in the Holy Land. Second, consolidation, through carefully devised measures on the home front of the twelve territories destined to serve as administrative bases for the operations of the twelve National Plans. Third, consolidation of all territories already opened to the Faith. Fourth, the opening of the remaining chief virgin territories on the planet through specific allotments to each National Assembly functioning in the Baha'i world.¹⁰

⁸Actually, the Guardian had been preparing the Baha'i world for the prospect of a new and more ambitious plan ever since November, 1951. The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, pp. 246-247.

⁹Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 41.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 41-42

In this and succeeding messages Shoghi Effendi laid out in detail what were to be the specific goals of each National Assembly's Ten Year Plan. That information was compiled and organized by Beatrice Ashton whose tabular presentation of plan goals was published in 1954.¹¹ Her efforts have simplified the task of extracting the numerous National goals directly relevant to this diffusion study, in particular, those concerned with: (1) opening new territories, (2) creating new National Spiritual Assemblies, and (3) increasing the numbers of local Assemblies and opened localities. These kinds of goals were only a part of the entire Ten Year Crusade, however, and this must be kept in mind when evaluating the extent to which the Faith achieved them.

Shoghi Effendi guided the Baha'i World toward a phased completion of its ten year undertaking, and in doing so established the principle that the first year of the planning period should be devoted to opening all new territories. Immediately thereafter, priority was to be given to strengthening the administrative system by increasing the numbers of local Assemblies and opened localities and by forming new National Spiritual Assemblies. In the latter half of the planning period emphasis was to shift to increasing the numbers of believers.¹²

The Virgin Territories

A total of 131 new territories were to be opened during the Ten Year Plan. In fact, because of the way in which the Guardian sought staged

¹¹Beatrice Ashton (comp.), Objectives and Tasks of the Ten Year Spiritual Global Crusade of the Baha'i World Faith (U.S.A.: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, 1954).

¹²Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World, pp. 129-130.

completion of the plan, this objective was to be completed during the first year of the plan--between April, 1953 and April, 1954. Table 31 lists the territories that were assigned to each National Assembly area and indicates when, if ever, the Faith reached them. It can be seen that 100 territories were opened the first year, 20 more were penetrated before the end of the plan, while eleven were never opened. In other words, 76 percent of the virgin territory goals were achieved on schedule while an additional 15 percent were achieved before the end of the Crusade, yielding an ultimate success rate of 91 percent.

All the territories that were not opened and a third of those that were opened late were located in the communist bloc. The Cold War political environment obviously was the most effective barrier to total achievement of plan objectives. The 13 other territories that were opened after the first year of the Ten Year Crusade were widely scattered throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. They tended to be extremely isolated, but so were many of the territories that were successfully opened during that first year. One can only conclude that the non-communist territories opened late were random occurrences and that Baha'i tardiness in reaching them was not an expression of some general barrier to diffusion.

Figure 38 identifies the locations of the 131 territories that were to be opened, shows National Assemblies to which they were allocated, and indicates whether or not they were successfully penetrated. The map reveals the extent to which the distribution of territories was truly global; there was a dearth of goal territories only in those areas already occupied. There seems to have been little regard for population

TABLE 31

THE 131 TERRITORIES THAT WERE TO BE OPENED TO THE BAHÁ'Í
FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1963

National Spiritual Assemblies Involved in Opening the Territory			
Territory	NSA Assigned the Objective	NSA that Achieved Objective (if different)	Month and Year Opened
OPENED ON TIME			
Aleutian Islands	United States	-	Jul 1953
Andaman Islands	India/Pakistan/ Burma	-	Nov 1953
Andorra	United States	(unorganized terr.)	Oct 1953
Ashanti Protectorate	Iran	(unorganized terr.)	Apr 1954
Azores	United States	-	Oct 1953
Bahama Islands	Central America	United States	Oct 1953
Balearic Islands	United States	-	Aug 1953
Baranof Islands	Canada	-	Oct 1953
Basutoland	Iran	United States	Oct 1953
Bechuanaland	Iran	Canada	Feb 1954
British Cameroons	British Isles	(unorganized terr.)	Oct 1953
British Guiana	South America	Central America	Oct 1953
British Honduras	Central America	-	Sep 1953
British Togoland	British Isles	(unorganized terr.)	Apr 1954
Brunei	Iran	United States	Feb 1954
Canary Islands	United States	-	Sep 1953
Cape Breton Islands	Canada	-	Oct 1953
Cape Verde Islands	United States	-	Jan 1954
Caroline Islands	United States	-	Jan 1954
Channel Islands	British Isles	-	Sep 1953
Chiloc Island	South America	-	Oct 1953
Cook Islands	South America	United States	Oct 1953
Crete	Germany/Austria	-	Oct 1953
Cyprus	British Isles	Iran	Aug 1953
Daman	India/Pakistan/ Burma	-	Jun 1953
Diu Island	India/Pakistan/ Burma	-	Dec 1953
Dutch Guiana	South America	United States	Oct 1953
Dutch New Guinea	United States	-	Oct 1953
Dutch West Indies	Central America	United States	Nov 1953
Falkland Islands	United States	-	Feb 1954
Faroe Islands	British Isles	United States	Jul 1953
Franklin	Canada	-	Sep 1953

TABLE 31 (continued) THE 131 TERRITORIES THAT WERE TO BE OPENED TO
THE BAHA'I FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1963

<u>National Spiritual Assemblies Involved in Opening the Territory</u>			
<u>Territory</u>	NSA Assigned the Objective	NSA that Achieved Objective (if different)	Month and Year Opened
French Camerouns	India/Pakistan		
	Burma	British Isles	Apr 1954
French Equatorial Africa	Egypt/Sudan	(unorganized terr.)	Oct 1953
French Guiana	South America	United States	Oct 1953
French Somaliland	United States	-	Aug 1953
French Togoland	United States	(unorganized terr.)	Apr 1954
French West Africa	Egypt/Sudan	-	Nov 1953
Frisian Islands	Germany/Austria	-	Sep 1953
Galapagos Islands	South America	-	Apr 1954
Gambia	India/Pakistan/ Burma	Iran	Feb 1954
Gilbert and Ellice Islands	Central America	-	Mar 1954
Goa	India/Pakistan/ Burma	-	Jul 1953
Grand Manan Is.	Canada	-	Sep 1953
Greece	Germany/Austria	United States	Aug 1953
Hadhramaut	Iraq	-	Dec 1953
Hebrides Islands	British Isles	-	Oct 1953
Italian Somaliland	Iran	-	Mar 1953
Juan Fernandez Is.	South America	-	Oct 1953
Karikal	India/Pakistan Burma	-	Aug 1953
Keewatin	Canada	-	Sep 1953
Key West	United States	-	Jul 1953
Kodiak Island	United States	-	Jul 1953
Kuria-Muria Is.	Iraq	-	Jan 1954
Labrador	Canada	-	Apr 1954
Leeward Islands	South America	United States	Oct 1953
Liechtenstein	Italy/Switzerland	Iran	Aug 1953
Lofoten Islands	United States	-	Aug 1953
Macao Island	United States	-	Oct 1953
Madeira Islands	British Isles	United States	Sep 1953
Magdalen Islands	Canada	-	Sep 1953
Mahe	India/Pakistan/ Burma	-	Oct 1953
Malta	British Isles	-	Oct 1953
Margarita Island	Central America	South America	Oct 1953
Mariana Islands	India/Pakistan/ Burma	United States	Apr 1954

TABLE 31 (continued) THE 131 TERRITORIES THAT WERE TO BE OPENED TO
THE BAHAI FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1963

Territory	National Spiritual Assemblies Involved in Opening the Territory		
	NSA Assigned the Objective	NSA that Achieved Objective (if different)	Month and Year Opened
Marquesas Islands	Canada	-	Mar 1954
Mauritius	United States	-	Nov 1953
Mentawai	Australia/N.Z.	Iran	Feb 1954
Miquelon and St. Pierre	Canada	-	Oct 1953
Monaco	Italy/Switzerland	United States	Sep 1953
Morocco (Int'l Zone)	Egypt/Sudan	Iran	Sep 1953
New Hebrides	Australia/N.Z.	-	Oct 1953
Northern Terr. Protectorate	United States	-	Sep 1953
Orkney Islands	British Isles	-	Oct 1953
Pondicherry	India/Pakistan/ Burma	Iran	Jul 1953
Portuguese Guinea	United States	-	Jul 1953
Queen Charlotte Is.	Canada	-	Aug 1953
Reunion	United States	-	Oct 1953
Rhodes	Italy/Switzerland	United States	Jan 1954
Rio de Oro	Egypt/Sudan	-	Oct 1953
Ruanda-Urundi	India/Pakistan/ Burma	United States	May 1953
Samoa Islands	Canada	Australia/N.Z.	Jan 1954
San Marino	Italy/Switzerland	Iran	Nov 1953
Sardinia	Italy/Switzerland	United States	Oct 1953
Seychelles	Iraq	(unorganized terr.)	Nov 1953
Shetland Islands	British Isles	-	Sep 1953
Sicily	Italy/Switzerland	United States	Oct 1953
Sikkim	India/Pakistan Burma	-	Aug 1953
Society Islands	Australia/N.Z.	-	Oct 1953
Solomon Islands	Iran	Australia/N.Z.	Mar 1954
Southern Rhodesia	Iran	-	Jun 1953
South West Africa	British Isles	-	Oct 1953
Spanish Morocco	Egypt/Sudan	United States	Oct 1953
Spanish Sahara	Egypt/Sudan	-	Oct 1953
St. Thomas Is.	United States	-	Feb 1954
Swaziland	Iran	United States	Apr 1954
Tonga Islands	United States	Australia/N.Z.	Jan 1954
Tuamotu Archipelago	Central America	(unorganized terr.)	Jan 1954
Windward Islands	South America	United States	Oct 1953
Yukon	Canada	United States	Sep 1953

TABLE 31 (continued) THE 131 TERRITORIES THAT WERE TO BE OPENED TO
THE BAHAI FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1963

Territory	National Spiritual Assemblies Involved in Opening the Territory		
	NSA Assigned the Objective	NSA that Achieved Objective (if different)	Month and Year Opened
OPENED LATE			
Admiralty Islands	Australia/N.Z.	(?)	Jul 1954
Anticosti Island	Canada	(?)	Apr 1956
Bhutan	India/Pakistan		
	Burma	Iran	Jun 1954
Chagos Archipelago	Iran	(?)	May 1957
Cocos Islands	Australia/N.Z.	(?)	Jun 1955
Comoro Islands	India/Pakistan/ Burma	(?)	(?) 1954
Hainan Island	United States	(?)	(?) (?)
Kazakhstan	United States	(?)	(?) 1956
Kirgizia	Iran	(?)	(?) 1957
Loyalty Islands	Australia/N.Z.	(?)	Oct 1955
Marshall Islands	Central America	(?)	Aug 1954
Nicobar Islands	India/Pakistan/ Burma	(?)	Jun 1957
Portuguese Timor	Australia/N.Z.	(?)	Jun 1954
Socotra Island	India/Pakistan/ Burma	(?)	Mar 1955
Spanish Guinea	United States	(?)	May 1954
Spitzbergen	United States	(?)	Jun 1958
St. Helena Is.	United States	-	May 1954
Tadzhikistan	Iran	(?)	(?) 1957
Tibet	United States	India/Pakistan/ Burma	(spg) 1956
Uzbekistan	Iran	(?)	(?) 1956
NEVER OPENED			
Albania	Germany/Austria		
Estonia	Germany/Austria		
Finno-Karelia	Germany/Austria		
Latvia	Germany/Austria		
Lithuania	Germany/Austria		
Moldavia	Germany/Austria		
Mongolia	Iran		
Rumania	Germany/Austria		
Sakhalin Is.	United States		

TABLE 31 (continued) THE 131 TERRITORIES THAT WERE TO BE OPENED TO
THE BAHAI FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN: 1953-1953

National Spiritual Assemblies Involved in Opening the Territory			
Territory	NSA Assigned the Objective	NSA that Achieved Objective (if different)	Month and Year Opened
Ukraine	United States		
White Russia	Germany/Austria		

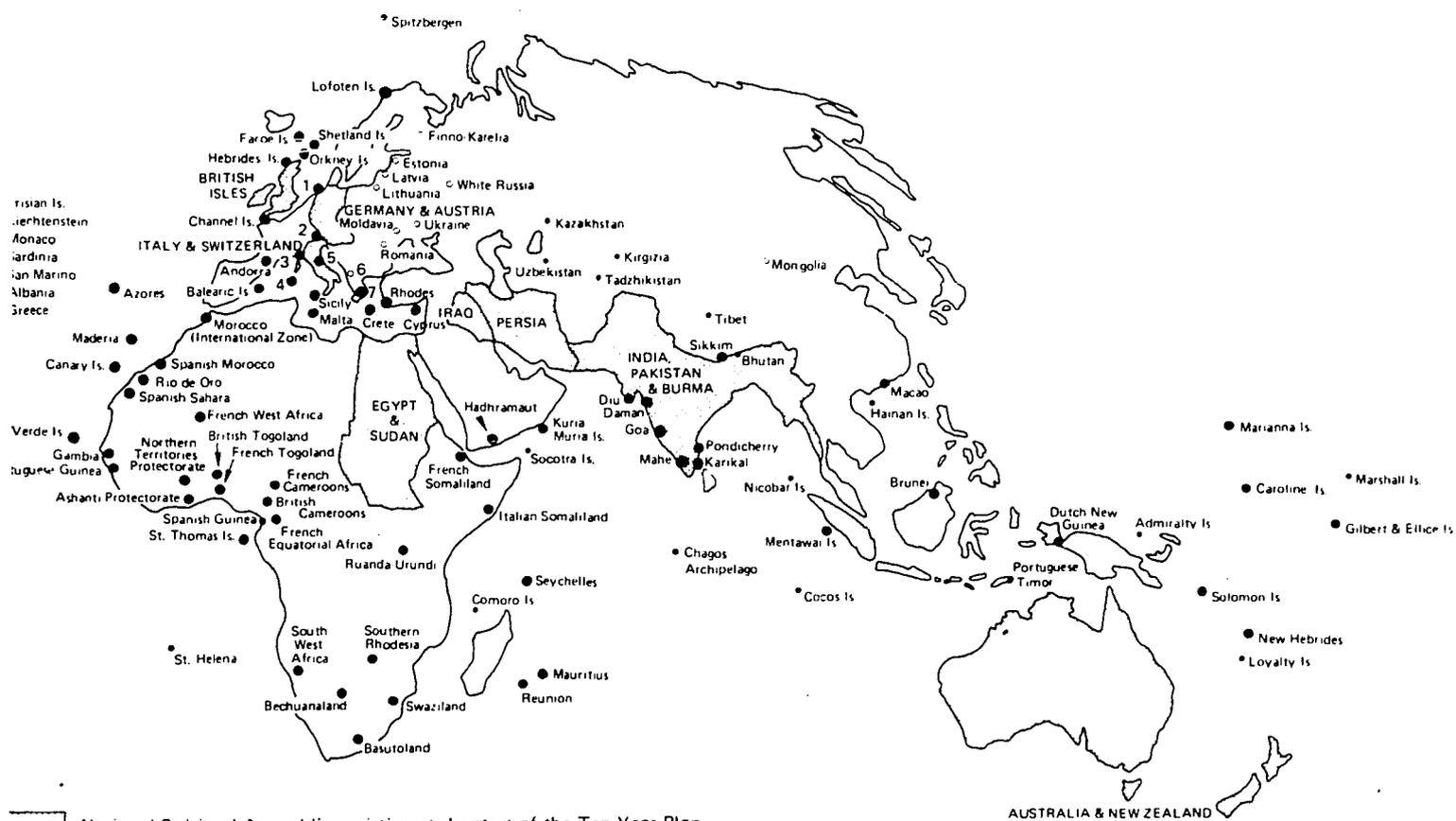
Sources: The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, pp. 449-457; Ashton, "Objectives and Tasks of the Ten Year Spiritual Global Crusade of the Baha'i World Faith."

New Territories Slated to be Opened to the Baha'i Faith During the Ten Year Plan (1953-



FIGURE 38

Ten Year Plan (1953–1963)



New territories in which pioneers were to be settled

- New Territory settled during the 1st year of the plan
- Territory settled before the end of the plan
- Territory never settled

Source: *The Baha'i World: 1954–1963: 449–457*

density in this distribution. Rather, dispersion was stressed to the exclusion of any other consideration. In fact, many territories are notable only for their geographical isolation and demographic insignificance. The United States, for example, which at the time could claim no more than 7,500 believers, was expected to spread the Faith to such obscure places as Spitzbergen, St. Helena, Sakhalin, Andorra, Tonga, and Reunion. Unless all were geographers, it is unlikely that many American Baha'is would even have heard of such places before the Guardian directed them to go there in 1953. The names of the 131 goal territories read like a list of the least important places in the world. What better evidence is there of the Faith's preoccupation with dispersion?

Most National Spiritual Assemblies were assigned goal territories which were relatively close in either the geographic or political sense. (Great Britain was allocated eleven territories, for example, five of which were nearby and the other six of which were British colonies overseas). The one main exception to this generalization is the United States which was assigned almost twice as many territories as any other National Spiritual Assembly. Almost all were geographically distant and only a few were politically or culturally affiliated. The United States, therefore, was in the position of having to overcome greater distances than any other National Assembly area. Furthermore, it had to do so with a Baha'i population that, although larger than that of most National areas, was much smaller than the Baha'i population in Iran and probably was less than that in India, Pakistan, and Burma.

Of course, the United States capacity to diffuse the Faith was much greater than its numerical significance to the religion would suggest.

This already has been discussed. Still, it is surprising that Baha'is from the United States were responsible for attaining an even larger share of the Ten Year Plan goals than they were awarded. As Table 31 shows, the United States was instrumental in settling many of the goal territories that were actually assigned to other National Spiritual Assemblies. Just as 'Abdu'l-Baha had envisioned, the American Baha'is were the ones who excelled in distributing the Faith around the world.

The extent to which the United States filled other National Assemblies' goals raises the interesting observation that a substantial part of all objectives that were assigned during the Ten Year Plan were not accomplished by the National Assemblies to which they had been allocated. In most cases, the United States took the initiative, but a number of other National Assembly areas also opened territories that were not assigned to them. This was possible because of the global orientation and cooperative attitude which historically have characterized the Faith. Shoghi Effendi ensured that Baha'is, regardless of their National areas, would be aware of, and collectively responsible for, all the goals assigned to all National Assemblies. As a result, an individual Baha'i would not hesitate to fulfill a goal merely because it happened to be the administrative responsibility of another National Spiritual Assembly. This principle of shared responsibility has improved the potential of the Faith to meet its own objectives since the higher efficiency that results from a (geographical) division of labor has not been accompanied by the usual subdivision of available resources which such a strategy typically implies. Instead, any National Spiritual Assembly has been able to draw on the resources of the entire

Baha'i world when attempting to achieve one of its designated plan objectives. This transcendence of National Assembly area boundaries also reinforces the global outlook of Baha'is, thereby strengthening the religion's inherent concern with world unity.

New National Spiritual Assemblies

Unlike virgin territories which can be considered opened as soon as one Baha'i is present and unlike local Spiritual Assemblies which are formed as soon as there are nine adult believers, the prerequisites for the creation of a new National Spiritual Assembly have always been somewhat vague. The basic principle has been that within a proposed territory there must be a body of believers who are sufficient in number to accommodate the election process required in selecting a National Assembly, and well enough versed as Baha'is to permit the selection of qualified leaders.¹³ This is a reasonable guideline, but it obviously permits a highly flexible determination of when a territory is ready for National status. In fact, however, a territory tended to be organized as a National Spiritual Assembly area as soon as it had a few local Spiritual Assemblies.

Table 32 shows the numbers of Assemblies and other opened localities that existed in the eleven territories that first elected National Assemblies in 1962. The figures indicate that a National Assembly was likely to be formed as soon as a territory had four local Assemblies.

¹³In Baha'i parlance, a qualified person is one who ". . . can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience. . . ." Shoghi Effendi, Baha'i Administration, p. 88.

TABLE 32

THE NUMBER OF ASSEMBLIES AND OTHER OPENED LOCALITIES THAT EXISTED
IN THE ELEVEN TERRITORIES THAT FIRST ELECTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES
IN 1962

Territory	LSA's	Other Localities
Belgium	4	11
Denmark	5	14
Finland	4	6
Luxembourg	4	0
Netherlands	9	18
Norway	4	10
Portugal	9	8
Spain	11	14
Sri Lanka	20	24
Sweden	4	19
Switzerland	12	36

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, pp. 958, 992, 995, 996, 1006, 1007, 1018, 1021, 1035, The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, pp. 294-295.

Sometimes a National administrative body would not appear until there was a rather larger number, but even then there were likely to be fewer than a dozen. Sri Lanka and Switzerland were contradictory, but it must be remembered that those countries were exceptional because they were already part of organized National areas, a situation that diminished the urgency of organizing them as independent units.

The Guardian was eager to see the rapid formation of new National Spiritual Assemblies because it would broaden the electoral base for the proposed Universal House of Justice. For that reason, as soon as a territory possessed what he perceived to be a minimum Baha'i presence he arranged for the formation of a National Assembly. Because of the highly personal way in which this decision was made, it is

virtually impossible to scientifically analyze the process whereby a multiplication of National Spiritual Assemblies was effected. Nonetheless, a comparison between those territories in which the Guardian planned to organize National Spiritual Assemblies during the 1953-1963 period and those which were so organized during that time highlights the degree to which the administrative development of the Faith conformed to his conception. Table 33 lists the territories which Shoghi Effendi planned to organize as National areas, shows the extent of Baha'i presence within their boundaries at the beginning of the plan period, and tabulates the new National Assemblies actually formed during the Ten Year Plan. Once again, the vision and the ultimate reality are nearly equivalent. Naturally, the fact that Shoghi Effendi was responsible for both planning and organizing new National Assemblies meant that there was found to be a high correlation between the expected and the achieved pattern of growth. The fact that the correlation approaches perfection, however, indicates that Shoghi Effendi's will was so strong that it overrode all external conditions that might have operated to favor the formation of a different set of National Assemblies. The potency of his will is even more evident when one recalls that he died in 1957, five and a half years before the end of the Ten Year Plan and well in advance of the formation of most of the Assemblies he had envisioned.

The creation of new National Spiritual Assemblies was the culmination of a staged progression that was latent but obvious in Shoghi Effendi's three closely interlocking plans. The first stage was the penetration of a major region, such as a continent, by a small band of pioneers who establish a widely scattered network of Baha'i nuclei. The

TABLE 33

THE PLANNED FORMATION OF NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES
DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN (1953-1963)

New NSA's Called for by the Ten Year Plan in 1953	No. of Localities in 1953	New NSA's Actually Created by 1963	No. of Localities in 1963
Afghanistan	2		1
Alaska ^a	26	Alaska ^a	37
Arabia (regional)	13	Arabia (regional)	20
Argentina ^a	12	Argentina ^a	21
Austria ^a	4	Austria ^a	11
Belgium	3	Belgium ^b	15
Bolivia ^a	5	Bolivia ^a	535
Brazil ^a	9	Brazil ^a	23
Central & E. Africa (regional)	33	Central & E. Africa (regional)	2061+
Ceylon ^a	3	Ceylon ^a	44
Chile ^a	12	Chile ^a	33
Colombia ^a	6	Colombia ^a	15
Costa Rica ^a	10	Costa Rica ^a	38
Cuba ^a	4	Cuba ^a	5
Denmark	4	Denmark ⁱ	19
Dominican Republic	3	Dominican Republic ^a	15
Ecuador	6	Ecuador ^a	20
El Salvador	4	El Salvador ^a	11
Finland	1	Finland	10
France	19	France	39
		Guatemala ^a	17
Haiti	3	Haiti ^a	16
Holland	4	Holland ^b	27
Honduras	4	Honduras ^a	20
Italy	13	Italy ^{a,b}	30
		Jamaica ^a	13
Japan	13	N.E. Asia (incl. Japan)	(Japan=53)
Luxembourg	1	Luxembourg ^b	4
Mexico	5	Mexico ^a	43
Near East (regional)	7		5
New Zealand	20	New Zealand ^a	42
Nicaragua	1	Nicaragua ^a	26
N.W. Africa (regional)	15	N.W. Africa (regional)	265
Norway	6	Norway ^b	14
Pakistan	18	Pakistan ^a	37
Panama	4	Panama ^a	42
Paraguay	1	Paraguay ^a	5
Peru	5	Peru ^a	14

TABLE 33 (continued) THE PLANNED FORMATION OF NEW NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN (1953-1963)

New NSA's Called for by the Ten Year Plan in 1953	No. of Localities in 1953	New NSA's Actually Created by 1963	No. of Localities in 1963
Portugal	4	Portugal ^b	17
S. & W. Africa (regional)	17	S. & W. Africa (regional)	328
S. E. Africa (regional)	9	S. E. Africa (regional)	767+
S. Pacific Is. (regional)	3	S. Pacific Is. (regional)	125
Spain	8	Spain ^b	24
Sweden	6	Sweden ^b	23
Switzerland	12	Switzerland ^{a,b}	48
Turkey	9	Turkey	26
Uruguay	1	Uruguay ^a	5
Venezuela	4	Venezuela ^a	14

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1950-1954, pp. 721-774, map insert on back cover; The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, pp. 947-1060; The Baha'i Faith: Information Statistical & Comparative, Including the Achievements of the Ten Year International Baha'i Teaching and Consolidation Plan, 1953-1963, comp. by the Hands of the Cause Residing in the Holy Lands, pp. 23-24.

NOTE: At the start of the Ten Year Plan there were 12 National Spiritual Assemblies: Canada, U.S., Great Britain, Germany/Austria, Italy/Switzerland, Egypt/Sudan, Iraq, Iran, India/Pakistan/Burma, Australia/New Zealand, Central America and South America. During the course of the plan, three of these were dissolved and replaced by a multiplicity of National Assemblies. In addition, the territories of some of the other nine National Assemblies were trimmed down by this same process of subdivision. Alaska was partitioned from the United States, Austria from Germany, New Zealand from Australia, and Burma, Ceylon, and Pakistan from India. Counter to this trend, the National Assembly of Egypt/Sudan expanded its territorial domain to include Abyssinia, Eritria, Libya, Socotra, and British, French and Italian Somaliland. The territorial growth made it necessary for that National Assembly to be referred to as North East Africa instead of Egypt/Sudan. All the changes outlined here plus the changes shown in the table meant that by the end of the Ten Year Plan there were 56 National Spiritual Assemblies.

^aNational Spiritual Assembly was created by subdividing a larger National Assembly.

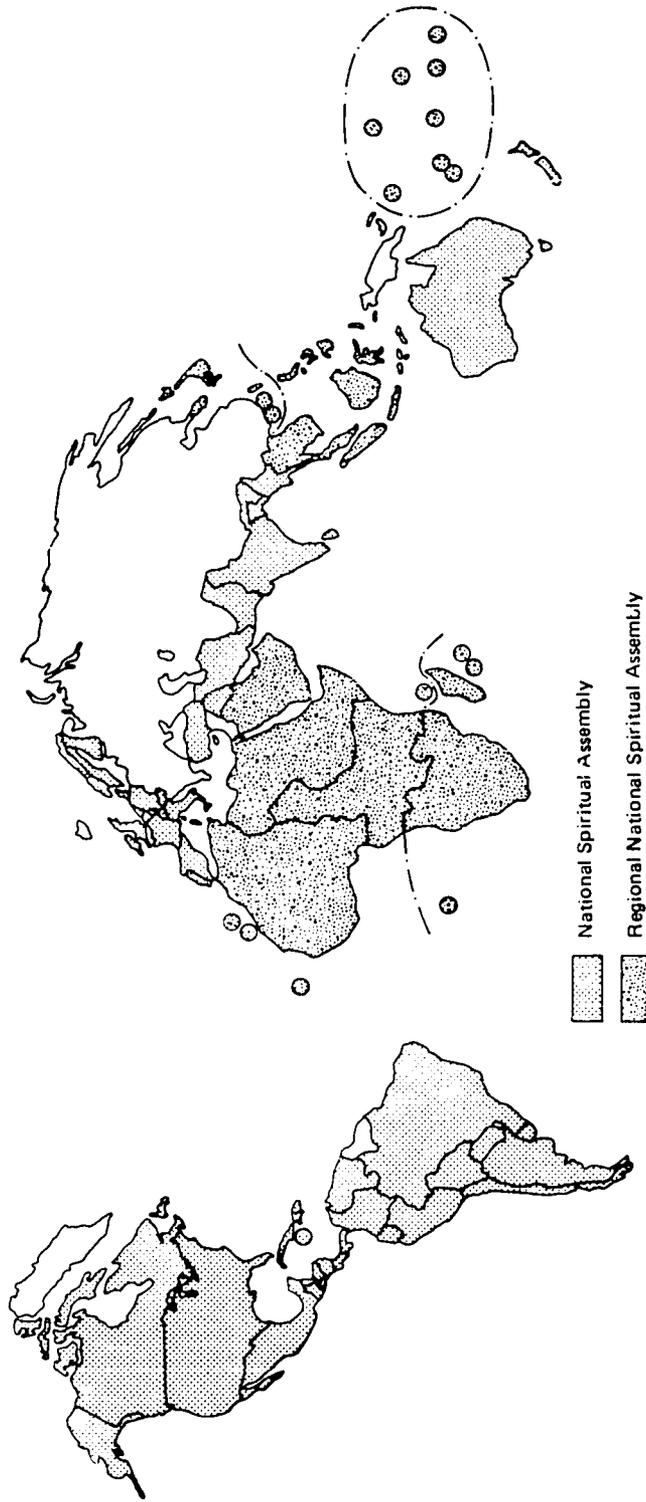
^bNational Spiritual Assembly was formed in a territory that was targeted for growth in the preceding Second Seven Year Plan (1946-1953).

second stage was the consolidation of the region through multiplication of the number of occupied localities, a process that usually resulted in the formation of a large regional National Assembly that loosely tied together the entire region. Finally, in the third stage the rate of Baha'i growth was encouraged throughout the region so that it could be partitioned into a number of smaller National Assembly areas. This three-stage development pattern was most clearly exemplified by Latin America, but its structure was also evident in Europe.¹⁴ The Ten Year Plan took the Baha'i Faith to the third stage in Latin America and Europe while conducting an expansionist campaign in the first and second stages throughout most of the rest of the world.

Figure 39 shows the geographic distribution of National Spiritual Assemblies by the end of the Ten Year Plan. It is evident from the map that Latin America and Northern and Western Europe were the areas where most new organization took place. Furthermore, one can see that throughout the rest of the world new National Assemblies were either of the large regional type (indicating achievement of the second stage in the development process) or were simple fragments of the old National

¹⁴As the Guardian had intended, three regional National Spiritual Assemblies were created in Europe midway through the Ten Year Plan: (1) Scandinavia and Finland, (2) The Benelux countries, and (3) the Iberian Peninsula. By the end of the planning period these regional bodies had been replaced by nine National Spiritual Assemblies, one in each country (The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, p. 274). Furthermore, the partitioning of the two huge regional National Assemblies of Latin America did not occur in a single step. First the two Assemblies were partitioned into four regional National Assemblies (1957). Then a few years later (1961) the four regional bodies were displaced by National Assemblies in each country (The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, pp. 257-258).

FIGURE 39 Baha'i National Spiritual Assemblies: 1964



Assemblies whose existence preceded the initiation of the Ten Year Crusade. What is obvious, therefore, is that the successful execution of the two Seven Year Plans laid a foundation for a thorough consolidation of the Baha'i ecumene in (1) Latin America, (2) North and West Europe, and (3) the original National areas. It is further evident that the Ten Year Plan not only succeeded in bringing about this consolidation but also managed to extend the margins of the Baha'i ecumene so as to include most other non-communist regions and prepare them for imminent partition into numerous National Spiritual Assemblies.

Opening New Localities in the
Old National Assembly Areas

Within the regions existing as National Assembly areas at the start of the Ten Year Plan, the Guardian designated specific increases to be effected in the numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies and opened localities. In addition, he identified a similar objective for the ten European countries targeted in the Second Seven Year Plan. Table 34 tabulates these goals and compares them with the actual achievements by 1962, one year before the end of the Ten Year Plan. As the table shows, he generally called for a doubling of the number of local Spiritual Assemblies, the key exceptions being Italy/Switzerland and the ten European countries--areas where the Faith was less well developed and in which the Guardian wanted to see a fourfold increase in the numbers of Assemblies.

Table 34 also indicates that in all but three areas the Ten Year Plan objectives were achieved by 1962. Iran, Iraq, and Egypt/Sudan had

TABLE 34

TEN YEAR PLAN GOALS FOR INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF LOCAL ASSEMBLIES IN THE TWELVE ORIGINAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AREAS AND IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF THE SECOND SEVEN YEAR PLAN

Territory	1953: No. of LSA's	Ten Year Plan Objective for Increasing LSA's	1963: Goal No. of LSA's	1962: Actual No. of LSA's ^a
United States	171	"increase to 300"	300	326 ^b
Canada	26	"double"	52	63
Central America	21	"double in each of 10 republics" ^c	39	125
Costa Rica	3	"double"	6	26
Cuba	2	"double"	4	4
Dominican Rep.	1	"double"	2	7
El Salvador	1	"double"	2	3
Guatemala	2	"double"	4	7
Haiti	1	"double"	2	10
Honduras	3	"double"	6	14
Mexico	2	"double"	4	11
Nicaragua	1	"double"	2	11
Panama	2	"double"	4	26
So. America	18	"double in each of 10 republics"	36	161
Argentina	2	"double"	4	6
Bolivia	1	"double"	2	98
Brazil	3	"double"	6	11
Chile	3	"double"	6	9
Colombia	3	"double"	6	11
Ecuador	1	"double"	2	5
Paraguay	1	"double"	2	3
Peru	2	"double"	4	8
Uruguay	1	"double"	2	3
Venezuela	1	"double"	2	7
Egypt/Sudan	10	"double" ^d	20	18
British Isles	24	"double" ^d	48	48
Germany/Austria	18	"double" ^d	36	36
Italy/Switzerland	6	"quadruple" ^e	24	24
Ten European Countries	12	"quadruple" ^e	48	60
Belgium	1			4
Holland	1			9
Luxembourg	1			4
Spain	2			10
Portugual	1			9
Denmark	1			5
Norway	1			4

TABLE 34 (continued) TEN YEAR PLAN GOALS FOR INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF LOCAL ASSEMBLIES IN THE TWELVE ORIGINAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AREAS AND IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF THE SEVEN YEAR PLAN

Territory	1953: No. of LSA's	Ten Year Plan Objective for Increasing LSA's	1963: Goal No. of LSA's	1962: Actual No. of LSA's ^a
Sweden	1			4
Finland ^f	1			4
France ^f	2			7
Iran	307	"double"	614	521
Iraq	6	"double"	12	10
India/Pakistan/ Burma	51	"double" ^d	102	535 ^g
Australia/N.Z.	15	"double" ^d	30	34

Sources: The Baha'i World: 1950-1954, pp. 721-774, map insert on back cover; The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, pp. 947-1060; Ashton, "Objectives and Tasks of the Ten Year Spiritual Global Crusade of the Baha'i Faith."

^aNo Baha'i directory is available for the year 1963-64, and so it was necessary to use data describing the extent of the Faith one year before the end of the Ten Year Plan.

^bThe figure excludes Alaska which in 1953 was part of the United States NSA. Including Alaskan NSA's, the figure is 337.

^cThe Ten Year Plan did not specify a goal for Jamaica which in 1953 also was part of Central America's NSA. In tabulating the goal number, and actual number of local Assemblies, therefore, it was assumed that Jamaica was part of the Central America NSA and was expected to maintain the three Assemblies it had in 1953.

^dThe Ten Year Plan also called for a doubling of the total number of opened localities.

^eThe Ten Year Plan also called for a trebling of the total number of opened localities.

^fNear the end of the Second Seven Year Plan, growth was sufficient to permit the formation of the new National Assembly of Italy/Switzerland. At that time, the Guardian selected Finland and France to take their place in the list of the Ten European Goal countries.

^gThis figure excludes Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon, which in 1953 were part of the Indian NSA. If the Assemblies in these countries were included, the figure would be 583.

not yet attained their goals, but their apparent underachievement is a false impression created by the lack of available data on numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies in 1963, the year the Ten Year Plan really ended. The unavoidable use of 1962 data to represent achievement during the plan underestimates the total amount of growth in all National Spiritual Assembly areas--not just Iran, Iraq, and Egypt/Sudan. The underestimation is likely to be substantial since the Baha'i world typically exhibits a burst of energy in the last year of a planning period.

Anyhow, the three National areas in question did achieve their plan goals. Isolated sources indicate that by 1963 Iran had managed to double its number of local Spiritual Assemblies,¹⁵ Iraq had surpassed its goal by reaching a total of 16,¹⁶ and Egypt/Sudan probably had exceeded the 20 Assembly goal set for it.¹⁷

Since all areas were successful in meeting plan objectives, there is no underachievement to explain. Most National areas either met or slightly exceeded the goals set for them, but a few areas wildly surpassed their plan objectives: (1) India, Pakistan, and Burma, (2) Central America, and (3) South America. These three are sufficiently remarkable to merit special attention.

Growth in India, Pakistan, and Burma was even more explosive than Table 34 indicates. By 1959 both Pakistan and Burma had partitioned, leaving only India where, after 1959, the Baha'i explosion occurred (consider the figures in Table 35).

¹⁵The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, p. 296.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 297.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 287.

TABLE 35

GROWTH OF THE BAHAI COMMUNITY IN INDIA: 1961-1963

	Feb., 1961	Feb., 1963
Number of Assemblies	58	675
No. of other Opened Localities	<u>85</u>	<u>1,774</u>
Total No. of Opened Localities	143	2,449
<u>Total No. of Believers</u>	<u>850</u>	<u>65,355</u>

Source: The Baha'i World: 1953-1964, p. 299.

Only two years before the end of the Ten Year Crusade, India was disastrously short of achieving its objective. During those final two years, however, there was a meteoric rise in the fortunes of the Faith. Between February, 1961, and February, 1963, Baha'is were doubling their numbers every four months, suggesting an annual growth rate in excess of 800 percent.

Why did the religion experience this enormous burst of growth? A similar phenomenon was detected in Uganda in the early 1950s, and preceding discussions have shown that a parallel development was to occur in South Carolina in 1970. In both instances, such short-lived spurts of unprecedented growth proved difficult to explain; the Indian case is equally mysterious. Perhaps a narrative of the sequence of events leading to this mass conversion will help to provide some understanding.

This astounding progress started with a conference in a remote village of Samgimanda in the State of Madhya Pradesh in Central India in January, 1961. The Faith had already been established there. When it was learned that Hand of the Cause Rahmat'u'llah Muhajir had arrived in Bombay, a teaching

project was organized and a group of teachers, in company with Dr. Muhajir set out for Madhya Pradesh. Upon learning that Dr. Muhajir desired to hold a conference, word was sent to the Spiritual Assembly of Sangimanda. The report of the Secretary of the National Assembly of India described the events as follows:

"When the Baha'is started for Sangimanda on foot and in bullock carts, they did not know what was awaiting them. The approach to the mud huts of the village was decorated with simple colored papers. A number of villagers came out several miles to receive their guests. By firing gunshots they proclaimed in the traditional way that important guests were coming to the village. Women, in groups, were chanting welcome songs and hymns. Amid the beating of the drums, booming of guns and devotional songs, cries of 'Alla'h-u-Abha and Baha'u'llah Jai' were heard. Children of the Baha'i school, over sixty in number, lined up to receive the Hand of the Cause. The conference was publicized within a few hours and attracted over 300 people. In spite of severe cold, this congregation continued well past midnight. It was cold, dark and midnight, but nobody wanted to leave. The Message of God was so attractive, soul-stirring and inspiring that they sat spellbound. Representatives from neighboring villages did not leave the place until they were assured by the Baha'is that they would send somebody to their places to give to the people the reassuring and hope-fostering Message of God."

During the next two years, over 210,000 copies of books and booklets about the Faith were distributed in India and, in addition, many heard of Baha'u'llah through simple postcards depicting the teachings--over 332,000 of them were given out. Hundreds of meetings were held, and everywhere the glad tidings were warmly received. What happened in India was a literal fulfillment of the Guardian's prediction that the last phase of the Crusade would witness "an upsurge of enthusiasm and consecration before which every single as well as collective exploit associated with any of the three previous phases, will pale."¹⁸

From this description it is possible to derive a few ideas about preconditions and initiators of rapid Baha'i growth. First, it seems that an established Baha'i community with a functioning local Spiritual Assembly must be present in an area before explosive expansion can occur. This does not mean that such presence will insure growth; it only means

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 298-299.

that without them rapid expansion is unlikely. In support, the above narrative leads one to suspect that Dr. Muhajir's effectiveness relied at least in part on the organized follow-up of a permanent group of local believers.

Second, it would appear that a single magnetic personality can be instrumental in bringing about rapid expansion. In this instance, Hand of the Cause Dr. Muhajir must have galvanized the local Baha'i community with his presence and influenced the general populace with his words. This is only a likelihood, not a certainty, but it iterates the theme of individual effectiveness that was explored in some detail when discussing the role played by Dr. Khayr'u'llah in the formation of the American Baha'i community before the turn of the century.

Third, the use of aggressive methods in diffusing the Faith seems to reap substantial harvests. In the early years of the religion in the West, Baha'is rarely approached the public by confronting total strangers. Believers either directly communicated the Baha'i message to people whom they knew personally or generally broadcast information about the religion in a public forum where no one was singled out. However, the more aggressive strategy of approaching strangers individually was employed in India during the high growth period, and in South Carolina in 1970 a similar method was used. This strategy, which has come to be referred to as mass teaching, appears to be capable of generating remarkable results. As a consequence, over the past decade mass teaching has become an accepted form of Baha'i propagation and in numerous instances it has been consciously employed to generate conversions in targeted areas.¹⁹

¹⁹Directions regarding the utilization of mass teaching are contained in Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 31-36.

The other two National areas in which Baha'i growth thoroughly outstripped the planning goals were Central and South America. Table 34 reveals, however, that the explosion was not widely distributed but was, instead, confined to two smaller subregions: Bolivia, on the one hand, and Panama and Costa Rica on the other. There is not sufficient published information to trace in detail what happened in those two widely separated regions, but it is known that, at least in Bolivia and Panama, the rapid influx of new believers consisted primarily of native Indians.

For many years the Faith had been preoccupied with the task of converting aboriginal Americans. In 1947, near the beginning of the Second Seven Year Plan, Shoghi Effendi appealed to the American believers in the following way:

Particular attention, I feel, should, at this juncture, be directed to the various Indian tribes, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Latin republics, whom the Author of the Tablets of the Divine Plan has compared to the "ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula." "Attach great importance," is his admonition to the entire body of the believers in the United States and the Dominion of Canada, "to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muhammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muhammad shone forth, in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world." The initial contact already established . . . with [various Indian tribes] . . . should, as the Latin American Baha'i communities gain in stature and strength, be consolidated and extended. A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected national assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Baha'u'llah.²⁰

²⁰ Shoghi Effendi, Citadel of Faith, pp. 16-17.

When in 1953 the Guardian launched the Ten Year Plan, he continued to encourage teaching efforts among American Indians. His convention message to the American Baha'is that year stated that the United States community must take responsibility for converting members of leading Indian tribes and for translating Baha'i literature into ten different Indian languages.²¹ As a result, efforts to spread the Faith in the Americas were strongly oriented toward reaching the native American population--so much so that by 1963 eighty-nine different Indian tribes were represented in the Faith, a quarter of all Canadian Baha'is were Indian, and a majority of the believers in Latin America were aboriginal Americans.²²

When explosive growth began in Bolivia and Panama, therefore, the degree to which it occurred within the Indian sector of the population was neither accidental nor unexpected. The magnitude of the growth was startling, however. In Bolivia, the first Indian Baha'i declared himself in April, 1956. By 1960 there were over 900 Indian believers and by April, 1963, the figure was approximately 8,000.²³ Similarly, in Panama, a total Baha'i population of less than 125 enrolled 377 new believers between April, 1961, and April, 1962. One year later, Panama had a Baha'i population of around 1,500, most of whom were Indians located in the San Blas islands.²⁴

The rapid expansion of the religion in Bolivia and the southern part of Central America iterated the pattern detected in Uganda and India

²¹Ibid., p. 118. ²²The Baha'i World: 1954-1963, XIII, p. 259.

²³Ibid., pp. 258, 269. ²⁴Ibid., p. 269.

and foreshadowed events in South Carolina. Why should these five areas have experienced rapid Baha'i growth that begins almost instantaneously, endures for a relatively short time, and then diminishes? Perhaps a consideration of what the five examples do and do not have in common will shed additional light on the subject.

First, consider what these high growth regions do not have in common. They are not geographically confined to a particular part of the world or to a specific political, cultural, or ethnic milieu. Thus it seems unlikely that variables associated with these sorts of considerations trigger the high growth phenomenon.

Furthermore, the examples cited did not occur at the same time; rather, they happened at widely spaced intervals between 1950 and the mid-1970s. In fact, the explosive multiplication of the numbers of Baha'is in Persia during the 1840s, in Turkestan during the 1880s, and in the northeastern United States in the late 1890s, shows that the phenomenon cannot even be labelled a modern development. This suggests that rapid Baha'i growth has not been the consequence of prevalent ideas and values associated with a given era in human history.

Looking now at the commonalities, there is the fact that the rapid growth always seems to start quickly, to last briefly, and then to fade. This pattern suggests that a certain alteration in the way Baha'is diffuse their religion may suddenly stimulate declarations. Perhaps the adoption of a mass teaching technique or the sudden appearance of a particularly inspiring Baha'i spokesperson initiates the growth. Long-term continuation of the rapid growth rate may not be possible because of the need to assimilate recent declarants; the new believers become so

numerous that the problem of cementing their attachments to the Faith requires the community to shift its concern from external expansion to internal consolidation.

Also, the spurts of Baha'i growth consistently occur in rural areas. This has been so in all modern instances, although the regions of very rapid expansion in early times (Persia, Turkestan, and the Northeastern United States) were characterized by the opposite trend of quick growth in urban centers. It will be recalled that Shoghi Effendi implied that urban places undermine spirituality thereby generating an anti-urban attitude within the Faith. It could be argued that this bias has tended to make the Faith more effective with rural people. One cannot help feeling, however, that there may be something to the Guardian's notion that urban materialism crushes spirituality and creates a population that is less receptive to a religious message. I must admit that I favor this latter view, but that leaves unexplained the occurrence of explosive growth in urban regions during earlier periods in the Faith's history.

The Status of the Faith at the
End of the Ten Year Plan

By the end of the planning period the Faith had grown to such an extent that it was no longer feasible to map its distribution by plotting all the localities where Baha'is resided. Whereas in 1953 there were about 2,850 occupied localities, by 1962 this number had increased to 11,115. Furthermore, by 1964--one year after the end of the Ten Year Plan--the number of opened localities had reached 15,186, of which 4,566 were local Spiritual Assemblies.

Table 36 summarizes the growth of the religion between 1953 and 1964. The Ten Year Plan ended in April of 1963, but statistics on the numbers of opened localities are available only for April, 1962 and April, 1964. The table exposes two pronounced trends, the most obvious of which is rapid growth. Between 1953 and 1964 there was more than a six-fold increase in the number of local Spiritual Assemblies. The increase in the number of National Spiritual Assemblies and in the number of opened localities (which includes local Assemblies) was almost as great, exceeding 500 percent in both cases.

The numerical significance of North America in the Baha'i ecumene plummeted between 1953 and 1964. At the beginning of the Ten Year Plan, North America and Iran totally dominated the statistics, but by 1964 other regions had surpassed both in importance. Iran still could claim to have far more believers than any other country, but insofar as opened localities are concerned, the relative positions of North America and Iran declined precipitously.

The relative decline of Iran is not obvious from Table 36 because statistics are presented for continents, not countries. In fact, in 1953 Iran contained 307 local Spiritual Assemblies and 629 opened localities. Comparison with the table will document that this represented about 80 percent of the totals for the continent of Asia. By 1964, however, Iran had only managed to double its figures, and its proportionate share of the totals for Asia had dropped to about 30 percent.

The decline in the relative size of the North American membership can be seen by comparing American growth to that of other continents. Membership statistics are not commonly available, but isolated sources

TABLE 36

GLOBAL EXPANSION OF THE BAHA'I FAITH DURING THE TEN YEAR PLAN

Region	Number of National Spiritual Assemblies			Number of Local Spiritual Assemblies			Total Number of Opened Localities		
	1953	1962	1964	1953	1962	1964	1953	1962	1964
North America	2	3	3	195	412	418	1,505	1,948	2,055
South America	2	21	21	40	291	289	140	964	1,428
Europe	3	15	15	45	173	182	186	675	753
Africa	1	5	8	27	1,183	1,361	122	2,823	3,277
Asia ^{a,b}	3	11	16	379	1,645	2,234	803	4,405	7,262
Australia & Pacific	1	3	5	18	77	82	95	300	411
WORLD ^b	12	56	66	704	3,781	4,566	2,851	11,115	15,186
Iran	1	1	1	307	521	530	629	1,271	1,517

Sources: *The Baha'i World: 1950-1954*, pp. 721-774; map insert in back cover; *The Baha'i World: 1954-1963*, pp. 947-1060; *Universal House of Justice, 1964-1973: Analysis of the Nine Year International Teaching Plan of the Baha'i Faith*, pp. 27-38.

^a Figures for Asia include Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, and Indonesia.

^b Figures for Asia and the World do not include Iran.

already cited indicate the approximate numbers of Baha'is in a handful of countries before and after the Ten Year Plan. Table 37 compares them with the United States (which contained almost all the North American believers). Although the American Baha'i population grew during the ten year period, its rate of growth was overshadowed by those of India, Bolivia, and Panama. Of course, these particular countries were remarkable because they did grow so quickly, but even if it were possible to

TABLE 37

THE SIZE OF THE BAHAI POPULATION IN FOUR DIFFERENT COUNTRIES:
1953 AND 1963

Country	1953	1963
United States	7,000	10,247
India	< 850	65,355
Bolivia	< 50	> 8,000
Panama	< 25	1,500

compare the United States with some other countries the figures in Table 36 indicate that membership growth probably was less in North America than on any other continent. It is hard to escape the conclusion that by 1963, the North American Baha'is were no more than a small minority of all non-Persian Baha'is. In fact, this is a virtual certainty since the ratio of opened localities having local Spiritual Assemblies to the total number of opened localities is as low for North America as for any other continent. This being so, the average population size of a North American Baha'i community would be unlikely to exceed that for any other continent. If the assumption is made that--outside Iran--the average size of a Baha'i community is the same for all

continents then it can be estimated that North American Baha'is would represent only 15 percent of the (non-Iranian) Baha'i world.

By the end of the Ten Year Plan, therefore, 'Abdu'l-Baha's vision had been realized. When he inherited leadership of the religion from his Father, the ecumene was confined to the Muslim realm. His intention was to firmly establish the Faith in North America, and then use that core of strength to diffuse the Baha'i message to the entire world. This is precisely what happened. Between 1893 and 1937, North America became the only substantial Baha'i center outside Persia. After 1937, Shoghi Effendi orchestrated a global diffusion process that emanated from that North American source, and by 1963 the process was so advanced that all the other continents could claim National Baha'i communities of sufficient size to challenge or surpass North America. The Guardian's daring commitment to the principle of dispersion had been vindicated.

CHAPTER XI

THE NINE YEAR PLAN: 1964-1974

A CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP

In 1957 Shoghi Effendi died, and that precipitated a major crisis in the religion's historical development. The Faith had always possessed strong leadership whose authority Baha'is everywhere had recognized as legitimate and unchallengable. Furthermore, the future structure of Baha'i administration had been clearly defined by Baha'u'llah and His son, 'Abdu'l-Baha. The Guardianship was to be a perpetuating institution with each Guardian appointing his own successor. The Universal House of Justice, as yet unformed, was to be an ongoing institution as well, with the Guardian as its head. The prerogatives and responsibilities of these two institutions were explicit and complementary: the Guardian being the infallible interpreter of sacred scripture, the Universal House of Justice being the final authority regarding all issues not addressed by the holy writings. The crisis was brought on by the fact that Shoghi Effendi failed to designate a successor, and the Universal House of Justice, for which he had labored for over thirty years, had not yet been called into being. In other words, the Faith was suddenly stripped of its leadership.

In these circumstances, Baha'is accepted the de facto assumption of leadership by the twenty-seven living Hands of the Cause of God who had been appointed by the Guardian before his passing. The Hands of the Cause, whose recognized role was (and continues to be) the protection

and promulgation of the Faith, guided the Baha'i world to a successful conclusion of the Ten Year Plan, coordinated the early election of members of the National Spiritual Assemblies called for by the plan, and arranged for the election of the Universal House of Justice in April, 1963.

Considering the circumstances, their provisional leadership during the six-year period of transition was a masterful mix of assertion and humility. On the one hand, they successfully maintained the religion's unity of purpose and direction during a time when there was no recognized leadership; on the other, they assiduously avoided arrogating spiritual authority to themselves (they even declared themselves ineligible for election to the Universal House of Justice). They used the writings of Shoghi Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and Baha'u'llah to explain every decision they made and they frequently stated that their actions were only provisional and would be subject to review by the Universal House of Justice after it was elected.

No matter how astute their leadership, however, the Hands of the Cause could not avoid a crisis. Baha'is had grown to accept the idea that the Faith could not function without the Guardianship¹ and so when

¹Shoghi Effendi himself induced this attitude:

"Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the law of God. . . . Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long and uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."

Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p. 148.

Shoghi Effendi failed to designate a successor, many were disconcerted by the awesome gap between expectation and reality. To make matters worse, in 1960 one of the most prominent of the Hands of the Cause--a man who had been a dedicated and active Baha'i since 1899--claimed that he was the second Guardian. This man, Mason Remey, managed to attract the allegiance of a small part of the Baha'i following, but by the time of his death in 1973 (at the age of 100) his group of followers had been demoralized by a series of internal power struggles. However, this small splinter group does continue to exist.²

The dilemma was resolved in 1963 when the Universal House of Justice was elected; its leadership was accepted. Even during the crisis years, however, the religion maintained its diffusion momentum. It was during those years, for example, that mass conversions occurred in India, Bolivia, and Panama. There are three reasons why the religion continued to expand. First, there was the Ten Year Plan itself which, by explicitly defining a direction for Baha'i activities, lessened the need for day-to-day guidance between 1957 and 1963. Second, there was the rational and humble approach to leadership on the part of the Hands of the Cause which helped the believers to avoid lapsing into a state of doubt and indecision regarding the truth and vitality of their religion. Third, there was the prospect that the Universal House of Justice soon would be formed, and that permitted the rank and file to look forward to an end to the uncertainty.

²For a thorough and objective account of the leadership crisis that followed the Guardian's passing, see Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith," pp. 330-390.

ORIGINS AND DIRECTIONS OF THE NINE YEAR PLAN

The election of the first Universal House of Justice coincided with the end of the Ten Year Plan, after which the House of Justice deliberated for a year before presenting the Baha'i world with a new plan for expansion of the Faith. The product of its efforts--the Nine Year Plan--embraced the same philosophy, furthered the same policies, and used the same tactics as the Guardian's preceding planning efforts. There were a few shifts in emphasis, however.

Until the end of the Ten Year Plan, the need to create an adequate foundation for the eventual election of the Universal House of Justice had obliged the Guardian to structure his plans in such a way as to place priority on the formation of National Spiritual Assemblies. Once the Universal House of Justice was elected the need no longer existed. Actually, the Nine Year Plan did call for the formation of many new National bodies, but that was intended to broaden the electoral base of the Universal House of Justice. The real focus of the Nine Year Plan was to increase the number of Baha'is by stimulating balanced global expansion of the number of opened localities. Even the opening of virgin territories, a prime objective in the three preceding plans, was in a subtle way a lower priority than growth pure and simple. It was not that concern with dispersion had come to an end; the Nine Year Plan specified 70 new territories to be opened and 24 lapsed territories to be reopened. It was rather that these goal areas, as well as the National Spiritual Assembly formation goals, were overshadowed by the objectives specified for expanding the numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies and opened localities around the world. Like all its predecessors, the Nine Year

Plan was designed to further the three policies of geographical dispersion, numerical increase, and compositional diversity. But now the emphasis was to be less on dispersion and more on growth and diversity.³

In keeping with this shift, analysis of the Nine Year Plan will concentrate on numerical growth instead of dispersion. It would be appropriate also to address the issue of compositional diversity, but the types of goals designated to pursue this are insufficiently precise to allow a rigorous statistical comparison of goals and achievements.

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE BAHAI WORLD IN 1973

By 1973 the Baha'i world had been organized into 113 National Spiritual Assemblies encompassing almost all significant territories outside the Communist sphere. The remainder of the world was partitioned into 74 territories, 66 of which were the responsibility of various National Spiritual Assemblies but were not part of any Assembly area. The remaining eight areas were unallocated. Figure 40 shows the distribution of these three kinds of territories.

The eight areas left untouched by the Nine Year Plan included China, North Korea, North Vietnam, Algeria, Iraq, Burundi, Gabon, and Israel. The first three were inaccessible to the Faith because of the isolationist policies which their governments pursued in the 1960s and early 1970s. They apparently contained no Baha'is in 1973. Algeria and Iraq were unallocated territories because all organized Baha'i activity had been banned by 1973, however both countries had substantial Baha'i

³Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 23, 25, 31-32, 60, 62.

Territorial Organization of the Baha'i World: 1973



1. DENMARK
2. NETHERL.
3. BELGIUM
4. LUXEMBO
5. GERMANY
6. Liechtenste
7. SWITZERL
8. AUSTRIA
9. San Marino
10. Monaco (Fr

1. BELIZE
2. HONDURAS
3. San Andres & Providencia Is. (Colombia)
4. Cayman Is. (Jamaica)
5. JAMAICA
6. HAITI
7. DOMINICAN REP.
8. Aruba, Bonaire & Curacao (Venezuela)

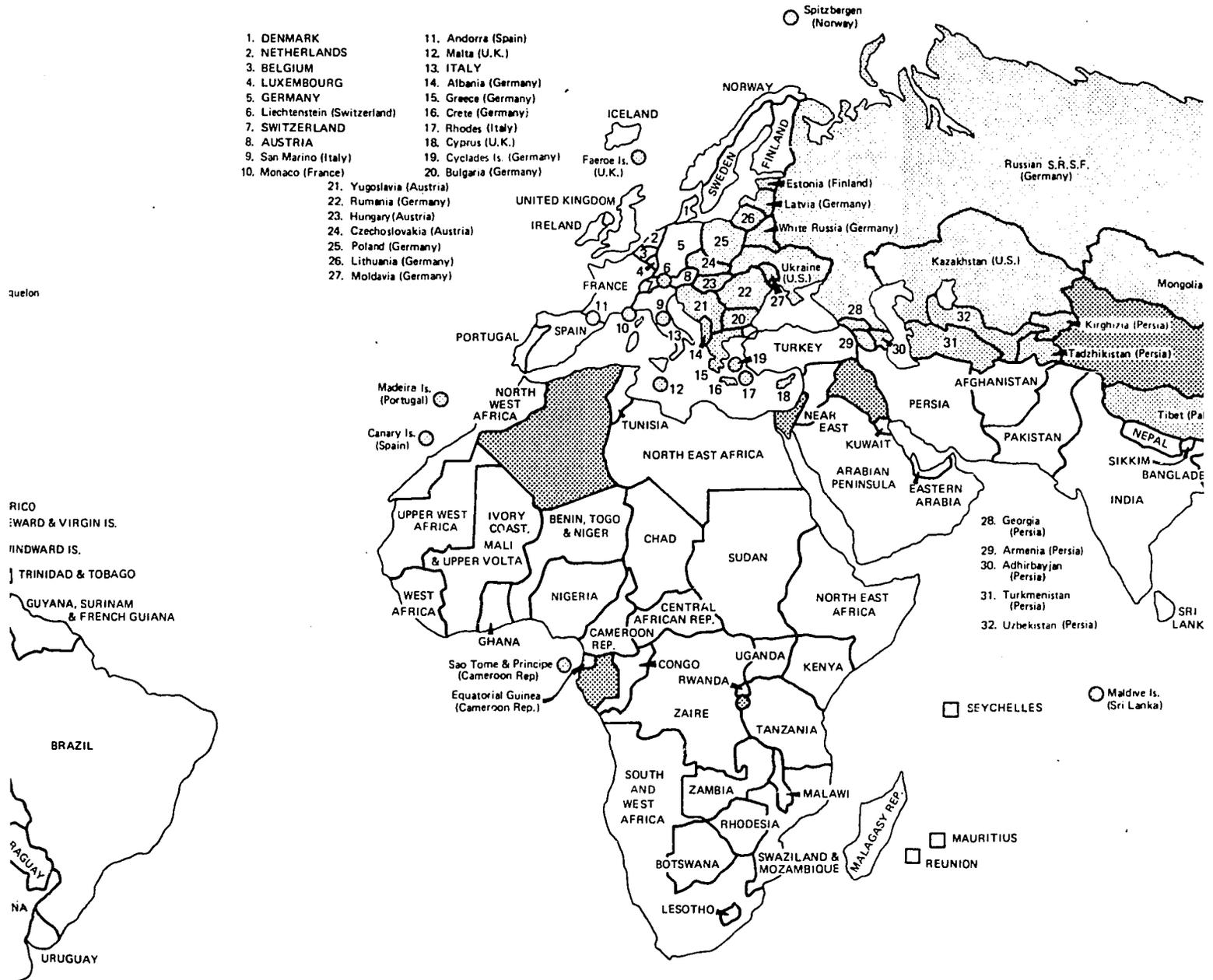
- Tokelau Is. (Samoa)
- Marquesas Is. (S. W. Pacific)
- SAMOA
- Tuamotu Archipelago (S.W. Pacific)
- Society Is. (S. W. Pacific)
- TONGA & COOK IS.
- Niue Is. (Tonga & Cook Is.)

● Easter Is. (Chile)

● Robinson Crusoe Is. (Chile)

● Falkland Is. (U.S.)

1. DENMARK
2. NETHERLANDS
3. BELGIUM
4. LUXEMBOURG
5. GERMANY
6. Liechtenstein (Switzerland)
7. SWITZERLAND
8. AUSTRIA
9. San Marino (Italy)
10. Monaco (France)
11. Andorra (Spain)
12. Malta (U.K.)
13. ITALY
14. Albania (Germany)
15. Greece (Germany)
16. Crete (Germany)
17. Rhodes (Italy)
18. Cyprus (U.K.)
19. Cyclades Is. (Germany)
20. Bulgaria (Germany)
21. Yugoslavia (Austria)
22. Rumania (Germany)
23. Hungary (Austria)
24. Czechoslovakia (Austria)
25. Poland (Germany)
26. Lithuania (Germany)
27. Moldavia (Germany)

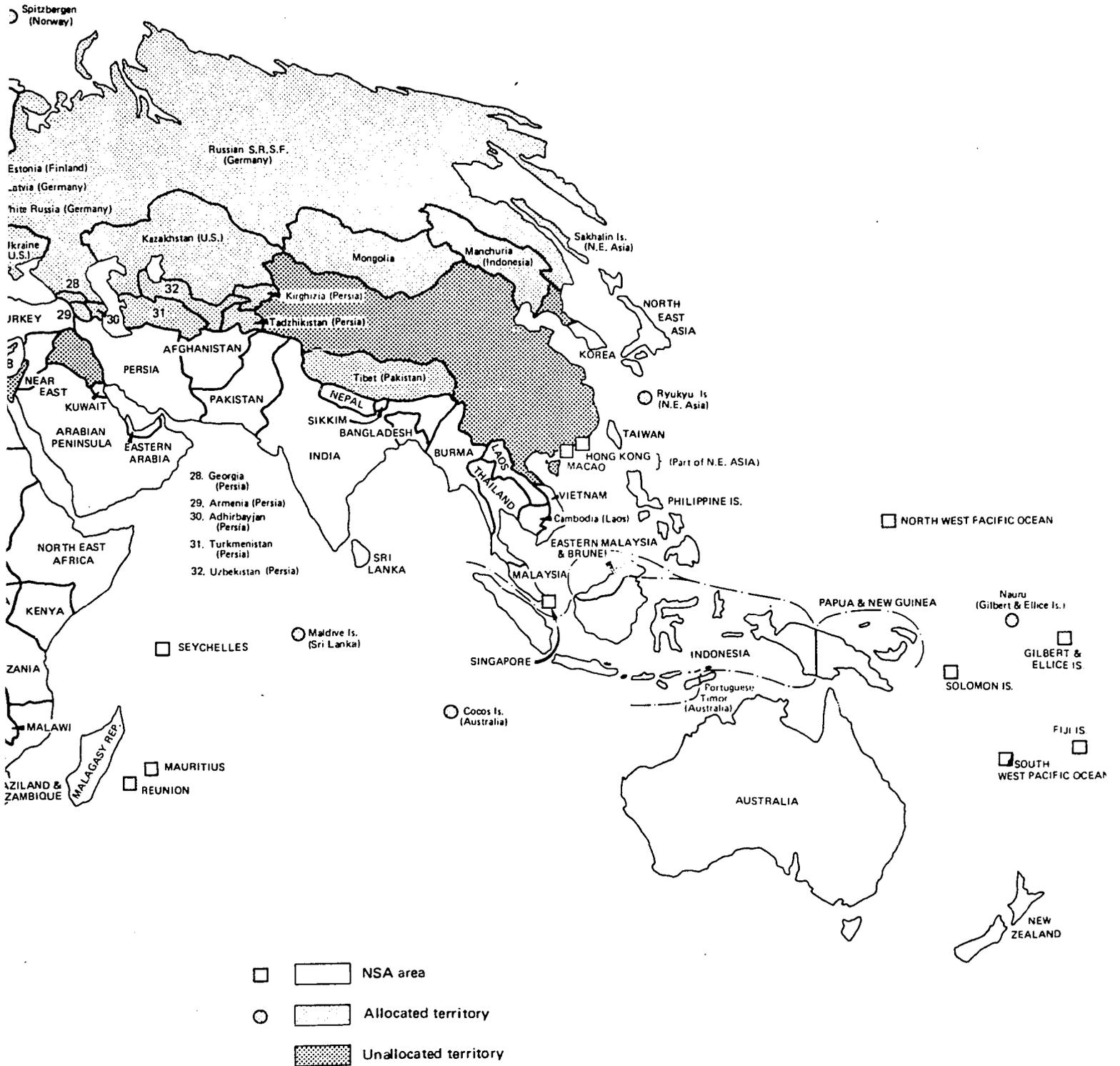


PERSIA National Spiritual Assembly area

Tadjhikistan (Persia) Territory allocated to an NSA
NSA responsible for an allocated territory

- NSA area
- Territory allocated to an NSA
- NSA responsible for an allocated territory
- ▨ Unallocated territory

FIGURE 40



Source: Universal House of Justice (1

communities; there were 19 opened localities in Iraq and 22 in Algeria. Burundi had a well-developed Baha'i community (47 opened localities by 1973) and for three years it was part of a National Spiritual Assembly that included Rwanda. In 1972 Burundi even attained independent National Assembly status, but during that same year internal disturbances precipitated a dismantling of all Baha'i administrative structures. I have not been able to ascertain why Gabon was unallocated in 1973 when it had eight local Spiritual Assemblies. Until 1972 it was part of a National Assembly area, but then it apparently had to be disassociated. Israel has never been targeted for administrative development and statistics regarding the presence of Baha'is in the country have been withheld. The Faith is particularly anxious to maintain its World Center there because of the many sacred Baha'i sites. For this reason, it has avoided developing a visible administrative structure that might seem threatening to the Jews.

Figure 40 shows that the 66 allocated territories not integrated into National Assemblies consisted of two types. On the one hand, there were the communist lands of Russia and Central Europe. On the other, there were widely scattered, thinly populated, highly isolated island groups and miniature states. Territories of the first type are large in geographical extent and significant in population size. Territories of the second type are not. Penetration of the communist regions may have to await a more favorable political climate, but the near future should see the gradual formation of National Spiritual Assemblies in most of the small, scattered places.

Many of the allocated territories were in the list of virgin areas that were targeted by the Nine Year Plan. They were, therefore, the regions of the world where Baha'i dispersion occurred between 1964 and 1973. However, Table 38 shows that population growth was most impressive in National Spiritual Assembly areas. Since growth, rather than dispersion, is the focus of this chapter, the subsequent analysis will consider Baha'i activity only in the organized National Assembly areas.

TABLE 38

THE BAHAI ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN 1973: TYPES OF TERRITORIES WITH NUMBERS OF OPENED LOCALITIES IN EACH TYPE

<u>Type of Territory</u>	<u>Number of Territories</u>	<u>Total No. of Opened Localities</u>
National Spiritual Assembly Areas	113	69,310
Allocated Territories	66	135
Unallocated Territories	8	96

Source: Universal House of Justice, The Nine Year Plan, 1964-1973: Statistical Report, Ridvan, 1973 (Haifa: The Universal House of Justice, 1973).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

For each of the 113 National Spiritual Assembly areas there are statistics on the number of local Assemblies and opened localities (1) existing in 1964, (2) set as goals by the Nine Year Plan, and (3) actually achieved by 1973. In addition, it was easy to compile statistics indicating the size (in square miles) and population of each National

Spiritual Assembly area. These bits of information were amassed, tabulated, and punched on computer cards.

Among these 113 National areas there are nine which received special treatment. Frequently, a National Assembly encompassed more than one country. When that happened, the Nine Year Plan usually set separate goals for each country in the National Assembly region, and later statistical reports on the progress of the Faith would tabulate goals and achievements in those territorial subunits. In such cases, consideration was given to subdividing the National Assembly region. There are two circumstances which were considered justification for making this sort of division: (1) if the National Assembly area contained countries with obvious, substantial differences in the concentration of Baha'i presence (as measured by the number of opened localities in 1973), and (2) if the National Assembly area consisted of political units that were widely separated. With these two criteria in mind, I decided to subdivide nine National Assembly areas, creating nine new ones and raising the total number from 113 to 122.

Once the data were ready, the following questions were posed: Do the Baha'i achievements in 1973 reflect the goals that were set in 1964? Do the goals set in the Nine Year Plan call for a uniform growth rate everywhere or do they specify differential growth rates that will redistribute the Baha'i population?

PLANNING GOALS AND ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

A simple correlation that treats planned number of local Spiritual Assemblies as the explanatory variable and actual number of Assemblies in 1973 as the dependent variable yields a high correlation coefficient:

+0.99. This statistical test, without further analysis, allows the conclusion that Baha'i achievements in 1973 accurately reflect the 1964 goals.

There is much that can be done to refine and qualify the conclusion, however. What, for example, is the slope and intercept of a regression line describing the relationship between the two variables and what is the geographic pattern of the high residuals in that regression?

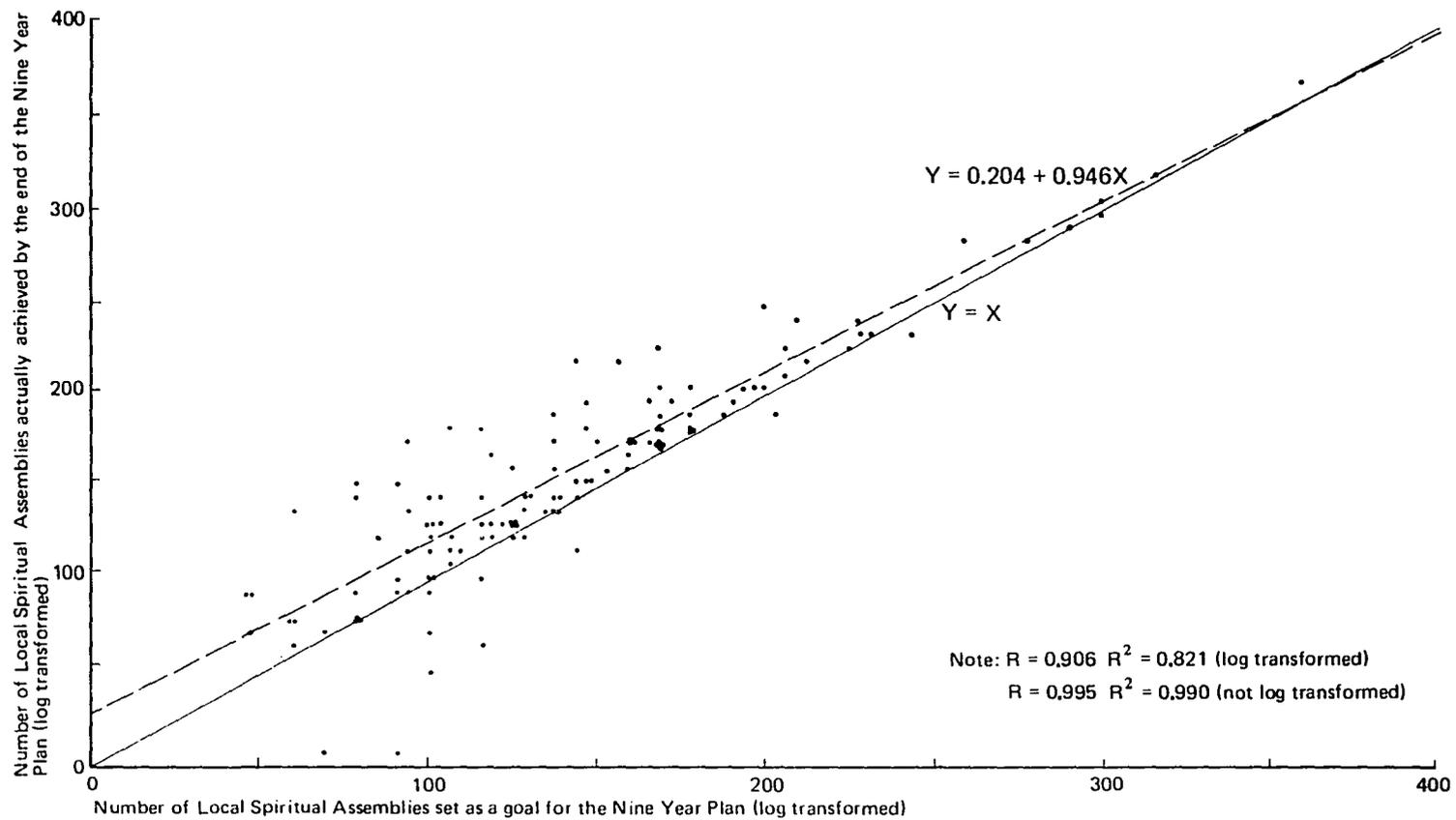
Both the dependent and independent variables consist of values that are highly skewed in favor of the lower quantities. For this reason it is appropriate to normalize the distributions by subjecting them to logarithmic transformations.

Figure 41 is a scatter diagram which describes the relationship between the two variables after their case values have been logarithmically transformed. The figure reveals a powerful relationship. Because of the logarithm transformation, the correlation coefficient has dropped to +0.91. This is still extremely high, however, and the r^2 value indicates that 82 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the independent variable.

The calculated regression line that has been drawn through the scatter of individual points has a slope which is slightly less than one (+0.95). The intercept, however, is above the x axis (+0.204), indicating that, on the average, the Faith achieved numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies that exceeded the objectives. The slope would suggest that this tendency is more marked for National Assembly areas with small objectives.

For all 122 areas, the religion surpassed its goals by about 23 percent. This is documented in Table 39 which also shows that National

FIGURE 41 The Nine Year Plan (1964–1974): Relationships Between Goals and Achievements for 125 National Spiritual Assembly Areas



Source: Universal House of Justice (1973)

TABLE 39

THE NINE YEAR PLAN: LSA GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY AREAS
WITH SMALL, MEDIUM, AND LARGE GOALS

NSA	NSA's in Which the Goal No. of LSA's is 1-14			NSA	NSA's in Which the Goal No. of LSA's is 15-39			NSA	NSA's in Which the Goal No. of LSA's is 40+		
	LSA Goal	LSA's Achieved	% Surplus		LSA Goal	LSA's Achieved	% Surplus		LSA Goal	LSA's Achieved	% Surplus
Central				Botswana	20	23	15	Cameroon			
Afr. Rep.	10	21	110	Dahomey/ Togo ^a	30	34	13	Republic	200	203	2
Congo	10	21	110	Lesotho	35	37	6	Chad	50	51	2
Niger ^a	5	5	0	Malawi	20	27	35	Ghana	40	40	0
Ivory Coast ^a	10	27	170	N.E. Africa:				Kenya	800	850	6
Mali/Upper Volta ^a	6	6	0	Eth./Som./ A&I ^a	32	58	81	Mauritius	41	57	39
Malagasy Republic	11	29	164	N.W. Africa	28	13	(b)	Nigeria	50	76	52
N.E. Africa:				Rwanda	25	37	48	Rhodesia	50	56	12
Egypt./Lib. ^a	5	1	(b)	Sudan	15	4	(b)	S.W. Africa/ S. Africa ^a	121	128	6
Reunion	10	13	30	Gambia ^a	20	27	35	Swaziland ^a	50	58	16
Seychelles	6	8	33	U.W. Africa (excluding Gambia) ^a	17	18	6	Tanzania	212	211	(b)
Angola ^a	10	5	(b)	Liberia ^a	5	20	33	Uganda	1500	1507	0
Mozambique ^a	10	8	(b)	Alaska	30	33	10	Zaire	1000	1223	22
Tunisia	10	3	(b)	Argentina	18	38	111	Zambia	60	73	22
Guinea/Sierra Leone ^a	6	6	0	Canada:				Bolivia	600	648	8
Belize	8	33	313	North ^a	15	15	0	Brazil	45	89	98
Cuba	8	0	(b)	Chile	25	51	104	Canada: South ^a	139	145	4
El Salvador	9	54	500	Colombia	27	161	496	Costa Rica	45	56	24
Leeward & Virgin Is.	6	31	417	Dominican Republic	15	26	73	Ecuador	120	164	37
Paraguay	9	14	56	Guatemala	27	30	11	Haiti	50	65	30
Puerto Rico	3	8	167	Guyana/ Sur./F.G.	16	42	163	Honduras	50	60	20
Trinidad/ Tobago	12	60	400	Jamaica	18	21	17	Mexico	50	101	102
Uruguay	9	23	156	Nicaragua	18	20	11	Panama	81	96	19
Windward Is.	4	23	475	Peru	24	82	242	United States	597	867	45
Afghanistan	4	4	0	Arabian Peninsula	15	10	(b)	Venezuela	50	164	228
Bangladesh	11	21	91	Burma	30	84	180	E. Malaysia/ Brunei	186	173	(b)
E. Arabia	12	16	33	Laos	36	152	322	India	4000	4870	22
Kuwait	3	8	167	Near East	16	16	0	Indonesia	106	71	(b)
Hong Kong/ Macao ^a	6	6	0	Nepal	15	59	293	Iran	1000	1000	0
Singapore	3	5	67	Taiwan	20	17	(b)	Korea	100	99	(b)
Fiji	7	17	143	Turkey	25	25	0	Malaysia	60	116	93
New Zealand	10	17	70	Hawaiian Islands	27	28	4	Japan ^a	60	64	7
N.W. Pacific Ocean	6	26	333	Papua/New Guinea	30	67	123	Pakistan	53	97	83
S.W. Pacific Ocean	10	10	0	Samoa	25	28	12	Philippines	200	268	34
Austria	12	13	8	Tonga/Cook Islands	18	17	(b)	Sikkim	75	76	1
Belgium	12	12	0	France	18	18	0	Sri Lanka	50	50	0
Denmark	10	10	0	Italy	24	28	17	Thailand	40	43	8
Finland	13	14	8	Netherlands	18	18	0	Vietnam	400	674	69
Iceland	4	6	50	Portugal	16	21	31	Australia	60	61	2
Ireland	4	6	50	Spain	22	22	0	Gilbert & Ellice Is.	40	54	35
Luxembourg	6	8	0	Switzerland	24	24	0	Solomon Is.	40	50	25
Norway	9	9	0					Germany	63	67	6
Sweden	8	10	25					United Kingdom	96	106	10
Total	329	617	88	Total	869	1451	67	Total	12,630	14,927	18

WORLD TOTALS: LSA Goals = 13,828; LSA's Achieved = 16,995; Percentage Surplus = 23%

Source: Universal House of Justice, *The Nine Year Plan, 1963-1973: Statistical Report*,
Ridvan, 1973.

^aThe region is actually a part of a larger NSA.

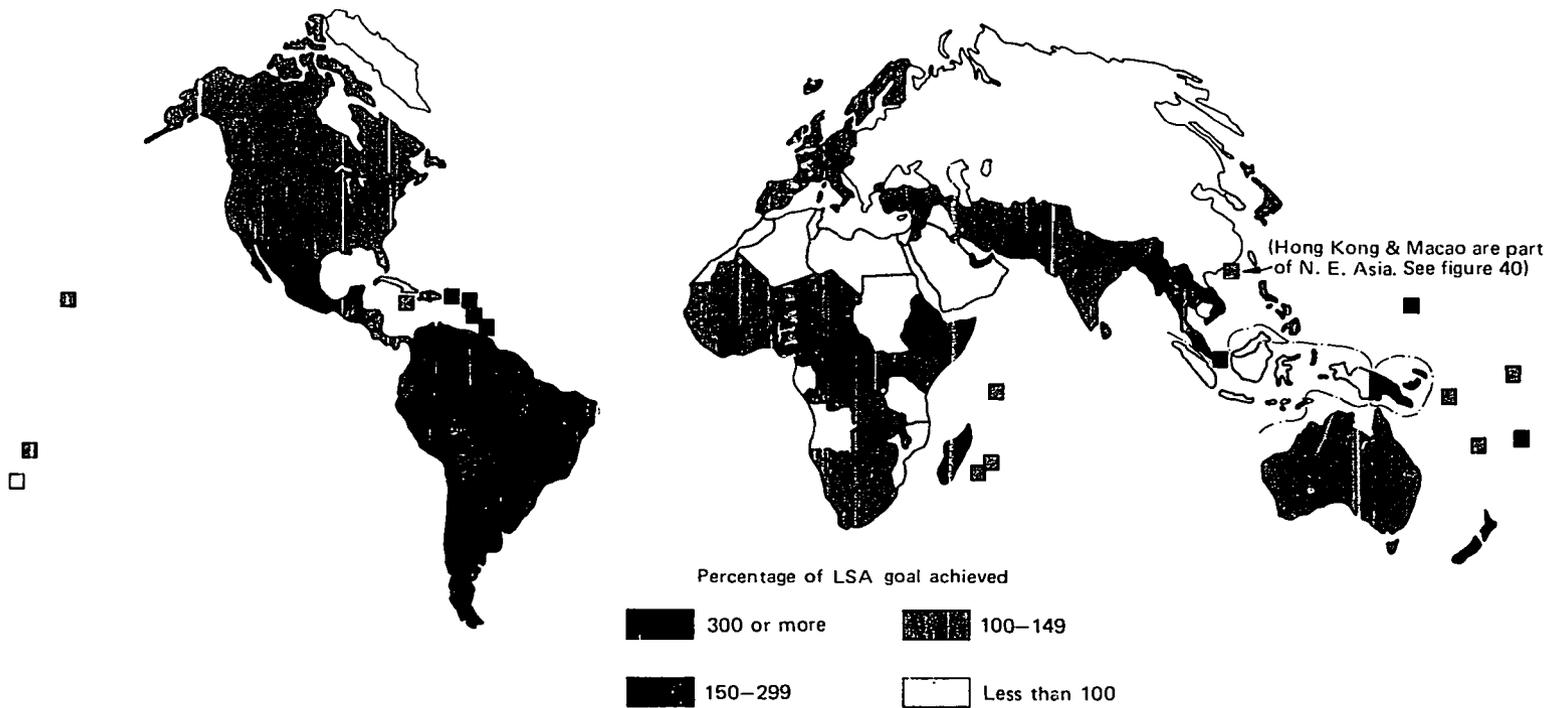
^bThe NSA failed to accomplish its LSA goal.

Assembly areas with small goals were more likely to overachieve by substantial margins.

Figure 41 contains a line that describes the theoretical notion lying behind this discussion--namely, that the Faith will achieve exactly the goals set (this line must have an intercept of zero and a slope of one). The relationship of the points in the scatter diagram to this line describes a salient feature of the Baha'i diffusion process. The fact that so few points lie below the line shows the importance which the Baha'i world places on achieving its goals in all areas. Within any given National Assembly area enormous effort is made to insure that at least the established goal is achieved. As a result, only 14 National areas fell short of their planning objectives. By comparison, 19 managed to reach exactly the number of local Spiritual Assemblies that the Nine Year Plan had assigned.

Since planning has been the most important explanation of why the Faith grew to the levels that it did in each of its National Assembly areas, it is more logical to analyze deviations from the line describing a perfect match between goals and achievements than it is to consider residuals from the calculated regression line. Figure 42 maps the achievement levels of the 122 National Assembly areas, showing for each the degree to which it exceeded or fell short of its assigned goal. It is important to realize that this map depicts neither the amount nor the rapidity of growth during the Nine Year Plan. Rather, it shows how successfully each National Assembly area responded to its 1964 planning goal.

Figure 42 The Achievement of Planning Objectives in National Spiritual Assembly Areas
The Nine Year Plan (1964–1973)



Source: Universal House of Justice (1973)

The distribution of National Assembly areas that did not accomplish their objectives confirms a trend that has already been mentioned: the religion has difficulty in communist countries and in the Sunni Muslim world. In both instances, prevailing beliefs and current political conditions discouraged growth of the Faith. Of the 14 National Assembly areas that did not reach their goals, seven were so handicapped: Cuba, Northwest Africa, Tunisia, Egypt/Libya, Sudan, Arabian Peninsula, and Indonesia.

Of the seven remaining National areas that failed to fulfill their plan objectives, six came so close that their deficits were quantitatively insignificant. Only Angola fell seriously short.

The National Assembly areas that exceeded their objectives by wide margins tended to distribute in a random fashion in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. To a disproportionate extent, however, they were present in Latin America and absent in Europe (both Iceland and Ireland barely qualified in the higher category in Figure 42).

The lack of surplus achievement in Europe draws attention to the fact that no highly industrialized, heavily urbanized country in the world (with the exception of New Zealand) outstripped its plan objectives. Perhaps urban places are less receptive than rural areas to a spiritual or religious message. Perhaps the clarity of local political boundaries effectively reduces the number of territorial subunits that qualify as localities in the Baha'i meaning of the word. Perhaps the relatively early establishment of the religion in most such regions resulted in their being treated as source areas for the diffusion process during the Nine Year Plan. Whatever the explanation, all industrialized countries reached their goals, and so the issue is not serious.

The prevalence of overachievement in Latin America is a particularly noticeable characteristic of Figure 42. The religion's success throughout this region is attributable to the same forces that operated in India during those two years of explosive growth in the early 1960s.⁴ Accounts of the Faith's progress in the individual National areas of Latin America document that, almost without exception, the introduction of aggressive mass teaching campaigns aimed at a particular group or locale resulted in very large numbers of conversions (by Baha'i standards) and in a surplus of local Spiritual Assemblies. Often, as had been the case in India, the mass teaching movement was stimulated by the visit of a Hand of the Cause of God or some other renowned Baha'i.⁵ An extract from the progress report of one National area--El Salvador--can stand as an example of the typical sequence of events throughout Latin America.

" . . . The early years of the Nine Year Plan," the National Spiritual Assembly reported, were a period when the "enrolling of one new believer was an occasion for considerable celebration . . . a handful of believers struggled against despair and worked to the point of exhaustion; there were many tests, much anguish and desperate prayer . . . the nine localities and three Local Assemblies that were the frail pillars of the National Spiritual Assembly had not grown appreciably since 1961 and these had been sustained with so much self-sacrifice and effort that even modest goals appeared beyond reach."

In 1968 these struggles and prayers began to bear wondrous fruits. "A new spirit was born in the community," The National Assembly commented, "which manifested itself particularly in the enrollment of new believers, especially among the youth. These,

⁴Actually, the explosion in India never really subsided. During the years 1968-1973, 157,000 new Baha'is were enrolled and today there are reported to be over 500,000 believers in the country.

⁵Progress reports for separate National areas confirm these remarks. The Baha'i World: 1968-1973, XIV, pp. 211-220, 230-242.

working side by side with members of the existing community and newly arrived pioneers of outstanding calibre led to victories on a scale not anticipated."

In 1968, coinciding with a visit of the Hand of the Cause Ugo Giachery, the Baha'is prepared an exhibit for the El Salvador International Fair which was the occasion for the dissemination of 37,000 specially printed pamphlets. Similar participation was arranged in 1970 and 1972 when 71,000 and 108,000 pieces of informative literature were distributed at the International Fair and 490 specially prepared radio announcements were broadcast. Much free press coverage accompanied the most recent of these exhibitions.

Proclamation commenced in the villages making use of the considerable musical talents of a pioneer couple and many embraced the Cause. A crash programme of consolidation produced a series of quarter-yearly conferences. Regional youth institutes were also conducted and a correspondence course was launched with over four thousand subscribers. Weekend teaching trips using newly designed deepening material sustained and strengthened the faith of the new believers. More than one hundred participated in these trips in one year alone and in one three-month period more than ninety such weekend trips were reported. Two books, five pamphlets and various other teaching aids were produced and distributed to the Spanish speaking countries. Eight Salvadorean believers served as international travelling teachers and two pioneered abroad. The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah was presented to the President of the Republic. Many special projects were undertaken including one where thirty-six believers visited a mountain village, remained four days and enrolled ninety percent of the population.

In the five year period under discussion the Salvadorean Baha'i community grew twenty times in numbers and its teaching goals were far surpassed. . . .⁶

This report highlights the recurrent theme of Baha'i expansion: spasmodic growth, generated by a handful of inspirational leaders, that increases the number of believers at such an unprecedented pace as to inundate the original established community. It also points out a new element in the Baha'i diffusion formula. By capitalizing on a particular event or situation, the Faith often effects sudden growth. In the case of El Salvador, the event was an international fair. Elsewhere it might be a local holiday, a public service broadcast (on radio or

⁶Ibid., pp. 212-213.

television), or a festival. Baha'is frequently try to disseminate information about their religion by any legitimate vehicle that contains the potential for public exposure. If the Toa Lesters organization is having a meeting, for example, the local Baha'i community is likely to recruit a believer with an interest in speechmaking to participate by giving a speech on some aspect of the Faith. If there is a parade, the Baha'is will enter a float. If there is a "swap meet" or second-hand sale, the Baha'is will take their unwanted items, sell them, donate their profits to the Baha'i fund, and distribute religious pamphlets in the process. One particularly effective strategy involves conferences. Held frequently, they almost invariably draw together Baha'is from many different lands. Usually staying for three or four days, the believers will use their free time working together in groups to approach the local population with the Baha'i message. Often the conference is designed to encourage dissemination of the Faith and usually the days immediately following the end of the conference are a time of intense effort to spread the Faith locally. In May of 1971, for example, there was an international conference held in Kingston, Jamaica. ". . . More than 1200 believers from twenty-nine countries attended and more than 500 new believers embraced the Faith during the three days."⁷

THE NATURE OF PLAN OBJECTIVES

In spite of deviations from the average, Baha'i growth during the period 1964-1973 was largely determined by the National objectives spelled out in the Nine Year Plan. That being the case, it is natural

⁷Ibid., p. 306.

to wonder whether the objectives were designed to promulgate a uniform growth rate everywhere in the world.

Without hesitation one can answer that the goals did not call for the same growth rate in all National Assembly areas. There were, in fact, enormous variations in the relative amount of growth expected from one National area to the next. The figures in Table 40 show the scope of this variety.

TABLE 40

PERCENTAGE GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES
THAT WAS EXPECTED BY THE GOALS OF THE NINE YEAR PLAN

Percentage Growth Expected	No. of National Spiritual Assembly Areas ^a
< 200	14
200-299	27
300-399	27
400-499	8
500-999	13
1000+	19

Source: Universal House of Justice, 1964-1973: Analysis of the Nine Year International Teaching Plan of the Baha'i Faith (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1964), pp. 26-38.

^aThere were 14 additional National Spiritual Assembly areas that had no local Spiritual Assemblies in 1964 and yet were expected to contain anywhere from 4 to 50 by 1973.

It can be concluded that the structure of the Nine Year Plan encouraged a redistribution of Baha'i strength. Although relocation of a few Baha'is was to play a key role in the redistribution process, most of the quantitative change would have to come from National differences

in the adoption rate. In other words, the Baha'i Faith planned to obtain more converts in some parts of the world than in others. But now the question is, Which parts of the world were targeted for more (or less) rapid growth and why were they chosen?

The first thought that comes to mind is that the Faith would plan to expand more rapidly in areas of previous success and would expect to grow less rapidly where prior expansion had been slow. In other words, the Baha'i Faith would plan self-growth in much the same way that the king ruled his realm in St. Exupery's story of The Little Prince: whatever his people wanted to do, that was what the king commanded. By adhering to this dictum the king found that he was an absolute monarch whose word was law. By following a similar sort of strategy, the Universal House of Justice could vastly improve the likelihood of giving to the Baha'i world a planning document whose objectives would be realized. It is virtually impossible for any planning authority to avoid behaving at least in part like the king. Failure to do so is unrealistic. But on the other hand, simple-minded implementation of the king's strategy is an admission of powerlessness to change the world.

The Nine Year Plan does not contain any striking evidence that objectives were based on preceding growth experience. India and Bolivia --two regions of rapid expansion during the Ten Year Plan--were given above average goals, but Panama and Costa Rica, other high growth regions during the 1950s and early 1960s, were expected to grow slowly during the Nine Year Plan.

It would be desirable to test the proposition that Baha'i planning goals were based on previous growth experience, and thus were only

apparently, and not really, effective in directing expansion of the religion during the period 1964-1973. Unfortunately, for two reasons it is not possible to quantitatively evaluate the legitimacy of this view. First, there is a data problem. The numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies were so small in 1953, at the beginning of the Ten Year Plan, that many of the 122 National areas now being considered had none. In those instances it would be impossible to derive a reasonable growth index which could be used to compare expansion during the years 1953-1963 with anticipated expansion during the years 1964-1973. Second, and more important, there is the conceptual problem. The whole idea underlying a comparison of goals with preceding actualities is to determine whether external forces lying outside the control of the religion and molding its geographical growth were simply accommodated by the Nine Year Plan. The problem here is that growth was not unplanned in the years preceding 1964. Baha'i expansion has been governed by specific plans that date back to 1937, at which time most of the world had no local Spiritual Assemblies.

There is a strategy that can be used to test the notion that preceding growth experiences did not dictate plan objectives. If it can be shown that planning goals were set largely in accordance with some other principle, then one can assume that the Universal House of Justice was not behaving in the same way as St. Exupery's king. But what other principle might have guided the Universal House of Justice to adopt different growth rate objectives for the 122 National Assembly areas? There is one possibility. Because of the religion's historical concern with dispersion, the Universal House of Justice may have embodied

this enduring policy in its Nine Year Plan objectives. The most logical expression of that policy would be planning goals which require more rapid expansion in areas with few Assemblies. The working hypothesis, therefore, is that a National area with few Assemblies in 1964 would be expected to multiply their numbers by a greater amount than a National area with many local Assemblies in 1964.

In order to test this hypothesis it is necessary to measure the ambitiousness of plan objectives in each of the 122 National areas. This presents a problem because 14 National areas contained no local Spiritual Assemblies in 1963. In those instances, it is impossible to say that the plan called for a certain percentage increase in the number of local Assemblies because the expectation of any increase will result in an infinitely high growth rate. In order to circumvent this problem, the following index was used:

$$I = \frac{A - a}{A}$$

I = index of plan ambitiousness
 a = number of local Assemblies existing in 1964
 A = number of local Assemblies required by the Nine Year Plan

Rather than using a measure that looks at the number of new Assemblies required relative to the number existing in 1964, this index notes the number of Assemblies to be achieved by 1973 and determines what proportion will have to be new. This strategy sidesteps the problem of zero denominators and infinite growth rates, but in the process it introduces a new difficulty. Whereas the traditional index based on a notion of percentage increases over a past level can take on any positive value, this new index is limited to a maximum value of one.

The result is that the intervals between equally spaced values represent increasingly large quantities as the index approaches one. Table 41 compares traditional percentage values with the corresponding index values, thereby graphically portraying the nature of the problem.

TABLE 41

A COMPARISON OF TWO MEASUREMENTS OF EXPECTED LSA GROWTH:
PERCENTAGE CHANGE VS. INDEX OF PLAN AMBITIOUSNESS

Percentage Change		Index of Ambitiousness
-50	=	-1.00
0	=	.00
100	=	.50
200	=	.67
300	=	.75
500	=	.83
1000	=	.91
2000	=	.95
∞	=	1.00

Although the distortion introduced by the structure of the index tends to skew the distribution of scores in favor of high values, this is advantageous because it meshes well with the extreme negative skewness of the distribution for the independent variable (number of local Assemblies in 1964). Because the hypothesis is that an inverse relationship exists between number of local Assemblies in 1964 and the index of plan ambitiousness, the existence of negative skewness for one and positive skewness for the other means that a high level of correlation is mathematically possible.

However, the potential for high correlation is not realized. The calculation of a correlation coefficient yields an r value of $-.16$, and

that is too close to zero to be meaningful.⁸ Consequently, I rejected the hypothesis and concluded that the local Assembly goals set by the Nine Year Plan were not designed to encourage more rapid Baha'i expansion in National areas having relatively few local Assemblies in 1964. In other words, the plan's local Assembly goals did not systematically favor Baha'i dispersion at the National level. Because this is so, there is no choice but to leave unanswered the original question of whether or not the Nine Year Plan merely perpetuated preexisting trends. One can be certain, however, that the plan did not provide for more rapid growth in areas where the Faith was already strong by 1964.

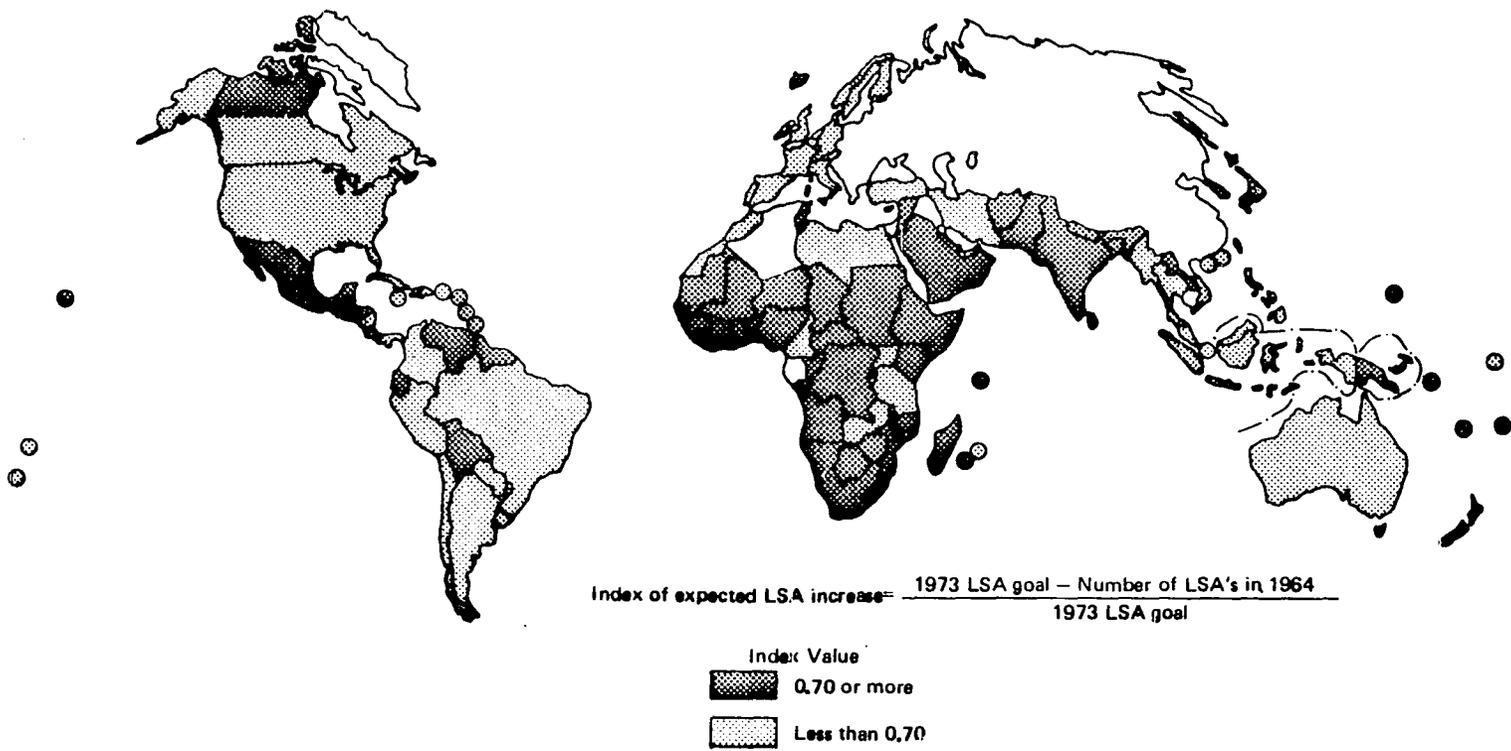
The geographic distribution of the variations in plan ambitiousness (see Figure 43) suggests three patterns. First, the more ambitious objectives were concentrated in Africa. Second, the Nine Year Plan tended to specify more ambitious goals in island nations. Third, highly ambitious goals were rarely assigned to industrialized regions (Japan, New Zealand, and South Africa--the only possible exceptions--had index values only marginally exceeding .70).

VARIATIONS IN PLAN AMBITIOUSNESS: THE
EFFECT ON ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

One might suppose that, because the Nine Year Plan objectives for separate National areas varied widely in ambitiousness, the relative

⁸If the set of cases were a sample, and not a total population, r would have to equal .17 to be statistically significant at the 5 percent level. It should be noted that the explanatory power of $r = .16$ is very poor since the $r^2 = .03$. Incidentally, one National area was excluded from the analysis because its data appear to have been faulty.

FIGURE 43 The Relative Ambitiousness of the Nine Year Plan (1964–1973)
The Expected Increase of LSA's in NSA Areas



Note: Japan, Hong Kong & Macao were a single NSA
 Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Somalia & Afars and Issas were a single NSA

Source: Universal House of Justice (1973)

success of a given National Area in achieving its goal would be controlled by how much was expected of it. Chad and Rhodesia can be used as examples. The Nine Year Plan obliged both countries to have 50 local Spiritual Assemblies by 1973. In 1964 when the objectives were set, however, Rhodesia already had 13 local Assemblies whereas Chad had none. Since the objective for Chad was more demanding, it might be expected that Rhodesia would more successfully pursue its plan goal. In other words, it can be hypothesized that overachievement (or underachievement) of plan goals by National Assembly areas will be inversely related to the index of plan ambitiousness.

To test this hypothesis, it was necessary to quantify the dependent variables by expressing the 1973 number of local Spiritual Assemblies as a percentage of the goal number specified in the plan (see Figure 42). The next step was to calculate a correlation coefficient and evaluate its significance. In fact, correlations were calculated for each continent separately as well as for the Baha'i world as a whole (see Table 42).

Whether all 121 National areas are considered together (Egypt/Libya was excluded because of faulty data) or those on each continent separately, the picture remains the same. There was no meaningful correlation between plan ambitiousness and plan achievement. One can conclude that relative level of achievement was not influenced by the ambitiousness of the assigned goal. In fact, if anything, a slight positive relationship existed, indicating that a more demanding goal was more likely to be exceeded. This is relevant because it justifies the assumption, previously made but never stated, that overachievement and underachievement during the Nine Year Plan were not caused by a faulty plan structure.

TABLE 42

THE NINE YEAR PLAN: CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS RELATING ACTUAL
OVERACHIEVEMENT AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT TO THE AMBITIOUSNESS
OF THE PLAN GOALS

Region	No. of Cases (No. of NSA's)	Correlation Coefficient	Statistically Significant at 1% Level?
Africa	36 ^a	+0.055	No
Latin America	27	+0.298	No
North America	4	-.682	No
Asia	26	+0.021	No
Australia & Pacific	11	+0.461	No
Europe	17	+0.582	No
WORLD	121 ^a	+0.118	No

^aEgypt/Libya was excluded because its data appeared to be faulty.

THE NUMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION OF BAHAI'S IN 1973

The Data Problem

Precisely 129 years after its birth, the Baha'i Faith concluded its Nine Year Plan and a religion which was first possessed by only one man in Shiraz had spread to embrace hundreds of thousands of adherents around the world. Although the movement is still extremely small and relatively invisible, it has diffused widely during its historical development. An attempt has been made to trace the main features of that diffusion process. For the sake of completion, it is appropriate to conclude with an analysis of the distribution of the Baha'i Faith at the end of the Nine Year Plan.

On the surface, this looks easy. After all, there is a 1973 tabulation of local Assemblies and opened localities in each National area;

these figures should be reasonable indicators of Baha'i strength in various regions of the world. Indeed, they are. But to what do these statistics relate? The enumeration of localities where Baha'is reside is a crude indicator of the strength of the religion, but as an exact measure of Baha'i presence it is inadequate without additional data concerning the total number of localities that could be occupied. Even then, it would not be possible to determine how successfully the religion has saturated the individual localities. These problems preclude the direct and unmodified use of published statistics to evaluate the geographical distribution of the Baha'i Faith.

Since the Baha'i religion is composed of individuals, the most satisfactory method of distributional analysis would consider the numbers of believers and their proportionate strength in the total population. It is easy to determine the total population residing in the many different regions of the world; the problem is the dearth of statistics concerning the numbers of Baha'is. Therefore, the size of the Baha'i population will have to be estimated.

Estimating the Size of the Baha'i Population in National Spiritual Assembly Areas

The Estimating Technique

How is it possible to derive an accurate, reliable estimate of how many Baha'is resided in each National Spiritual Assembly area in 1973? The only good information--that tabulating the numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies and opened localities--obviously will correlate with Baha'i population size, but lacking membership statistics, how is it possible to evaluate the strength of that correlation, the predictive power of its

coefficient of determination, and the parameters of its associated regression formula?

Occasionally, the Baha'i population of a specified area is mentioned in the literature of the religion. In forty cases, it was possible to ascertain either the number of local Assemblies or the number of opened localities as well. These forty cases will be used to develop an estimating procedure.

Table 43 tabulates the relevant information. Although the possibility that the list is not a representative sample is both real and sobering, it is encouraging that (1) a wide variety of geographical locations are included, (2) the territorial size of the separate cases varies greatly, and (3) the range in values is broad for all three important variables (number of Assemblies, number of opened localities, and number of Baha'is).

The first step in the estimating procedure was to calculate the correlation coefficient and the regression formula when Baha'i population is treated as the dependent variable and number of local Spiritual Assemblies as the independent variable. After that, the same procedure was followed substituting number of opened localities as the independent variable. At this point, therefore, there were two correlation coefficients and two regression formulas, one of each for each of the two variables treated as independent (see Table 44). Both these sets of values indicate strong positive relationships although it is disconcerting that in each instance the regression formula predicts the presence of hundreds of Baha'is even when there are no localities in the country containing believers. That problem, however, will be addressed later.

TABLE 43

AREAS WHERE THE KNOWN SIZE OF THE BAHAI POPULATION CAN BE RELATED TO THE
KNOWN NUMBER OF LSA'S OR THE TOTAL NUMBER OF OPENED LOCALITIES

Area	Time Frame	No. of LSA's	Total No. of Localities	Baha'i Population	Source of Information ^a
United States	Spring, 1936 ^b	66	233	2,548	C. of R., 1936, p. 76.
United States	April, 1950	159	1,134	5,755	(NTC Office Statistics)
Philippines	(early 1950's)		40	200	B.W.: 1954-63, p. 303.
Uganda	April, 1954	23	80	500	MBW, p. 62.
Uganda	April, 1955		100	900	BW: 1954-63, p. 285.
Africa	April, 1955	120		1,300	BW: 1954-63, p. 285.
No. West Africa	April, 1956	38	101	1,000	BW: 1954-63, p. 287.
Uganda	April, 1957		180	1,100	MBW, p. 113.
Africa	April, 1957		550	3,500	MBW, p. 110.
Japan/Indonesia/ New Zealand	April, 1957		210	1,700	MBW, p. 111.
India	Feb., 1961	58	143	850	BW: 1954-63, p. 299.
Philippines	July, 1962		182	1,600	BW: 1954-63, p. 303.
India	Feb., 1963 ^c	675	2,449	65,355	BW: 1954-63, p. 299.
Vietnam	April, 1963	133	160	3,000	BW: 1954-63, p. 303.
Bolivia	April, 1963	38	475	8,000	BW: 1954-63, p. 269.
Korea	April, 1963	12	50	2,047	BW: 1954-63, p. 305.
Ken. & E. Africa	April, 1963	861	2,000	40,000	BW: 1954-63, p. 289.
Ecuador	April, 1968	29	220	6,000	BW: 1963-68, p. 153. BW: 1968-73, p. 237.
Upper W. Africa	1968		20	400	BW: 1968-73, p. 193.
Swaziland	1968	12	36	800	BW: 1963-68, p. 149. BW: 1968-73, p. 201.
Lesotho	1968	6	28	300	BW: 1963-68, p. 149. BW: 1968-73, p. 201.
Mozambique	1968	1	9	250	BW: 1963-68, p. 149. BW: 1968-73, p. 201.
Zambia	1968	16	251	2,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 202.
Gilbert & Ellice Islands	1968	8	68	984	BW: 1968-73, p. 273.
Chad	April, 1969	13	21	1,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 208.
Brazil	Feb., 1971	60	125	5,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 233.
Ghana	April, 1973	41	157	1,721	BW: 1968-73, p. 192.
Zambia	April, 1973	72	581	3,800	BW: 1968-73, p. 202.
Zaire	April, 1973	490	557	19,800	BW: 1968-73, p. 206.

TABLE 43 - continued

Area	Time Frame	No. of LSA's	Total No. of Localities	Baha'i Population	Source of Information ^a
Cen. African Rep.	April, 1973	22	115	1,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 207.
Chad	April, 1973	52	273	3,500	BW: 1968-73, p. 209.
Dominican Rep.	April, 1973	26	100	3,000	NYP, 1964-73, p. 40. BW: 1968-73, p. 217.
Windward Is.	April, 1973	27	31	2,500	NYP, 1964-73, p. 43. BW: 1968-73, p. 220.
Ecuador	April, 1973	207	531	28,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 237.
Papua/New Guinea	April, 1973	67	246	3,000	BW: 1968-73, p. 265.
Gilbert & Ellice Islands	April, 1973	57	151	2,460	BW: 1968-73, p. 273.
Iceland	April, 1973	6	35	370	BW: 1968-73, p. 282.
Rhodesia	April, 1973	57	279	5,000	NYP, 1964-73, p. 37. BW: 1968-73, p. 201.
Upper W. Africa	1973	36	117	1,800	BW: 1968-73, p. 193.
United States	April, 1976	1,230	5,644	^d	(NTC Office Statistics)

Note: The data for this table is very precise for numbers of local Spiritual Assemblies and total numbers of opened localities. Figures indicating the sizes of the Baha'i Populations, however, are less precise since the sources from which they were drawn often modified the values with such words as "almost," "over," "nearly," and "more than". The amounts of Baha'i population presented in the table simply use the numerical figure presented in the source and ignore any modifiers.

^aThe sources of information have been abbreviated according to the following scheme:

BW: 1954-63 = The Baha'i World: 1954-1963
BW: 1963-68 = The Baha'i World: 1963-1968
BW: 1968-73 = The Baha'i World: 1968-1973
MBW = Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World
NYP, 1964-73 = Universal House of Justice, The Nine Year Plan, 1964-1973: Statistical Report, Ridvan, 1973.
C of R., 1936 = U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1936, Vol. II, Part I.

^bThe figures for LSA's and total localities are for April, 1935 whereas the population figure is for the Spring of 1936.

^cThe figures for LSA's and total localities are for Dec., 1962 whereas the population figure is for April, 1963.

^dThe figure for Baha'i population was known and was used in the upcoming analysis.

TABLE 44

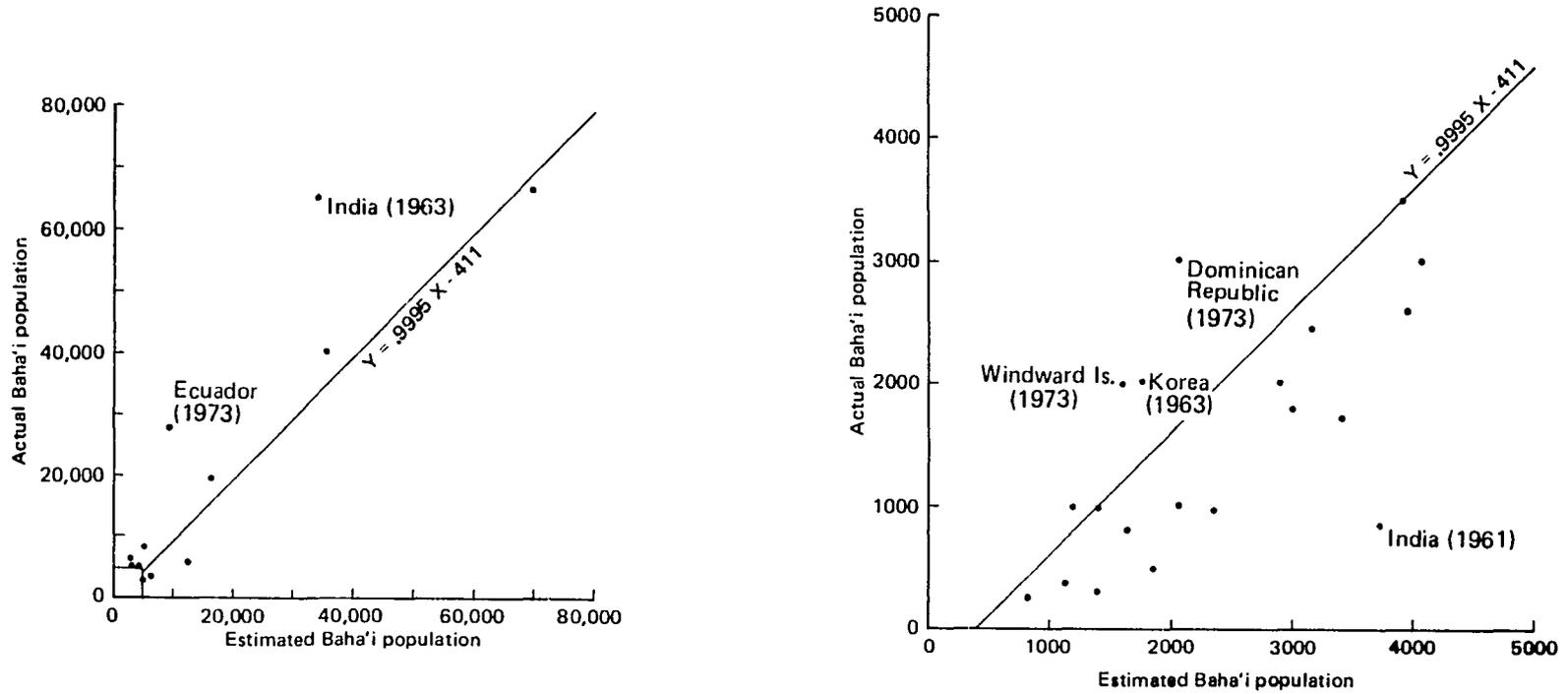
CORRELATION AND REGRESSION WITH BAHAI POPULATION AS THE DEPENDENT
VARIABLE AND LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES OR OPENED LOCALITIES
AS THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

No. of LSA's as Independent Variable	No. of Opened Localities as Independent Variable
No. of Cases = 33	No. of Cases = 39
$R = .80, R^2 = .64$	$R = .91, R^2 = .83$
$Y = 997.9 + 46.7X$	$Y = 526.2 + 14.2X$

The next step was to use the two regression formulas to generate two sets of expected Baha'i population values that could be compared to the observed values. Although the correlation coefficient suggests that the number of opened localities performs better as an independent variable, and should therefore be used instead of number of local Spiritual Assemblies to predict Baha'i population size, an analysis of the two arrays of predicted values confirmed that when one independent variable predicts inaccurately in one direction the other independent variable often predicts inaccurately in the other direction. For this reason it was concluded that a combination of the two arrays of predicted values would yield more accurate population estimates. Thus, a mean predicted value was calculated for the 32 cases having data for both independent variables.

At this point, a scatter diagram was constructed to reveal in greater detail the nature of the relationship between mean predicted and actual Baha'i population size (see Figure 44). One of the most troublesome difficulties was the skewness of distribution. For both

FIGURE 44 Actual and Estimated Baha'i Populations: 32 Isolated Cases



estimated and actual population size, most of the cases take on values under 5,000. In a few instances, however, the population figures are in the tens of thousands. The problem is this. A regression line fitted to all the points may be unduly affected by the few very large values, thereby rendering it useless for predicting populations in the low range. A line fitted just to the smaller values where most of the cases occur, however, will likely miss the mark entirely for the cases with very large Baha'i populations--cases which may be few in number but which contain a high percentage of all the Baha'is. Keeping in mind this limitation for regression analysis, it can at least be confirmed that the calculated correlation coefficient ($r = .93$) was higher when this mean Baha'i population prediction was employed as the independent variable than it was when either local Assemblies or opened localities was treated as the independent variable. It seemed, therefore, that the mean Baha'i population estimate was an improvement over the two earlier estimates derived separately.

A visual examination of the distribution of points indicated that six isolated cases on the scatter diagram deviate substantially from the overall trend. It was assumed that these six cases are exceptional and do not relate to the general pattern. Since, by the magnitude of their residual values they could unduly affect the placement of a regression line, they were eliminated from consideration before a regression formula was calculated and a line fitted (because five of these six cases are positive residuals, it is safe to say that in the end there will be a handful of National Assembly areas that actually had much larger Baha'i populations than estimated in 1973. One can see that the regression line

fits the larger values very well and properly captures the slope of the trend for the smaller values. There is a tendency for the line to slightly overpredict population at the lower values, but this bias will have to be tolerated.

A complete procedure for estimating the size of the Baha'i population in each National Spiritual Assembly area now exists. To summarize, the regression equations derived by treating number of Assemblies and number of opened localities as separate independent variables were used to generate two preliminary estimates of the Baha'i population in each National area. The pairs of values in these two arrays were then averaged and the resulting mean estimates were used as values for an independent variable that was tested against the actual Baha'i population variable. The resulting regression formula is shown in Figure 44 ($Y = .9995 X - 410.9$). The individual values for Y became the final population predictions.

It should be noted that the minus intercept value (-410.9) effectively compensates for the tendency of the preliminary regressions (using Assemblies and localities) to predict Baha'i populations of a few hundred even when the independent variables are zero.

Population Estimates

Table 45 tabulates for each National area the estimated size of the Baha'i population and shows the approximate number of believers per one million people. Because of the tentativeness of the estimating procedure, these figures must not be taken as highly accurate.

Although the individual estimates may vary widely from the actual but unknown figures, when they are summed their inaccuracies should tend

TABLE 45. ESTIMATED BAHAI POPULATION AND ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BAHAI'S PER MILLION POPULATION
IN EACH NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY AREA: 1973

NSA	Baha'i Population	Baha'i per Million	NSA	Baha'i Population	Baha'i per Million
AFRICA			Gambia ^a	1,507	3,076
Botswana Rep.	1,484	2,356	Upper W. Africa:		
Cameroon Rep.	9,268	1,502	others ^a	1,062	169
Central Africa Rep.	1,566	500	Liberia ^a	1,294	794
Chad	3,459	894	Guinea/Sierra Leone ^a	655	96
Congo	1,296	1,013	Zaire	38,010	1,613
Dahomey/Toga ^a	1,855	369	Zambia	5,159	1,112
Niger ^a	638	148	AMERICAS		
Ghana	2,898	310	Alaska	2,329	6,850
Ivory Coast ^a	1,386	298	Argentina	2,489	101
Mali/Upper Volta ^a	570	51	Belize	1,867	14,362
Kenya	48,611	3,895	Bolivia	42,197	7,917
Lesotho	2,986	3,013	Brazil	9,026	89
Malagasy Rep.	1,618	216	Canada: North ^a	1,014	16,900
Malawi	2,800	585	Canada: South ^a	10,556	478
Mauritius	2,656	3,088	Chile	2,842	278
Nigeria	3,716	62	Colombia	8,934	385
Egypt/Libya ^a	673	18	Costa Rica	2,732	1,461
Ethiopia/Somalia			Cuba	380	43
etc.	3,047	103	Dominican Rep.	1,668	377
North West Africa	1,130	69	Ecuador	7,859	1,178
Reunion	867	1,845	El Salvador	3,252	842
Rhodesia	3,640	617	Guatemala	3,054	551
Rwanda	2,209	551	Guyana/Surinam/F.G.	2,035	1,682
Seychelles	836	13,933	Haiti	2,679	603
S. Africa/ S.W. Africa ^a	6,813	272	Honduras	3,258	1,172
Angola ^a	560	95	Jamaica	1,672	844
Sudan	516	31	Leeward & Virgin Is.	1,465	1,465
Swaziland ^a	3,381	7,350	Mexico	5,359	95
Mozambique ^a	752	85	Nicaragua	1,180	587
Tanzania	13,595	948	Panama	5,106	3,252
Tunisia	642	118	Paraguay	1,075	403
Uganda	63,835	5,905	Peru	5,015	336

Angola ^a	560	95	Leeward & Virgin Is.	1,465	1,465
Sudan	516	31	Mexico	5,359	95
Swaziland ^a	3,381	7,350	Nicaragua	1,180	587
Mozambique ^a	752	85	Panama	5,106	3,252
Tanzania	13,595	948	Paraguay	1,075	403
Tunisia	642	118	Peru	5,015	336
Uganda	63,835	5,905			

NSA	Baha'i Population	Baha'i per Million	NSA	Baha'i Population	Baha'i per Million
Puerto Rico	800	271	Vietnam (S.)	27,829	1,395
Trinidad & Tobago	2,995	2,825	AUST./PACIFIC		
United States	60,736	289	Australia	3,593	274
Uruguay	1,214	406	Fiji	1,337	2,431
Venezuela	7,398	656	Gilbert & Ellice Is.	2,649	44,150
Windward Is.	1,108	1,944	Hawaiian Is.	1,203	1,415
ASIA			New Zealand	1,415	478
Afghanistan	537	29	N.W. Pacific Ocean	2,023	9,195
Arabian Peninsula	684	40	Papua/New Guinea	3,243	1,267
Bangladesh	1,488	20	Samoa	1,829	10,161
Burma	4,053	137	Solomon Is.	3,465	19,250
E. Arabia	859	1,652	S.W. Pacific Ocean	804	3,829
E. Malaysia/Brunei	9,625	4,936	Tonga/Cook Is.	1,266	11,509
India	269,823	469	EUROPE		
Indonesia	4,815	39	Austria	1,073	142
Korea (S.)	6,648	202	Belgium	1,064	109
Kuwait	602	684	Denmark	847	169
Laos	8,169	2,569	Finland	919	197
Malaysia	5,553	578	France	1,574	30
Near East	1,015	166	Germany (W.)	5,495	89
Nepal	2,276	189	Iceland	740	3,524
Japan ^a	3,770	35	Ireland	619	204
Hong Kong/Macao ^a	662	150	Italy	2,134	39
Pakistan	4,164	62	Luxembourg	680	1,943
Persia	--	--	Netherlands	1,290	96
Philippine Is.	30,605	761	Norway	781	197
Sikkim	5,286	25,171	Portugal	1,317	154
Singapore	525	240	Spain	1,433	41
Sri Lanka	3,323	251	Sweden	1,053	129
Taiwan	1,714	108	Switzerland	1,998	311
Thailand	3,628	91	United Kingdom	6,584	118
Turkey	1,347	36			

^aThe region is actually part of a larger National Spiritual Assembly

to cancel out and the estimated total number of Baha'is should be substantially more reliable. With this in mind, the figures in Table 46 show the size and proportionate representativeness of Baha'is, continent by continent.

TABLE 46

ESTIMATED BAHAI POPULATION AND ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BAHAI'S PER MILLION POPULATION IN ALL THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY AREAS ON EACH CONTINENT: 1973

Region	Baha'i Population	Baha'is per Million People Aged 15+
Africa	236,987	1,173
North America	74,635	439
South America	128,693	730
Asia (except Iran)	399,002	530
Australia & Pacific	22,827	1,591
Europe	29,601	119
Total	891,745	570

In terms of absolute numbers, it is evident that the Baha'i Faith is strong in Asia, Africa, and the Americas and weak in Europe and Australia/Pacific. When one looks at relative figures, however, the picture changes somewhat. The number of Baha'is per million population is high for Africa and low for Europe, a pattern that mirrors the situation described by the absolute numbers. Australia/Pacific, however, which in terms of absolute number of Baha'is is rather insignificant, becomes the region with the heaviest concentration of believers per million population.

These figures are based on a comparison of the Baha'i population and the total population only in the organized National Assembly areas.

Thus, for Asia especially, but also Europe and Africa, large territories with sizable populations are excluded from consideration.

The Geographic Distribution of Baha'is in 1973

One would think that the most informative way to analyze the geographic distribution of Baha'is would be to map the variations in the national values for Baha'is per million population. However, examination of the data reveals a strong tendency for the number of Baha'is per million to vary inversely with the absolute total population size of a country. In other words, a country with a small population will have a very high number of Baha'is per million people whereas a country with a large population will have few Baha'is per million. A map which simply records the number of Baha'is per million population will, therefore, do little more than reveal which countries are large and which ones are small--something which adds nothing to an understanding of the spatial characteristics of the Baha'i ecumene.

Of course the existence of the relationship is significant and merits analysis. The population size of a given National Assembly area is largely a function of political realities lying outside the control of the Faith. Whether purposefully or not, the Faith has defined for itself National Assembly areas that coincide in almost all cases with the territorial extent of one or more countries. Hence, it is safe to say that the process of creating Baha'i National Assembly areas has not allowed total population size to play a significant role in determining the territorial limits of a new National Assembly area. Thus, the inverse relationship between total population of a National area and its number

of Baha'is per million probably can best be understood if Baha'is per million is treated as the dependent variable. From this perspective it can be theorized that a country with a small population that has its own Baha'i National Assembly is in a better position to deeply penetrate its target population than a country in which the Baha'i National Assembly has to reach many people. It is a matter of logistics. Most National Assembly areas around the world are relatively recent creations and any one contains a Baha'i population that is an extremely small part of the whole human mass in that country. Thus, for example, it is much more difficult for a National Assembly to organize Baha'i resources and stimulate the tiny numbers of active believers to reach one percent of the population in a country like Nigeria where some 600,000 converts would have to be recruited than in a nation such as Botswana where only about 6,000 people would be required.

It was necessary to consider the statistical magnitude of this perceived relationship. Because of their highly skewed distributions, both variables were logarithmically transformed before computing the correlation coefficient and the regression equation. The results were as follows:

x = independent variable: millions of people in the National area.

Y = dependent variable: estimated no. of Baha'is per million pop.

number of cases = 121 (Iran was excluded)

$r = -.79$

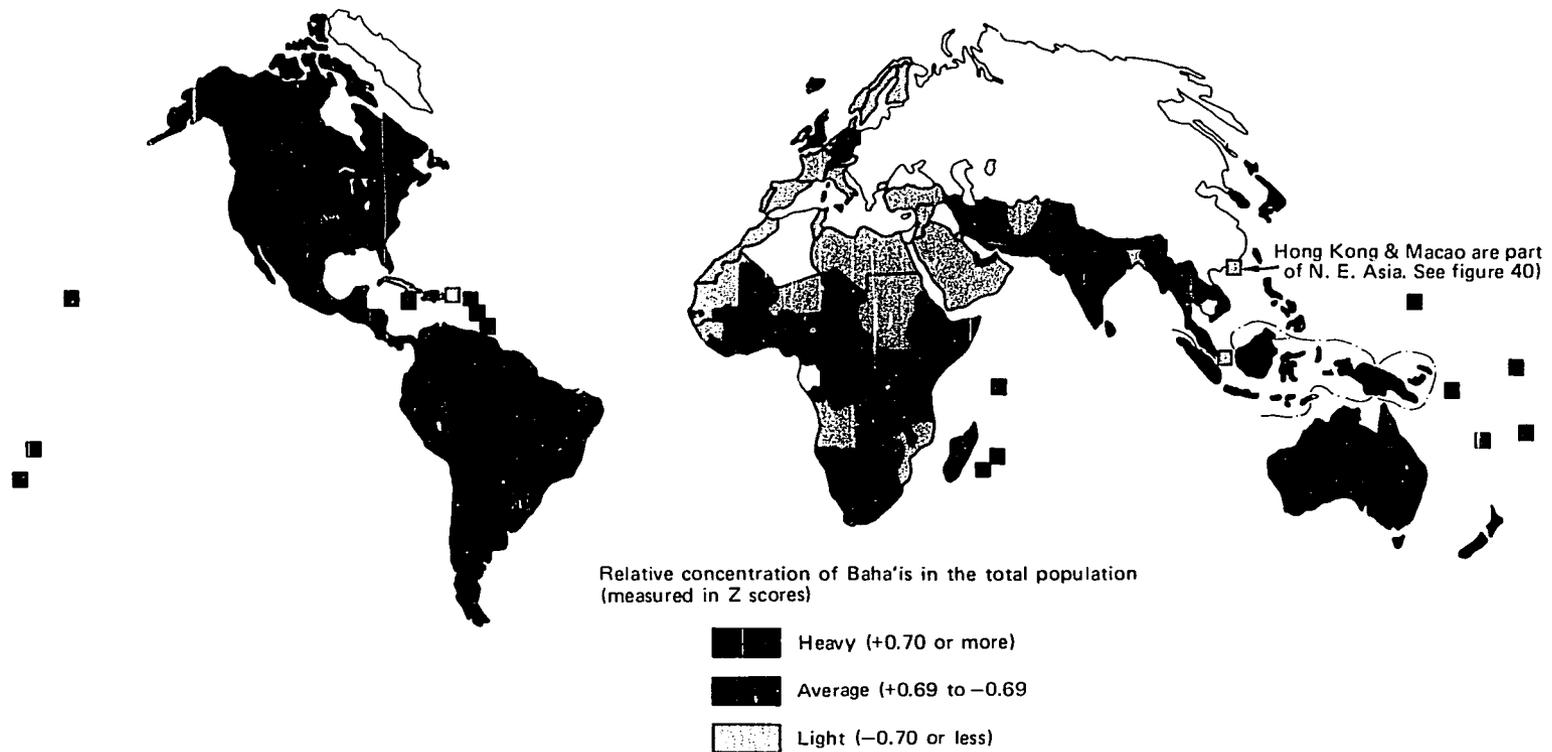
$r^2 = .62$

$Y = 3.13 - 0.74 X$

The r^2 value of .62 testifies to the strength of the relationship and underlines the need to control for total population size before endeavoring to map the variations in Baha'i strength. At this point, residuals were calculated and converted to Z-scores. These in turn were used to construct the map in Figure 45.

Figure 45 is deceptive. It conveys a sense of absolute accuracy that is totally unwarranted under the circumstances. The data for the map rest on a series of estimates which were constructed from a meager supply of real information and a large number of untestable assumptions. As a result, any conclusions that might be drawn, any ideas that might be suggested, any patterns that might be evident, must spring from the mind of the viewer.

Figure 45 Relative Concentration of Baha'is (after having controlled for size of total population)
National Spiritual Assembly Areas: 1973



CHAPTER XII

DIFFUSION AND THE BAHA'I EXPERIENCE

RESEARCH GENERALIZATIONS

Distance and Diffusion

Why has the Baha'i Faith spread more rapidly to some parts of the world than to others? The search for answers to this question has led to the discovery of a number of explanations that apply only to the Baha'i experience and that already have been discussed. In addition, however, three general principles can be identified that probably would apply to the diffusion process of many different innovations.

1. The probability of adoption is inversely related to distance from the potential sources of an innovation.

This is, perhaps, the generalization about diffusion most widely accepted by geographers today; numerous studies have identified a tendency for an innovation to spread to nearby areas more readily than to distant ones.¹ The Baha'i Faith has shown a similar tendency. The pattern has been recognizable for both geographical and cultural distance.

The validity of this generalization has also been confirmed by the ample evidence throughout the study indicating that adoption has been the result of personal contacts rather than impersonal media messages.

¹See, for example: Hagerstrand, Innovation Diffusion as a Spatial Process, pp. 158-163; Gould, Spatial Diffusion, pp. 26-88; Louder, "A Distributional and Diffusionary Analysis of the Mormon Church, 1850-1970," pp. 128, 134-161, 187.

In a very real sense, therefore, adoption of the innovation has only occurred when potential adopters and change agents have been face to face. Of course, change agents are typically mobile, and this has facilitated adoption of the innovation at large distances from the areas where most believers reside. Still, human movement costs time and money, and so short distance travel is more prevalent than long, with the inevitable result that the Faith has diffused more readily to nearby areas.

2. Specific planning directives, established routes of pilgrimage (or migration), and extreme separation of core areas and leadership centers can set up patterns of diffusion that overcome the tyranny of distance.

Notwithstanding the fact that Baha'i diffusion has been subject to the same sorts of distance constraints as have governed the spread of many other innovations, a number of circumstances in the development of the Faith have drawn attention to ways in which the friction of distance can be defied. In the early decades of the history of the religion, when most believers resided in Persia and yet the leadership was located in 'Akka, substantial migratory flows were generated between these two distant areas. There has been no evidence to suggest that conversions were more common along that route than at either end of it. Nevertheless, the period did see some amount of diffusion along the route and a substantial amount of growth in 'Akka, located 600-1000 miles from the heartland of the religion.

Similarly, during the period 1893-1921, when 'Abdu'l-Baha was directing Baha'i growth in North America, expansion of the religion was most dramatic 6,000-9,000 miles from both the heartland and the center

of leadership. Furthermore, significant growth occurred in Europe because of the developing flow of pilgrims from the new North American core area to the established center of the religion in 'Akka.

There are numerous examples of the initiation of far-flung growth as a result of planning directives. The early establishment of the Faith in Turkestan, the sudden creation of a Baha'i community in North America, the formation of Baha'i centers in Australia and Japan, the rapid penetration of South America, the planned transmittal of the religion from North America to ten previously untouched European countries, the opening of Africa, the dispersion of Baha'is to dozens of obscure countries and territories around the world--these are all examples of diffusion over long distance that probably would not have occurred without planning directives. They are, furthermore, persuasive evidence that distance need not be the most powerful determinant of adoption rates.

3. Migration, adoption, and disaffection all have the potential to control the geographic spread of an innovation.

Although the logic of this statement is obvious, studies of diffusion frequently overlook the role of disaffection and usually fail to give balanced consideration to the roles of migration and adoption.² Analysis of Baha'i diffusion in the United States permitted a reasonably careful consideration of migration and adoption, but, like most studies, failed

²Hannemann and Meyer, for example, never raise the question of disaffection (Hannemann, The Diffusion of the Reformation in South-western Germany, 1518-1534; Meyer, "Ethnicity, Theology, and Immigrant Church Expansion") while Dann fails to explore the relative contributions of migration, adoption, and disaffection to the diffusion of the Holiness movement (Dann, "Spatial Diffusion of a Religious Movement").

to give sufficient attention to disaffection. However, in tracing the spread of the religion in the United States between 1893 and 1976, it was possible to identify specific periods during which each of these three diffusion dynamics were transcendent: migration accounted for most of the geographic expansion during the years 1937-1944, differential adoption rates were the chief cause of changing distribution during the Nine Year Plan, disaffection was the primary reason for geographical readjustment between 1916 and 1926. The lesson to be learned is that geographic diffusion really is the end result of all three of these forces, any one of which has the potential to predominate. Furthermore, it is apparent that the transcendence of a given diffusion dynamic can be temporary. Changing conditions within and outside an innovation can alter the relative contributions that migration, adoption, and disaffection make to the diffusion process.

Rate of Growth

The most common hypothesis regarding the rate of growth of a newly introduced innovation is that slow initial acceptance will accelerate until such time as the remaining target population becomes sufficiently diminished to precipitate a decline in the adoption rate. Cumulative adoption plotted against time, therefore, will yield a logistic curve.³ The logistic curve may have applicability when studying an innovation that is diffusing within very limited time and space constraints and that offers very obvious benefits to an easily identifiable target population.

³Gould, Spatial Diffusion, pp. 18-21; Rogers and Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations, pp. 128-133, 176-191.

However, for predicting global growth in a large historical context, the results of this study suggest that it is not very useful. In more complex situations of this type it is necessary to abandon attempts to find recurring growth rate trends and focus instead on independent factors that appear to influence growth rate.

1. Rate of growth shows no overall pattern of regularity; rather it varies sharply between regions and from one time period to the next.

This statement appears to be nothing more than an admission that growth rates are unpredictable. As such, it does not sound like a very useful generalization. However, the Baha'i experience indicates that at this time it is unrealistic to view growth rates as predictable. An acceptance of this fact allows the investigator to devote his energies to analyzing the variability of conditions that govern growth rates.

2. For sustained growth, retention is as important as adoption.

Twice during the early decades of the twentieth century the Baha'i population of the United States declined in size. Furthermore, during the 1920s and 1930s the Baha'i community of Turkestan fell from pre-eminence to oblivion. These experiences highlight the fact that there is nothing inevitable about expansion, that contraction is always a possibility. The circumstances surrounding them preclude the possibility that numerical diminution could have been caused primarily by mortality. The only logical explanation for the decline in the numbers of believers in these instances is that more people abandoned the religion than adopted it. Statistics presented in Chapter VII indicated that in 1975-1976 the Baha'i population of the United States was experiencing an

annual rate of abandonment of about three percent. If this rate were to continue without compensating enrollments, even for only a decade or two, the net result would be a sharp decline in the total size of the Baha'i population. It would seem that any innovation whose adoption consists primarily of an intellectual and emotional commitment is potentially vulnerable to attrition.

It is interesting to speculate about whether the social acceptability of a religion affects its vulnerability to abandonment. If an established religion is defined as one that either claims the allegiance of a large part of the local population or has been a constant element of society over a long period of time, then it can be hypothesized that in order to become established, a religion must cross an undefined but real threshold between social acceptability and social rejection. If this is true, then it is logical to think that adherents of a socially unacceptable religion personally suffer greater or lesser degrees of rejection by the rest of society whereas adherents of a socially accepted religion do not. Since most people prefer to avoid rejection if they can, it follows that until a religion succeeds in becoming socially acceptable it is likely to be more vulnerable to attrition. This point is particularly relevant when a member of a religion becomes apathetic since the larger societal view of his religious affiliation may play a part in his decision to abandon the religion altogether. One of the more common strategies that an unestablished religion will use to combat disaffection is to directly involve all adherents in activities that make the individual feel part of a movement that, although outside the bounds of what is acceptable to society as a whole, has a sense of purpose and

provides for social cohesion within the group. This strategy is likely to be more successful if the membership of the religion is geographically compact, a situation which facilitates interpersonal communication, permits successful social functions and group activities, and generally encourages more rapid social acceptance of the religion in the small area occupied. By foregoing the advantages that accompany geographic concentration, the Baha'i Faith may be exposing itself to greater dangers of disaffection and attrition. However, the Baha'i religion has been ideologically obliged to pursue dispersion, and that strategy is not without its advantages; a movement which becomes a sub-culture may begin to look inward, thereby losing its determination to have an effect on the world lying outside its control.

3. Publicity, even of an adverse type, can increase awareness of an innovation and improve its potential for growth.

Such a generalization must be viewed as extremely tentative and conjectural since this study has presented virtually no direct evidence in its support. Because analysis has concentrated on adoption as an indicator of diffusion, very little attention has been paid to the notion of awareness and its role in facilitating the diffusion process. In compiling information for this study, however, I reviewed a number of historical narratives that identified situations in which efforts to proclaim Baha'i failed to generate conversions but to which the narrator assigned importance as stimulators of awareness about the religion. Since there was no obvious means of measuring the effect on awareness of these efforts to spread the Baha'i Faith, it was not appropriate to include

such obviously subjective information in this study. Nevertheless, in a larger context, the issue merits further attention.⁴

There is a widespread Baha'i attitude that although positive publicity is better than adverse publicity, either is preferable to anonymity. Negative publicity typically occurs in the form of books, articles, and radio commentaries that criticize the beliefs of the religion, but, at least in North America, Baha'is frequently use such attacks as an opportunity to publicly defend their Faith in the same media format. The result of such an exchange is that many people become aware of the principles of the religion, and this after all is the avowed objective of all Baha'i expansion efforts.

4. Mass media may heighten awareness and create good conditions for diffusion, but adoption depends on personal interaction between change agents and potential adopters.⁵

There are numerous examples of situations in which an individual change agent was responsible for conversions to the religion, but, with the possible exception of Tahirih, the study uncovered no examples of conversions taking place as a result of impersonal sources of information. The logical conclusion is that adoption generally occurs only after direct

⁴For discussions of awareness and adoption, see: Palmore, "The Chicago Snowball: A Study of the Flow and Diffusion of Family Planning Information"; Rosario, "The Leader in Family Planning and the Two-Step Flow Model"; Rogers and Shoemaker, Communication of Innovations, pp. 24-28, 100-118, 128-133.

⁵Gerlach and Hine, "Five Factors Crucial to the Growth and Spread of a Modern Religious Movement," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 7 (Spring, 1968), pp. 23-40.

interaction with a change agent. This conclusion may have validity for a number of other innovations.

Change Agents

In the process of analyzing the specifics of Baha'i diffusion in various locations around the world, key individuals frequently have been identified as responsible for the growth. Furthermore, the attention which has been paid to them permits certain conclusions regarding their characteristics, their behavior, and their impact. These people, referred to in this study as change agents, are Baha'is whose actions and words have been instrumental in persuading some of those around them to adopt the Baha'i Faith.

1. Diffusion relies heavily on the work of a few highly dedicated change agents.⁶

A number of specific examples already have been cited showing how the work of a single person frequently has been responsible for the introduction and dissemination of the Baha'i Faith in some area of the world. Even in areas where Baha'i communities already existed, a single person was occasionally found to be the precipitator of widespread expansion (Dr. Khayr'u'llah in New York City, for example, and Dr. Muhajir in Central India). It is reasonable to think that change agents may be similarly instrumental in the dissemination of other innovations.

2. If change agents occupy powerful and respected positions in society, their potential effectiveness will be greater.

⁶Rogers and Shoemaker discuss the roles of change agents in the diffusion process in Communication of Innovations, pp. 227-228.

In his history of the yearly years of the Baha'i movement, Nabil occasionally mentions that mass conversions sometimes occurred when the foremost religious authority in a community converted to Baha'i and began to publicly espouse the religion. Apparently, such men were opinion leaders whose views greatly affected public attitudes and public behavior.

Although there is no firm evidence, one suspects that opinion leadership is a more powerful force in less literate, less urbanized societies. Certainly today in the West--where technology, literacy, and urbanization are high--opinion leadership in the realm of the spiritual is not as potent as it used to be. In contrast, it would seem that religious leaders in many non-Western settings still have the ability to shape public opinion. Since most diffusion research originates in Western society, there is a possibility that the importance of opinion leadership in global diffusion processes is seriously underestimated.

3. Change agents often exhibit markedly different migratory behavior from that of other adopters.

Many Baha'is who have been instrumental in disseminating their religion have shown a willingness to migrate more frequently and over longer distances than their fellow believers. Furthermore, their migratory behavior appears frequently to have been a consequence of religious motives. This suggests that those individuals who are most instrumental in disseminating an innovation are not necessarily typical adopters. As a result, diffusion models that define parameters for communication and predict adoption based on proximity to previous adopters may be highly unrealistic unless they differentiate between previous adopters who act as change agents and previous adopters who do not.

4. The more mobile the change agents, the more likely is the innovation to expand its geographical limits. Dispersion relies heavily on migration and mobility.

Outside Iran, there are only a few million Baha'is in the world. Considering the fact that most growth during the twentieth century has been initiated from North America, it is not unreasonable to presume that without extensive migration and mobility the religion could easily have been confined to a relatively small area such as the industrialized Northeast of the United States. This region, even narrowly defined, contains well over 60 million people. Even if Baha'i growth had been confined just to this one region, it would have had to convert only about five percent of the total population in order to achieve the membership that it now enjoys worldwide. The probability is high, therefore, that the religion could have generated the same numerical growth in a relatively small area. The global distribution of Baha'is appears not to have resulted from saturation of target populations but rather from conscious migration and mobility of change agents.

5. The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of change agents may deviate from societal norms, but the nature of the deviation will vary with the cultural and temporal setting.

For the most part, the scale and scope of this study have been too large to permit a detailed analysis of the characteristics of change agents (this, in fact, would be an ideal area for future research on Baha'i diffusion). Nevertheless, it was possible to ascertain that in the developmental stages the religion was disseminated almost entirely by men in Persia and primarily by women in many Western countries. This exemplifies the way in which change agents for the Baha'i Faith can exhibit a systematic demographic bias that varies between cultures. When

looking for a comparable change through time, it is appropriate to point to the shift in socio-economic status of change agents in the United States. Whereas in the first few decades of American Baha'i history a disproportionately large number of change agents may have been wealthy, current conditions do not indicate the existence of any such pattern. Evidence is scanty and inconclusive, but generally there are enough clues to suggest that the above statement is true for the Baha'i Faith and may be applicable to a number of other innovations.

Policy, Planning, and Internal Organization

Throughout this study, constant attention has been given to ways in which the Baha'i innovation has successfully molded its own diffusion process. As a result, most of the statements which follow merely state in more general terms concepts that already have been the subject of extensive commentary.

1. Strong, centralized leadership creates a favorable environment for diffusion in the early stages. It permits a rational allocation of change agents and allows decisive responses to changes in the conditions for diffusion.
2. Internal dissension has the potential to paralyze diffusion and even cause contraction.

These two complementary notions have substantial implications for diffusion research. They suggest that growth rates can be best understood by carefully considering how an innovation is marketed rather than by evaluating the characteristics and relative availability of potential adopters.⁷ Both the supply and the demand elements of a diffusion

⁷See Brown, "The Market and Infrastructure Context of Adoption," pp. 1-6, 32-35.

equation are likely to change with time, but the supply considerations in particular are vulnerable to frequent and large modifications. Even in the Baha'i Faith, where there has been a long tradition of centralized leadership, it has been possible to identify frequent oscillations between internal unity and internal division--oscillations that have been shown to have a relationship to variations in the religion's growth rate. Once it is realized that the diffusion of an innovation is heavily reliant on such considerations as internal organization and policy, it becomes apparent that accurate prediction of growth rates will be feasible only when shifts in policy and changes in internal organization can be foreseen.

It is difficult to know whether strong, centralized leadership assists the diffusion process in later stages. Since the adoption decision seems to rely heavily on personal interaction between a change agent and a potential adopter, there is the possibility that centralized leadership of a very large movement will become dictatorial, oppressive, and insensitive to grass roots sentiment. On the other hand, lack of centralization will create favorable conditions for internal division which has already been identified as a hindrance to the diffusion process. This is an intriguing issue, but not one that can be adequately explored by studying the experience of such a small and youthful movement as Baha'i.

3. A well-developed administrative structure can facilitate diffusion.

A clearly articulated administrative structure provides a system for marshalling and distributing human and physical resources.⁸ By doing so, it creates the potential for successful diffusion. However, the role of an administrative system in a diffusion process will depend on the extent to which the objective of the administrative structure is to disseminate the innovation. Examples have been cited to show that Baha'i administration exists primarily for the purpose of expanding the influence of the religion. In some other movements, well-defined administrative systems exist primarily to serve the needs and desires of those who already belong to the movement. In these cases, internal organization--although well-developed--is unlikely to contribute substantially to diffusion.

4. Expansionist goals can facilitate large-scale diffusion.
5. Careful planning can encourage diffusion.

Since its beginnings in 1844, the Baha'i Faith has strived for expansion by pursuing three distinct objectives: numerical increase, geographic dispersal, and compositional diversity. Since 1916, these Baha'i expansionist goals have been embodied in a sequence of growth plans. Much of this study has been devoted to analyzing the effectiveness of Baha'i policy and planning; and in most instances it has been

⁸Both Gibbon and Latourette, for example, stressed the importance of administrative organization to the spread of Christianity (Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Introduction by Christopher Dawson (6 vols.; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1966), Vol. 1, pp. 430-483; Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity (7 vols.; 3rd ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1937), Vol. 1, The First Five Centuries, p. 164).

concluded that they have guided the diffusionary history of the religion. Since plans and policies have exercised substantial control over dissemination of the Baha'i innovation, it is reasonable to think that similar direction could be given to the diffusion of many other innovations.

6. Given specific planning objectives, patterns of geographic distribution can be altered drastically--even to the point of inversion.

Great changes in the geographic distribution of the Baha'i population were achieved as a result of policy and planning. The case has already been made that planned diffusion profoundly altered the distribution and density of the Baha'i population. What needs to be pointed out now is the significance of this fact. Although there is much evidence that distance and inaccessibility--be it of the physical, social, or cultural type--strongly inhibit diffusion, this study has shown that such barriers are not insuperable and that the dissemination process is amenable to manipulation by the decision-making personnel responsible for growth of the innovation.

7. When a planning or administrative unit has a small geographic area and a small population, the potential for achieving ambitious diffusion goals is greater and the likelihood of exceeding planned expansion is higher.

Rather than speculating on the reasons why this should be so, I would like simply to draw attention to the implications for planned expansion. The Baha'i experience would suggest that more rapid diffusion can be achieved via planning if (1) the basic planning units are small, but (2) the change agents available in any one small planning unit are encouraged to pursue objectives everywhere in the

world. This combination of compartmentalization and flexibility seems to be well adapted to achieving balanced growth via planning objectives. Its success, however, will rely on the existence of a strong, centralized body with the authority to monitor and direct global diffusion by setting goals for the small geographical units and encouraging all change agents everywhere to achieve them.

8. Plan ambitiousness and level of achievement are not related.

Although it is unreasonable to think that highly ambitious goals are as likely to be achieved as modest ones, statistical evidence for the Baha'i Faith bearing on this question has failed to reveal the existence of any inverse relationship. The Baha'i experience is only one case, of course, and so it would be premature to adopt the above statement as an article of faith. Nevertheless, the fact that no statistical relationship between plan ambitiousness and plan achievement was identified suggests that future studies of diffusion dealing with other innovations ought also to hypothesize and test for such a relationship.

9. The wisdom and flexibility with which the propagators of an innovation meet changing conditions that confront them will greatly influence the rate of diffusion.

This is not the place to discuss the pros and cons of the "great man" theory of history which holds that the unique behavior of key individuals (be they male or female) has frequently determined the course of human events. Suffice it to say that most people accept the idea that in at least some instances the unique character of an individual has played a pivotal role in history. Generally, those who are more impressed by the influence of individuals on historical events might

logically be expected to have less confidence in mankind's ability to predict the future. Whatever position one might take on this issue, evidence from the Baha'i experience suggests that the actions of key individuals within the religion have been sufficiently dramatic to stimulate a similar range of opinions regarding their influence on Baha'i diffusion. This kind of consideration merits attention in future diffusion studies.

External Conditions

Although the primary emphasis throughout this study has been on the ways in which the Baha'i Faith has managed its own growth, in a number of instances external conditions have been identified as influential forces in the religion's diffusion process.

1. Persecution can stimulate diffusion when the adopters are indigenous people representative of society.
2. Persecution can halt, and even reverse, diffusion when the adopters are drawn mostly from a particular nationality, race, religion, or socioeconomic class.

The regeneration of the Baha'i Faith in Persia after the 1840s contrasts sharply with the disappearance of the movement from Turkestan and the Caucasus during the 1930s and 1940s. In both cases the Baha'i religion was subjected to persecution, but the consequences were very different. Historical sources have documented that in Persia the Baha'i Faith was widely disseminated and was adhered to by people with a great variety of backgrounds whereas in Turkestan the Baha'i community was relatively concentrated geographically and was comprised largely of wealthy Persian expatriates. These differences help to explain why

survival was possible in one setting and not in the other. When a movement is confined to a particular segment of society it is easier to isolate and persecute the adherents and it is easier to find a rationalization for doing so that will be acceptable to the rest of society.

An innovation may be diffused much more easily and far quicker if the target population does not contain the full diversity of society but rather is narrowed to include one class of people only. If this is true, it may help to account for the ephemeral nature of many movements. The rise and decline of a short-lived ideology or religion may involve the rapid penetration of a particular segment of society that, due to some aspect of its uniqueness, is receptive to the new movement. With changes in social circumstances or conditions, however, the lack of diversity among the adherents may make it difficult for the membership to adapt, with the result that attrition sets in.

Finally, a note of caution should be struck. The notion that persecution is more of a threat to a movement with a membership that is not representative of its host society should be considered in light of the Jewish experience. Is one to believe that Judaism has survived because of, or in spite of, the fact that its followers have long been a distinct social group frequently occupying clearly defined economic or occupational niches in society and occasionally exhibiting obvious geographic concentration?

3. Conditions of political and religious freedom are conducive to diffusion whereas suppression or proscription can make diffusion more difficult.

In this instance, the intention is to consider a circumstance in which all religions (or perhaps all but one) are proscribed rather than just the

one under consideration. This, of course, is the situation which prevails throughout most of the communist realm. Under such circumstances, the overt activities of a single religious movement are curtailed nearly as effectively as would be the case if it alone were subjected to the suppression, and yet there is not the opportunity to inherit the attention that is likely to focus on a "martyred" religion. As has been mentioned before, it is very difficult for a religion to flourish when it is relatively unknown and invisible.

4. Foreign cultural environments pose substantial, but not insuperable, barriers to diffusion.⁹
5. At an international level, an innovation tends to enter a new country via its cosmopolitan urban center(s).¹⁰
6. At the macro and micro scale, initial diffusion tends to be hierarchical whereas subsequent diffusion often is contagious.¹¹

Evidence in support of these three generalizations has been provided at different points in this study. Discussion, however, has always centered on the question of whether the generalizations are valid for the Baha'i innovation; it has not contemplated the possibility that what seems to be true for the Baha'i Faith may also hold for many other innovations. Perhaps future diffusion studies can pose these generalizations as explicit hypotheses and test them in a more vigorous fashion.

7. At the global level, an innovation tends to spread first to technologically and economically developed countries and later to the developing countries.

⁹de Planhol, The World of Islam, pp. 101-125.

¹⁰Paul Ore Pederson, "Innovation Diffusion within and between National Urban Systems," Geographical Analysis, 2 (July, 1970), pp. 203-254.

¹¹Gould, Spatial Diffusion, pp. 25-68.

The vectors of Baha'i diffusion have very clearly portrayed this pattern of expansion. Even though the Faith originated in a part of the developing world that was not even associated with a Western colonial empire, dissemination to Western centers occurred early, penetration of other developing areas was subsequent, and the impetus for global dispersion was provided by the West rather than the religion's place of origin. Even for a non-Western innovation, therefore, the advanced technology, the economic strength, and the political supremacy of Western countries appear to have been extremely important to the diffusion process. Notice, for example, that the Baha'i Faith, which has its roots in Muslim traditions, spread from Egypt to America and thence to Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and even Japan before Muslim North Africa west of Egypt was even touched.

It would be quite natural to expect that most technological innovations would be developed and spread by the West. To see a non-Western religion use the West as a staging area for global diffusion, however, suggests that the mechanics and logistics of dissemination have much in common regardless of the nature of the innovation.

8. Particular personalities and unique historical events can have a strong impact on the diffusionary fortunes of an innovation.

Just as the behavior of key individuals within the organization of an innovation can greatly affect the diffusion process, so too can the actions of key people not associated with the movement.

9. Societal conditions and current social values can have at least a short run effect on diffusion.

Actually, there is little doubt that social values and conditions can have an enduring effect on diffusion of a religious or ideological

innovation. In the contemporary world, however, societies everywhere are changing so rapidly that it is no longer possible to visualize what the world of tomorrow will be like. As a result, the survival of an innovation depends largely on its ability to adapt to conditions of continuous change.

In the United States, the Baha'i Faith experienced rapid expansion during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This growth was stimulated at least in part by the spiritual revolution that enveloped the country at that time. Without that philosophical shift in the nation, it is unlikely that the Baha'i membership would have expanded as it did. Today, one of the more important changes in the national outlook involves the acceptance of women's rights. The more clearly the Baha'i Faith, or any similar innovation, takes a position on this issue, the more likely is the issue to influence the rates of adoption and rejection. This, therefore, is an example of a rapidly emerging modern social question with the potential to make or break a new movement.

10. Economic conditions can affect the rate and direction of diffusion.

Even though the Baha'i Faith is not tied to a particular social class or economic philosophy, evidence from the United States suggests that diffusion has proceeded more vigorously in areas where economic conditions have been encouraging in-migration. Of course, in the case of the Baha'i Faith, the heavy reliance on change agents who are willing to settle in a new area in order to spread the religion probably has made the movement unusually sensitive to local economic conditions. Nevertheless, any innovation that relies primarily on interpersonal communication

to achieve dissemination is likely to be affected by local variations in economic health.¹²

If an economy has the capacity to absorb new people, then carriers of an innovation are more likely to enter that economy, establish themselves, and then proceed to stimulate adoptions.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research on Baha'i diffusion should, I think, address three specific areas. First, there should be smaller scale studies designed to explore the dynamics of diffusion in small areas of the world. Large-scale analysis has provided a prerequisite overview of Baha'i expansion, and has explicitly addressed the questions of where, when, and why Baha'i diffusion has occurred, but the conclusions that have been reached have been relatively general and tentative in nature. Small-scale studies would allow more detailed analysis of the diffusion question and would supply settings in which the generalizations derived from this study could be tested more vigorously.

Second, efforts should be made to explore the psychological and sociological dynamics of adoption. At present, there is very little understanding of how the adoption decision occurs. Change agents appear to be vital links between the innovation and the target population, but in what ways are they vital? Do they succeed by force of logic or

¹²Meyer, Diffusion of the American Montessori Education. Although Meyer avoids purely economic explanations of the pattern of diffusion of Montessori education in America, it is evident that the movement was most successful among urban people of higher socio-economic status.

by means of charisma and personal magnetism? Are they numerous or few? How do they differ from other Baha'is? In what ways do they establish contacts and how frequently do their efforts result in conversions? On the other hand, there are the adopters themselves. How do they usually find out about the innovation? How is the transition from awareness to acceptance effected? Does their conversion usually coincide with a period of crisis or trauma in their lives? These and many, many other questions need to be addressed by researchers interested in understanding why people join the religion.

Finally, attention should be given to the motivations underlying disaffection and abandonment. The rising incidence of this kind of attrition in the United States makes it a significant force in the dynamics of Baha'i population change. It may be that an improved understanding of what causes disaffections will help isolate those aspects of the Baha'i Faith that are most difficult for new believers to accept. This, in turn, might be used to modify the way in which Baha'i principles are introduced and inculcated.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE BAHAI FAITH

When the modern social scientist fantasizes, I suspect that his thoughts turn most frequently to the allure of controlled experiments. However, no way has yet been discovered to control for the multitude of forces that mold human behavior. The classical scientific method has not been a powerful analytical tool for examining the human experience, but no other methodology has proven better. Social scientists have had little choice but to mimic the experimental procedures that have served

the physical sciences so well. In doing so, however, the assumption has had to be made that important aspects of a phenomenon can best be understood by removing it from its (larger) context--an essential first step in the analytical process. When social scientists attempt to initiate this process of extracting the problem from its context, three techniques are commonly used: (1) arbitrary limitation on the temporal frame of reference, (2) arbitrary limitation on the geographical frame of reference, and (3) arbitrary limitation on the variability of the characteristics of the object(s) of study. If, for example, a social scientist wishes to understand why the Baha'i Faith has diffused at the rate and in the directions that it has, then he is likely to approach the problem first by collapsing it. In the belief (not fact) that the problem is too large to be tackled in its entirety, and in the further belief (not fact) that an ultimate answer to the overall question can be derived gradually from separate answers to the same question asked at much smaller geographic and temporal scales and among a certain subset of the objects of study, the investigator is likely to redefine the problem so that it is not as large (or as relevant). By the time research is undertaken, for example, the proposed research topic may have become "The Diffusion of the Baha'i Faith in the United States: An Analysis of Adoptions by Youth, 1960-1975." The question that arises is whether the depth of analysis which becomes possible under this more confined definition of the problem will yield a solution that (1) has any relevance in its own right, and (2) can be combined with the conclusions from other similarly confined studies on the subject to give an answer to the larger question of what has caused the Baha'i Faith to diffuse (or,

going even farther, what are the general principles of the diffusion process). I am pessimistic about the efficacy of this building block approach to the study of human experience. Perhaps it can work, but I strongly doubt that it does unless it is accompanied by a synthetic approach that identifies the relationship of the object of study with its larger context.

This exploration of the Baha'i diffusion certainly has been more an analysis than a synthesis, and for this reason it must be viewed as just one more social science study in which the emphasis is greater on the science than on the social. Nevertheless, there has been a serious effort to let the problem dictate the method rather than having the method place limits on the problem. The result, I would submit, is a study that permits conclusions about the entire religious movement rather than just one small part of it. It cannot be denied that in the process of achieving breadth and universalism, the methodology has had to be less rigorous than would otherwise have been the case (this is a matter of no small concern since a large part of all modern social science research is dedicated to the task of proving that the investigator is a true scientist rather than uncovering relevant generalizations). However, by examining the whole of Baha'i history it has been possible to provide an appropriate perspective for further research on particular aspects of Baha'i diffusion. I would perceive this to be a major contribution of this study.

SUPPLY DIFFUSION

Diffusion can be viewed as a process involving supply of, and demand for, an innovation. From the beginning, this study has openly proclaimed its preoccupation with the supply side of the diffusion equation.¹³ It is unavoidable that such a strategy should have drawn the research into a detailed analysis of the characteristics of the innovation while giving less attention to external conditions. One of the results of this approach is that the innovation has been treated more as a living, intelligent entity than as a dumb force. Dumb forces do not make decisions; intelligent beings do. By recognizing that the dissemination of many innovations, including the Baha'i Faith, involves a constant flow of conscious and unconscious decisions, an investigator is confronted with the task of having to account for the behavior of one, or a small group of, decision makers. This situation poses analytical problems that are much greater in magnitude than those typically confronted when studying the average behavior of a relatively large number of potential adopters. It is one thing to predict the behavior of the average potential adopter of an innovation; it is quite another to predict the actions of the leadership of an innovative movement.

In spite of the problem, the supply approach adopted in this study has facilitated the identification of two main ideas that enrich the current body of diffusion research. The first idea is that planning can result in a diffusion pattern that deviates greatly from what one would expect under certain widely accepted principles of diffusion. The second

¹³See the discussion of supply diffusion in Chapter I.

idea is that diffusion research has great potential for practical application when it views the process as a rational strategy for success rather than as a naturalistic process of change. Neither of these ideas is new; the seeds of both are contained in existing supply-oriented diffusion studies. Nonetheless, this examination of global Baha'i diffusion over thirteen decades has articulated and legitimized these two ideas to a degree far surpassing any preceding study. In concert, these two ideas imply that we have the power to do more than merely understand the diffusion process; we can control it.

Literature reflective of the demand approach to the diffusion process stresses three theoretical notions. First, there is the idea that the incidence of adoption of an innovation will vary with the passage of time in accordance with the pattern described by the s-shaped cumulative curve. Second, there is the concept of non-geographic distance which postulates that new adoption will be more widespread among those who resemble existing adopters in social, economic, cultural, linguistic, ideological, and other traits. Third, there is the belief that geographic distance directly influences the quantity of adoption. These three theories, or principles, frequently are tested in diffusion research and usually are found to be viable. It is probably safe to say that diffusion researchers have reached a consensus that these theories are now approaching the status of (social) scientific law. What is not so clear is the degree of effort required to overcome their authority. In other words, to what extent is it possible for conscious attempts at dissemination of an innovation to generate a diffusion process that defies these three laws?

The Baha'i Faith has extensively employed the planning tool. Of all the planning themes pursued by the Baha'i Faith, the most intriguing to me has been that of geographical dispersion. During much of the twentieth century, Baha'i expansion was planned in such a way as to give greater priority to geographical dissemination than to numerical increase. Analysis of data on the size and distribution of the Baha'i population has shown that strategy to be successful. It is true that the Baha'i Faith has not penetrated the communist realm. It is true that Baha'i expansion has tended to occur more frequently across shorter social and geographical distances. But it is also true that, due to planning and clearly defined objectives, the Baha'i Faith has achieved a geographical and social universality that far exceeds what could reasonably be expected of a small, young, and obscure religious movement.

In short, the Baha'i example has shown that planning can direct growth over long geographic and non-geographic distances and can substantially affect the adoption rate. Planning, therefore, has the potential to manipulate the diffusion process.

Of course the balanced view would be that diffusion responds to a mixture of supply and demand conditions, neither of which dominates the process. Although this study has exhibited a clear bias in favor of supply oriented explanations of diffusion, the motive behind such a bias has been to develop a strong counterpoint to currently prevalent demand oriented thinking. Only when both supply and demand conditions are recognized as comparable in the diffusion equation is it going to be possible for a balanced understanding of diffusion to emerge.

But most of all, supply oriented thinking lends to diffusion research an attitude of optimism and activism. Research undertaken from the demand perspective generally leads to a passive acceptance of how diffusion occurs, but the supply perspective is a clear recognition that mankind has the capability to manage the diffusion process. Supply thinking is an open invitation to social engineering.

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